

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.

The moral portrait of the many other characters is not much better. With crude and cruel realism the narrator builds up a true gallery of villains, whose traits and actions often remind the reader of Camilo José Cela's *tremendismo*, a narrative mode that Porcel has successfully cultivated in previous writings.

Masterfully manipulating a technique of constant digressions, the reader is introduced to many of the narrator's ancestors and to some of the contemporary members of his family. As the action moves back and forth over a span of two hundred years, little attention is paid to chronology and no attempt is made to establish any clear sequence of events that could suggest a relationship of cause and effect amongst them. Only the vague links that allow the passage from one character's story to another provide the minimum cohesion needed to keep the flow of the narrative. Otherwise, chaos and senselessness in the historical process are the premises leading to the *carpe diem* conclusion suggested in the final paragraphs of the novel.

The horses motif is fully developed in one of the most telling passages of the narrative: the climatic moment of Daniel's revenge taken upon his own brother, the narrator's grandfather. In this core episode the horses become innocent and symbolic victims of a truly diabolical scheme.

At this point a significant comparison between the narrator's own father and his uncle Daniel provides a clue towards an understanding of the novel's structure. The narrator's search for his roots through two hundred years of the family's past is thus underscored by what will become intermittent references to a parallel search for his own father, who disappeared during the Spanish Civil War. The implicit twofold search provides the tenuous link between past and present that gives coherence to the whole plot.

In an indirect but efficient way, the ever present and powerful landscape of Andratch, which is progressively transformed into a mythical space where history acquires a cautionary and exemplary meaning, contributes to that unity. The final paragraphs of the novel, back to the present and to the Parisian world, mark not only a voluntary ending of the search but also the will to embrace life for life's sake as the true and only valid root of the narrator's own identity: "Hunger, the imperative demands from the world of survival, are what push me down the road of life—yes, my life—and it draws me away from this neurotic, secular annihilation surrounding me. . ." (168).

The pendular move back and forth between a dead historical past and a fleeting present often leads the author to philosophize about the nature of time and the role of memory. Masterfully incorporated into the narrative's flow, his meditations betray an existential anguish and an almost resigned acceptance of a very limited but deeply felt biological horizon. In an open discussion on his work at the 8th Colloquium of the North American Catalan Society (Indiana

University, Bloomington, 2 October 1995), Porcel himself defined it, asserting that his main interest and what he was trying to present in his books was "the essence of the subsistence."

A new and suggestive dimension is given to this novel by the deliberately fragmented structure of the narrative, which makes it a true fable in the Brechtian sense of the term; as in the works of the German dramatist, Porcel's apparently chaotic series of autonomous and frequently disconnected episodes leave it for the reader to establish the temporal and causal relationships that may provide a narrative logic. Porcel had been actively engaged in writing for the theater during the years preceding the publication of *Horses into the night*, and there is no doubt that, in the historical context that he himself was writing, he paid close attention to Brecht's work and its meaning. Porcel takes advantage of that particular dramatic technique and successfully applies it to the structure of a novel; his own aims and objectives do not necessarily coincide with those of the German writer, but the echo cannot be ignored.

A final word should be said about the translation. Porcel's language is of unsurpassed richness from a lexical point of view. His use of adjectives, the rhythm of his prose, the deliberate ellipsis, and his calculated contrasts amongst complementary or subordinate sentences are only some of the difficulties which face the translator. Porcel's style is, as a rule, rich in imagery and metaphor, profoundly sensual, and often of strong lyrical undertones, but it can also be extremely stark and concise; to reflect these changes of rhythm and mood without losing a proper sense of balance is not an easy task. John L. Getman has succeeded admirably; his work as a translator is not only extremely professional and accurate, but also a work of love and profound sensibility, showing a true understanding of Catalan in general, and of Porcel's writings in particular. That understanding is also well reflected in his short but illuminating introduction to the text. Catalan literature is not as well known outside Catalonia as it deserves, and there are very few translations to introduce it to the English speaking world. *Horses into the night* should whet the appetite of all discerning readers. It is to be hoped that its publication will not be an isolated instance and that many other translations from Catalan will follow.

María-Elena Angulo

Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse

New York: Garland Publ., 1995. Pp. 124. \$27.00

Reviewed by George R. McMurray

In her Introduction, María-Elena Angulo states that her purpose in writing the present volume is to discuss magical realism in five Spanish-American novels; in addition, she will demonstrate how this type of narrative discourse