

admirable criticism—engaged, assured, elegant, enormously suggestive, always lucid, and often brilliant.

Ian Wojcik-Andrews

*Margaret Drabble's Female "Bildungsromane": Theory, Genre, and Gender*

New York: Peter Lang, 1995. Pp. viii + 224. \$49.95

Reviewed by Jane Campbell

This book, Volume 6 of Peter Lang's series *Writing About Women: Feminist Literary Studies*, has a promising subtitle and an engaging project, that of applying Marxist-feminist analysis to Drabble's novels. In his first four chapters, Ian Wojcik-Andrews discusses, in general terms, female appropriation of the *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman*; "family matters" (marriage) in Drabble's first novel, *A Summer Bird-Cage* (1963); housework in her second, *The Garrick Year* (1964); and "narratives of community" (Sandra Zagarell's term) in *The Needle's Eye* (1972). Chapter Five, "The *Bildungsroman*: Violent Conventions, Female Relations," returns to these three novels and sets them beside examples of male-centered *Bildungsroman*. In a subsection entitled "Mothers and Daughters," there is a brief discussion of Drabble's *Jerusalem the Golden* (1967); two additional subsections are labeled "Childhood and Children" and "Notes Toward a Pre-Oedipal Theory of Genre." Chapter Six, "The *Bildungsroman* as *Künstlerroman*: Autobiography, Memory, Identity," begins with the marginalization of the female by Wordsworth, Mill (surprisingly), and Wells, moves to Drabble's representation of women writers in her first novel, and concludes with a summary of Drabble's own journey as a writer; here, *The Middle Ground* (1980) is introduced into the discussion, with the assumption that its heroine, Kate, can be identified with its author. A brief chapter, "Toward a Marxist-feminist Theory of the *Bildungsroman*," concludes the book.

There are some very good things in this study. The author's concentration on the two earliest novels (which are still critically neglected) produces a convincing demonstration of the decentering of the marriage plot by a new kind of narrative based on female relationships, and the exploration of women's work in *The Garrick Year* and of the importance of money in both texts is helpful in showing that there is more to interest a Marxist-feminist critic in these books than has been supposed. Equally well done is the description of the capitalistic entrepreneurship of the two fathers, Mr. Phillips and Mr. Bryanston, in *The Needle's Eye*. But I found the author's principles of inclusion/exclusion unclear and its organizing premises sometimes difficult to discern. If the story of young women's development in relation or opposition to the marriage plot is the focus, why is *The Millstone*, with its challenge to the bourgeois family ideal, omitted? (Its heroine elects to be a single parent and discovers love through nurturing her child.) In any discussion of *Künstlerroman* in Drabble, surely *The Waterfall*, with

its split narration (both the first- and third-person narrators are Jane, who is a poet) should feature prominently. Wojcik-Andrews's last chapter suggests, sensibly, that further work on *The Waterfall* should examine house and body in the *Bildungsroman*, but apart from a brief reference in another chapter—"Jane Gray . . . fictionalizes her indifferent marriage to Malcolm and her passionate affair to [sic] James" (153)—I found no reference to the experimental method of narration which has greatly interested feminist critics. On the other hand, Wojcik-Andrews's wish to examine women as writers in other texts leads to somewhat far-fetched examples, as when Louise in *A Summer Bird-Cage* is included as a writer on the strength of a thank-you note and an invitation to an "At Home" (161-2). The decision to discuss each of the three central novels in several chapters leads to some repetitiousness, but there are also some inexplicable gaps. It seems strange that male brutality in *Oliver Twist* should be compared, first, to a related instance in Elizabeth Bowen's "The Demon Lover," then, only briefly, to examples from *The Garrick Year* and *The Waterfall* (91-6). There is no account of Rose's suffering at the hands of her husband, Christopher, in *The Needle's Eye*. The section on *The Middle Ground*, focusing as it does on Drabble's own development, leaves no opportunity for showing how this later novel extends, through Kate's friendships with Evelyn and with Hugo, the displacement of the plots of female rivalry and heterosexual romance which the earlier books had begun. The virtual exclusion of other novels—*The Realms of Gold* (1975), *The Ice Age* (1977), and the trilogy which was completed in 1991 (*The Radiant Way*, *A Natural Curiosity*, *The Gates of Ivory*)—rules out texts which afford rich material for Marxist-feminist analysis. Perhaps I am, unfairly, wishing for a different critical book altogether, but it does seem to me that a more careful thinking-through of methodology would have made this a more satisfying book.

