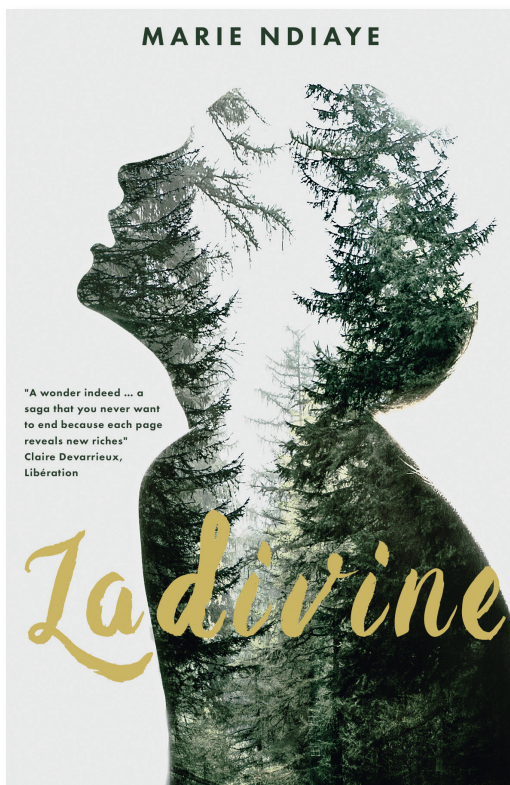


The
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2016



Reader's Guide



Other novels by Marie NDiaye

Rosie Carpe (2001)

Three Strong Women (2009)

Self-Portrait in Green (2014)

Ladivine Marie NDiaye

Translated by Jordan Stump

Maclehose Press

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About the author

Marie NDiaye was born in France in 1967. She published her first novel at 17, and has won the Prix Femina for *Rosie Carpe* in 2001 and the Prix Goncourt for *Three Strong Women* in 2009. Her play *Papa Doit Manger* has been taken into the repertoire of the Comédie Française. In 2007, after the election of Nicolas Sarkozy, NDiaye left France with her family to live in Berlin. She was a finalist for the Man Booker International Prize in 2013.

About the translator

Jordan Stump has translated many authors from French including Marie Redonnet, Eric Chevillard, and Honoré de Balzac. His translation of *Jardin des Plantes* by Claude Simon won the 2001 French-American Foundation translation prize, and he was named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Artes et des Lettres in 2006

About the book

Clarisse Rivière's life is shaped by a refusal to admit to her husband Richard and to her daughter Ladvine that her mother is a poor black housekeeper. Instead, weighed down by guilt, she pretends to be an orphan, visiting her mother in secret and telling no-one of her real identity as Malinka, daughter of Ladvine Sylla. In time, her lies turn against her. Richard leaves Clarisse, frustrated by the unbridgeable, indecipherable gulf between them. Clarisse is devastated, but finds solace in a new man, Freddy Moliger, who is let into the secret about her mother, and is even introduced to her. But Ladvine, her daughter, who is now married herself, cannot shake a bad feeling about her mother's new lover, convinced that he can bring only chaos and pain into her life. When she is proved right, in the most tragic circumstances, the only comfort the family can turn to requires a leap of faith beyond any they could have imagined if it is to be embraced. Centred around three generations of women, whose seemingly cursed lineage is defined by the weight of origins, the pain of alienation and the legacy of shame, *Ladvine* is a bewildering, beguiling story of secrets, lies, guilt and forgiveness by one of Europe's most unique literary voices.

Discussion points

Guilt is a central theme of the novel, and is a particularly striking feature of Clarisse Rivière's relationship with her mother. But how far does guilt permeate the lives and actions of other characters?

How does Marie NDiaye treat the themes of race, gender and class?

How would you characterise Clarisse Rivière's relationship with Freddy Moliger? Why do you think she is drawn to him?

The possibility of transforming into another species is a recurring theme in Marie NDiaye's writing. How does the role of the brown dog relate to the trauma suffered by Ladvine and her family?

Marie NDiaye's style of writing is particularly notable for its long, flowing sentence structures. What impact did this form of narration have on your appreciation of the story?

What did you make of the ending? Did you think the characters found closure? Why/why not?

Themed reading

Ta-Nehisi Coates *Between the World and Me*
Marguerite Duras *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein*
Zadie Smith *On Beauty*

Useful links

<http://www.publicbooks.org/fiction/marie-ndiaye-one-powerful-writer>

<https://www.quercusbooks.co.uk/Books/detail.page?isbn=9780857053343>

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/marie-ndiaye/ladvine/>

<http://granta.com/ladvine/>