

an effort to tie the end of it in with the title, merely unbalance the poem as a whole, disturbing both tone and structure.

Like her imagination and forms, her style is essentially undemanding. Her rhythms are steady, veering towards flatness only in the over-conversational *Salt*. Her diction is smoothly colloquial for the most part, without being slangy or archaic (except perhaps for the unnecessarily pedantic Latin plural of *vulva* in "wrinkled vulvae"). At some points, for example "turned for relief/to waxy glow of flowers," she drops the article before a noun which could really do with it, giving the lines a rather clipped effect, in this case rather at odds with the impressionistic romanticism of the poem as a whole. On the other hand, the adjective "yellow" is clearly redundant in the lines "lemon yellow rim/of morning sky". These points are indications not of a lack of control, but of a need for one more final polishing before publication.

On the whole, in fact, I would prefer to see less control and more energy. The potential for the energy is certainly to be found in these poems. It needs, however, to be encouraged and developed so that the poems strike the reader rather than nudging her timidly.

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**Margaret Laurence.** Patricia Morley. *Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981. Pp. 171.*

Margaret Laurence's work to date falls into two clear divisions, the books which reflect her experience in Africa, and the better-known Manawaka novels, where the prairie town of her childhood provides a central focus. She herself implied that *The Diviners* (1974) marked

the end of a stage in her career and this, therefore, is a good time for taking stock of her achievement. There is already a plethora of articles on every conceivable aspect of her work, but until now only one book-length critical study, Clara Thomas's *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence* (1975). I wish I could say that Patricia Morley has added a second of comparable stature, offering fresh insight or even pulling together existing critical viewpoints in a lively and readable way. Alas, her *Margaret Laurence*, one of the Twayne's world authors series, does not fit the bill.

I was surprised to read that "the biographical details of Laurence's life are confusing" (p.16). What we need to know of the events of her life has been told clearly in many places and their pattern is easy to grasp. In Morley's hands, however, the details do become confusing. One of the problems is organization: we are well into an account of Laurence's journey to Somaliland, and her reading of the books of Moses en route, when we suddenly encounter her grandparents in their early days in Canada. A useful description of her birthplace, Neepawa (no date of birth given in the text), and its relationship to the fictional Manawaka, is just as suddenly interrupted by a return to matters of ancestry, with this geographical whirl:

The Scottish side of Laurence's ancestry has loomed larger in her imagination than the Irish, doubtless because of the Scottish culture of Neepawa. Laurence thinks of herself as Scots-Canadian, and identifies sympathetically with the Highlanders despite the fact that Fifeshire is in the Lowlands. (p.18)

Another problem is over-documentation: the obvious facts or deductions can surely be stated without acknowledgement that "Critic Clara Thomas" and "Donald Cameron, a Canadian writer and critic" have already uttered them.

This is a fault throughout the book; where Morley strikes out on her own, she is much more readable than when she compiles a confusing pastiche of other critics' views.

To Morley, the central metaphor in Laurence's work is that of "the unbroken journey" and she has previously published a couple of articles on the relationship of the African travels to the later fiction. Understandably, then, her chapter on the five African books has an authoritative tone and is less cluttered with reference to others (George Woodcock is the only other person to have written well on Laurence's travel writings and she naturally refers to his assessments). *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (1963) is rightly given prominence in this section. Written a decade after Laurence's time in Somaliland, it is a travelogue based on her diaries and it gives a vivid sense of the landscapes and people she encountered. Her engineer husband was building a series of dams in the drought-stricken Haud desert where she was brought face to face not only with an alien culture but with appalling physical suffering, disease, famine and death. What the book also records is her own spiritual journey from naive enthusiasm and hasty judgment to a respect for the privacy and dignity of others.

As a result of her interest in the voyage metaphor, Morley gives perhaps too much attention to the children's book *Jason's Quest* (1970). This incorporates in miniature some of Laurence's favorite themes, such as the ambiguous heritage of the past, the need for social change, and the nature of personal freedom and wisdom being dependent on individual character. Morley does a thorough job of showing how the adult reader might be amused by all the parallels with Laurence's other work but she does not address the question of whether this is a good book for children. Given the unconvincing characterization of animals and the too-contrived fantasy, I doubt if it is.

