

"Diviners All: Characters in *The Diviners*" explains how this, the largest cast in Laurence's fiction, is divided according to the narrative's two time-lines of past and present, to demonstrate "the interpenetration of past, present, and future" (55). By delineating Jules, Pique, Christie, Brooke, and Royland in detail, Warwick demonstrates how they are "Diviners All."

"House and Garden: Place in *The Diviners*" discusses the importance of place, both natural and architectural, in the scheme of action and imagery of the novel, as Morag's journey of life takes her from innocence to experience and finally to her own riverside paradise. Warwick pursues the significance of cemetery and nuisance grounds, islands and gardens from the literal level to the symbolic, showing how Laurence's use of the river image to convey the continuity of life leads to an understanding of the importance of language and art to the human community.

The section on "Critical Reception," a standard feature in the ECW series on Canadian Fiction, is the only part of Warwick's volume that disappoints. "To survey all the critical responses to the novel that have appeared since 1975 would require more space than is available here" (15), she acknowledges, offering instead merely "an outline of the various approaches that have been used in discussions of *The Diviners*" (15). In a brief discussion of the early reviews, Warwick mentions the "ambivalent response" of Robert Fulford and of Marian Engel. Then she summarizes the general approaches of critical essays that address either the complex relation between form and content, or the feminist content of *The Diviners*. Again Warwick mentions only two critics, Clara Thomas and Ildiko de Papp Carrington, although her final Works Cited section is far more inclusive. Warwick concludes this section by acknowledging that "[m]any other critical discussions of *The Diviners* deserve attention here, but space is limited" (17). Indeed. But despite the weakness of this section of the book, *River of Now and Then: Margaret Laurence's "The Diviners"* offers concise and precise perceptions that will prove invaluable to students and scholars alike.

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Derek Wright. *Wole Soyinka Revisited*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993. pp. vii, 219.

The title *Wole Soyinka Revisited* is both accurate and short of the mark. In this book, Derek Wright thoroughly examines the literary, religious and philosophical background to Soyinka's work. However, when Wright turns to the individual texts, he emphasizes the more accessible plays and autobiographies at the expense of the more challenging and emotion-laden plays and poetry. For example, too much is made of *Dance of the Forests*, and too little of the poetry as a whole.

It is when Soyinka draws upon his eclectic knowledge of Greek, British, American, and Yoruba cultures, amongst others, that his work becomes more inaccessible. Soyinka often makes extensive use of Yoruba mythology, and his writing is firmly rooted in the scenes of rural and urban Nigeria. Whether it is the author's or the reader's responsibility to make the extra effort necessary to ensure comprehension is a contentious question for those who enjoy literature from around the world. Although Derek Wright criticizes Soyinka for confusing the reader, he does provide a detailed guide to Yoruba and European imagery. The first two chapters of *Wole Soyinka Revisited* examine "Soyinka and the Yoruba Worldview" and "Yoruba Theatre: Ritual, Tragedy, and Dramatic Theory." Students in particular will find useful the descriptions of Yoruba life and drama. The biographical material is also useful, since, as Wright points out later in his book, for artistic and other reasons, Soyinka takes liberties with the biographical facts. Wright occasionally mentions that Soyinka has been persecuted, jailed and sent into exile, and that he has also participated in the government of Nigeria. But Wright provides too little of the political background to Soyinka's life and work.

Wright devotes four chapters to discussing Soyinka's plays. The novels, the autobiographies, the poetry and the criticism are allotted one chapter each. The initial chapters tend to explain the religious and philosophical origins of the imagery and plots before turning to a critique of the works. In later chapters, Wright proceeds more quickly to the critique, presumably because he recognizes that the reader has grasped the essential background information.

Unfortunately, Wright's critiques are indeed "critical," in the colloquial sense of being negative. He suggests that Soyinka is confused about his objectives and how to realize them. Perhaps it is Wright who is confused: he seems to expect more adherence to Western literary conventions than Soyinka is willing to deliver. Several times he chastises Soyinka for not ending on a cathartic climax that leaves the audience or reader with a feeling of lessons learned. Such closure can be satisfying, but often Soyinka's goal is to disturb the audience or reader. At the end of some plays and both novels, the sense of conclusion is muted, leaving us with the feeling that work remains to be done, and we are to do it. In Nigeria, the audience must be provoked into thinking about the dilemmas and crises portrayed by Soyinka. Those of us who live outside Nigeria are called upon to do even more difficult work: we must examine our own complacency and then take action to improve our society. Soyinka, for all his egotism, is not so arrogant as to suggest remedies to every wrong he depicts.

Wright, like most readers of Soyinka, takes unabashed pleasure in the two most straightforward autobiographical works, *Aké* and *Isara*. Although Wright points out the liberties Soyinka has taken with the facts, he acknowledges that these texts are accessible, entertaining, enlightening, and most of all, written with ease and joy:

What makes *Ake* such a magnificent and captivating work is its richly reimagined [*sic*], not its documentary quality. Its main value is as a treasure trove of anecdotes about the world Soyinka grew up in, as a quarry for the raw material of incidents and characters in the plays, poems, and novels . . . and as a circular re-creation of the tensions and contradictions that were the formative agents of the writer's creative vision. (144)

Wright fails, however, to recognize in *The Man Died* the recreation of an artist's mental agony. Wright is not alone in describing the prison memoir as egocentric, but I continue to regard this criticism as inappropriate when applied to a book about solitary confinement. *The Man Died* gives the reader an unparalleled glimpse of what the complex artistic mind does to keep itself healthy in the face of an assault by those who fear complexity and opposition.

Finally, in his chapter on the poetry, Wright does Soyinka and students a terrible injustice. Wright has barely a good word to say about the poetry, and even when he does find something to praise, he does not bother to analyze or explain his response. Instead, the occasional sentence of approbation is immediately undermined by long paragraphs of complaints. I regret Wright's apparent inability to enjoy the natural dramatic poetry in Soyinka's work, and I hope that students and other readers will use the thorough research Wright has provided to find their own way to an appreciation of Wole Soyinka's art.

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