Attacks on Drabble from Marxist-feminist perspectives need to be more squarely faced, I think. Gayatri Spivak and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, for example, have both objected to Drabble's assumption that stories of privileged middle-class women are worth telling and accused her of giving only lip service to issues of conflict and struggle in women's lives. In his section on *The Middle Ground*, Wojcik-Andrews does quote Spivak (although out of context; she was writing about *The Waterfall*), countering her statement that Drabble does not seriously consider race and class with a useful analysis of the "anarchistic" form of *The Middle Ground* and its inclusion (through Kate's young Arab friend, Mujid; other characters could have been drawn in as well) of "underprivileged and radical points of view" (196). Other political critiques of Drabble are relegated to a footnote, however (204). If the consideration of the ways in which class and gender intersect in the novel had been both deepened and extended to her other texts, this would have been a more satisfying book.

The book could also have benefited greatly from rigorous editing. Indexing is erratic and sometimes cryptic: adjectives ("infantile," "monogamous") and verbs ("inculcate," "interpellates") are included. Both here and in the body of the

text, names are confused: Rosamund Stacey is called "Rosalind" (153), and Kate's friend Beatrice Mourré is referred to as "Beatrice-Mourree" (191); critics Judith Kegan Gardiner and Jean Gardiner are merged at one point (15); and, oddest of all, former Goon Show comic Sir Harry Secombe becomes Marxist writer Wally Seccombe (39, 217, 223). Catharine MacKinnon's name is (doubly) misspelled (215, 222). Wojcik-Andrews's style is at times difficult to read, sometimes because of grammatical and typographical errors and awkward wording ("Unlike Sophy, Emma is unlike Mary" [118]), and sometimes because of his habit of introducing gratuitous, unhelpful comparisons and parallels, as when the film *Terminator 2* is compared to *The Needle's Eye* because of the presence of children in both (137). Altogether, this is a book on an important subject which does not quite live up to its potential.

Baltasar Porcel

*Horses into the night*

Trans. from the Catalan and Introduction by John L. Getman

Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995. Pp. xi+169. US \$26.00

Reviewed by Arsenio Pacheco

*Horses into the night* (*Cavalls cap a la fosca*) is a Catalan novel first published in 1975. It was then considered one of the most important works to have appeared in Spain since the Spanish Civil War and was honored with four important literary prizes. Twenty years later it has lost none of its freshness and is still a compelling narrative. *Horses into the night* is the story of the Majorcan family Vadell, from the village of Andratch, told by one of its members who, at the time of writing, is living in Paris. A brief note from a book found in an antiquary shop triggers off the narrative, a loosely connected series of episodes reconstructed from memory, old documents, history books, letters, and past conversations with the narrator's grandmother and his uncle, the vicar of Andratch. Vivid flashbacks of the narrator's own experiences add a personal and existential touch to the chronicle's flow.

The story starts by explaining the social and economic rise of the Vadell family towards the end of the seventeenth century, achieved through murder, treason, and trickery. It is suggested that the convict and founder of the lineage, Jaume Vadell, killed Escolastic de Capovara, his former master in the galley, while both were captive slaves in North Africa. On his return to Andratch, Jaume Vadell, pretending to be Escolastic, succeeded in robbing the Capovara family of all their wealth by killing Capovara's sons and naming his own as heirs of the estate. Even the Capovara's banner, three galloping horses, became the Vadell's coat of arms, and the sign of their destiny as suggested by the title of the novel.