Morley nowhere mentions two other children's books Laurence published in 1979, *Six Darn Cows* and *The Olden Days Coat*, and refers only in passing to *The Christmas Story* (1980). Granted, these are only simple texts accompanying others' illustrations and I see no reason to discuss the appearance of Laurence's typical themes in them, though they are certainly there. For the sake of completeness, however, the titles should at least be included in the chronological summary (which, incidentally, has other omissions, such as the Governor General's Award for *A Jest of God*, and is awkwardly set out).

Much has been written on the five Manawaka books and it is not easy for a critic to distil the essence of the various approaches. This particularly affects Morley's section on *The Diviners*, "Laurence's masterwork", which is a huge and complex novel approachable from many angles. This being so, it is a waste of space to devote over two pages to the attempts to remove the book from the Grade Thirteen curriculum in some Ontario schools. What we gain from the details of which Pentecostal ministers attacked and which teachers defended is yet another picture of depressing parochialism that has little to do with the novel. Morley seems to be rather uncomfortable with the book herself, in spite of giving it high praise, and consequently reverts to irritating and unnecessary appeals to authority: "The essential unity of technique and vision has been discussed by critics as diverse as Jean-Paul Sartre and Wayne Booth" (p. 120); "John Fowles calls voice the most difficult problem for a writer" (p. 122). With the other Manawaka novels Morley is more at ease and she has much of interest to say about image patterns and structural devices, particularly in *The Stone Angel* and *A Bird in the House*. She is at pains, perhaps because of the fuss over *The Diviners*, to stress, quite unnecessarily, that Laurence is religious: "After many years of absence from church services,

Laurence began in the late 1970s to attend the United Church" (p. 25), a move Morley clearly approves, since the one major distortion in her criticism is the reading of a more conventional religion into the novels than is there. For example, there is nothing in *The Stone Angel*, despite the images of transformation and grace at the end, to suggest that after her death Hagar "confronts her Self and her God" (p. 82). The very ambiguity of the last words of the novel, "And then—", leaves the matter far more convincingly unresolved. The kind of spiritual vision Laurence implicitly conveys in the first four Manawaka books, and powerfully asserts through the images of grace in *The Diviners*, is diminished by being forced into the narrow confines of a conventional creed. Indeed, Morley elsewhere agrees that "Laurence humanizes the religious myth [of the search for the Promised Land], freeing it from its specifically Christian implications" (p. 79). This is acknowledged also in the useful section on the history of the Métis, which, incidentally, is essential background for appreciation of the full significance of the Tonnerre family in the Manawaka cycle. Here Morley refers to Laurence's awareness that we need to learn "to pay homage to the earth and its creatures" (p. 145), though she does not apply this to her reading of the novels, where the land itself, and especially water, offer a source of illumination and healing. Stacey, of *The Fire-Dwellers*, and Hagar find their temporary peace on the shore of the Pacific, with the great brooding forest as backdrop, and Rachel, in *A Jest of God*, sets out for the coast in search of her salvation. For Morag, rivers and trees are a spiritual necessity and she is instinctively responsive, even as a child, to the native Indian sense of the numinous: "Not that clouds or that would have human feelings, but that the trees and river and even this bridge might have their own spirits. Why shouldn't they?" (*The Diviners*, p. 103). Some indication of this persistent theme would have given Morley a more balanced argument.

It is a pity that over-emphases and omissions spoil Morley's book. The same faults mar the bibliography, which should be reliable and reasonably comprehensive in a handbook of this kind. I do not think Morley's own one-page notes and reviews merit inclusion, or that David Blewett's article on "The Unity of the Manawaka Cycle," which she has drawn on heavily, should be listed, without title, only in an entry under her own name. This article appears in the *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 13, one of two excellent periodical issues of recent years devoted to Margaret Laurence, the other being the *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 27: it is quite absurd to list these volumes under Morley, Patricia. The author has some reason to be proud of her contribution to Laurence studies, but not quite to this extent.

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**Women and the Constitution.** Audrey Doerr and Micheline Cormier, eds. *Ottawa: The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1981. Pp. 223.*

Finally, a book has been published which is devoted to women and the constitutional issues that are of special concern to them. Not only does *Women and the Constitution* deal with issues of concern to women but it reveals how little input women have had in the constitutional process in the past.

Unfortunately, however, the book was compiled before the extent of women's involvement in the current constitutional debate and subsequent resolution was realized. The specific non-discrimination provisions of the Charter owe their renewed force to the efforts and lobby of women's organizations through-