

the novel has already pilloried. Campbell is trapped all the more easily because she trusts Byatt far too much, confident that this writer is every woman's friend. A soupçon of suspicion might have alerted Campbell to Byatt's deep contempt for academic discourse shaped by generations of masculinism. When Byatt submitted a letter, with poems, to the respected journal *Victorian Poetry* under the pseudonym Maud Michell-Bailey (a character from *Possession!*), she left no doubt about her assessment of the world of scholarship that she had left behind in order to become a hugely popular writer. Byatt's ability to manipulate the literary market compares well with that of Umberto Eco. A revealing moment not discussed by Campbell is that *Possession* was carefully repackaged and rewritten for American readers. Despite Campbell's confidence that Byatt's "paramount interest remains the telling itself, the production of narratives about women that interrogate and revise old stories and create new ones" (191), it is more than likely that the desire to earn money through writing takes precedence.

Anne Tyler
The Amateur Marriage
Toronto: Viking Canada, 2004. Pp. 306. \$36.00

Joanna Trollope
Second Honeymoon
Toronto: McArthur, 2006. Pp. 323. \$24.95
Reviewed by Nora Foster Stovel

Jane Austen took her characters up to the altar, but no further, in what were essentially novels of courtship. Recent women novelists, however, explore what lies beyond the altar. American writer Anne Tyler, in her novel *The Amateur Marriage*, and British author Joanna Trollope, in her latest novel *Second Honeymoon*, explore life after marriage. Both novelists are adept at recreating the texture of their individual societies, as well as creating individual characters and relationships.

Tyler's narrative spans over half a century in *The Amateur Marriage*—six decades, to be precise—from the 1941 Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor to the attack on the World Trade Center sixty years later. The surge of wartime enthusiasm sweeps two young people—Michael Anton, from the Polish district of East Baltimore, and Pauline, from a waspish neighborhood only a few blocks away—into an "amateur marriage." Years later, Michael reflects: "He believed that all of them, all those young marrieds of the war years, had started out in equal ignorance. He pictured them marching down a city street, as people had on the day he enlisted. Then two by two they fell away, having grown wise and seasoned and comfortable in their roles, until only he and Pauline remained, as inexperienced as ever—the last couple left in the amateurs' parade" (168). In her deeply wise but amusingly flakey manner, Tyler explores "the break at the heart

of the family" (291). That the author lost her own husband a few years ago may intensify the pathos of this whimsical, but poignant, narrative.

In the course of narrating this eventful marriage, Tyler takes us through six decades of American life and culture, from the wartime furor through the sixties counterculture to the new millennium. As usual, she sets her novel in Baltimore—from the ethnic downtown to the prosperous suburbs—although the narrative ranges from the east to the west coast and back again.

Tyler divides her narrative into ten chapters, all with intriguing titles, such as "The Dandelion Clock," "Killing the Frog Slowly," or "The Man Who Was a Dessert." Only near the end of each chapter is the application of the title clarified. "Killing the Frog Slowly" "means doing something so gradually that nobody happens to notice" (177–78). Chapters conclude with tableaux so vivid the reader has to stop reading to absorb them. Still, the narrative keeps the pages turning. *The Amateur Marriage*—subtitled "A Novel," lest prospective readers suspect it is a self-help book for newlyweds—Tyler's sixteenth novel, is surely one of her best.

Second Honeymoon, Joanna Trollope's thirteenth novel, covers a mere season, but a season that reflects the marriage that precedes it. The novel, as the title suggests, is set well into a marriage—thirty years after the wedding, in fact. It is essentially an "empty nest" narrative. Edie's youngest child, Ben, the baby of the family and apple of his mother's eye, has just moved out to live with his girlfriend in her mother's flat. Ben's father, director of a small actors' agency, is secretly delighted that all the chicks have flown the nest, because he is looking forward to rekindling his romance with his wife—to a second honeymoon. But his wife is too preoccupied with mourning the loss of her youngest son. So determined is Russell to have his wife all to himself again that he refuses his daughter Rosa's request to move back home temporarily when she is suddenly jobless.

Edie plays more roles than that of housewife, however. She is a reasonably distinguished actor who has been reduced in recent years to the odd commercial. Now grown into the maternal role, she lands the part of Mrs. Alving in Ibsen's haunting play *Ghosts*. The parallels between reality and fiction, or between the actors and their roles, lend the narrative a metafictional dimension that marks a departure for Trollope. As the mother of the doomed boy, Edie comes into her own, garnering admiring reviews from critics and family alike. It is only natural, then, that she should invite the hapless actor who plays her son to live in her daughter's room. Eventually, all the Boyd children move back home, reducing Ben to sleeping on the sofa. The chicks have all come home to roost, so the house is fuller than ever, and the Boyds are farther than ever from a second honeymoon. The only thing to do is to move on: the maternal role "was also the past and there was, suddenly, excitingly, frightening, no time like the present.

Not, that is, if you wanted a future" (323). Martin Anton, too, in Tyler's *Amateur Marriage*, "began to walk faster, hurrying around the bend" (306).

These two veteran novelists, American and British, are adept at capturing family life in their two disparate locales, and both write with a consummate skill that makes them each a delightful read.

Margaret Drabble

The Red Queen

Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2005. Pp. 334. \$32.99 \$20.00

Reviewed by Nora Foster Stovel

The Red Queen, the sixteenth novel by Margaret Drabble, marks a postmodernist departure for this popular writer. Clues are in the subtitle, "A Transcultural Tragicomedy," in the epigraph from *The Russian Ark* by Alexander Sokorov—"The dead weep with joy when their books are reprinted"—and in the prologue, which begins, "This book was inspired by a volume of court memoirs written in Korea more than two centuries ago" (ix). Drabble's claim is reinforced by the bibliography, note on sources and acknowledgments that conclude the text. Like *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997) by Arthur Golden, *The Red Queen* is based on an ancient Asian account, but, unlike the fictional basis of Golden's narrative, Drabble's source is factual and exists in four translations. This does not make Drabble's novel any less postmodernist, however.

The Red Queen is divided into "Ancient Times" and "Modern Times," with the latter section ending in "Postmodern Times"—appropriate for a postmodernist, metafictional novel. "Ancient Times" is the memoir of Lady Hong, Crown Princess of Korea two centuries ago, recounted in her voice to an unidentified envoy, or ghostwriter. She was married at age ten to Prince Sado, the Crown Prince, known as "the Coffin Prince"—a schizophrenic psychotic who was persuaded by his father, King Yongjo, to climb into a rice chest, where he took eight days to die.

"Modern Times" is more typical of Drabble. Set in the present, it focuses on Barbara Halliwell, an academic who reads the memoir 35,000 feet above the air en route from Heathrow to Korea, where she is to attend a conference on globalization and medicine to be held at the Pagoda Hotel in Seoul—just as Drabble attended a conference on multicultural literature in Seoul in 2000—starring the international celebrity Jan Van Jost. Barbara, or Babs as she is known to friends—just as Margaret Drabble is known as "Maggie"—is at work on a book on triage for the National Health Service. But her attention is caught by Lady Hong's memoir. The parallels are striking: like the Crown Princess, Babs lost her firstborn child, Benedict, and her husband, Peter, went mad. She is