

## Book Reviews

Joanne Creighton, *Margaret Drabble*. London: Methuen, 1985. pp. 129. \$5.50 pb.

Margaret Drabble has published nine novels to date, and already an equal number of books has been published about them. Seven monographs include Valerie Grosvenor Myer, *Margaret Drabble: Puritanism and Permissiveness* (London: Vision, 1974); Ellen Cronan Rose, *The Novels of Margaret Drabble: Equivocal Figures* (London: Macmillan, 1980); Mary Hurley Moran, *Margaret Drabble: Existing Within Structures* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983); Joanne Creighton, *Margaret Drabble* (London: Methuen, 1985); Lynn Veach Sadler, *Margaret Drabble* (Boston: Twayne, 1986); and John Hannay, *The Intertextuality of Fate: A Study of Margaret Drabble* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1986). Collections of critical essays include Dorey Schmidt, ed., *Margaret Drabble: Golden Realms* (Edinburg, Texas: Pan American University Press, 1982) and Ellen Cronan Rose, ed., *Critical Essays on Margaret Drabble* (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall, 1985).

Joanne Creighton's *Margaret Drabble* is one of the most valuable of these studies. Written for the Contemporary Writers series, it demonstrates both the strengths and the weaknesses endemic to most such critical series. Certainly Creighton's book is an excellent introduction to a study of Drabble's fiction, but, by tailoring her manuscript to the specifications of the series, Creighton has partly effaced her own personality and opinions, rendering her study less innovative and provocative. The standard Contemporary Writers format is responsible for some of the most useful aspects of this book: the substantial introductory chapter (13-36) in particular provides much helpful information which is divided into three (untitled) sections on Drabble's reputation, biography, and literary context. The bulk of the book is devoted to brief but condensed discussions of the novels, which are grouped together into three chapters in roughly chronological order, though discussed individ-

ally. Creighton also includes a useful Bibliography and interesting Notes, but an introductory chronology and a concluding chapter, like those in its Twayne counterpart, would enhance the usefulness of this study.

An accomplished critic and scholar, Creighton provides perceptive readings of the novels and interesting perspectives on the novelist. She makes particularly apt use of numerous unpublished interviews with Drabble, as well as her own unpublished conversation with the author. But she rarely refers to Drabble's considerable critical writing or acknowledges adequately the extensive existing criticism of Drabble's fiction. Her study is couched in a readable, if rather impersonal style — clear and condensed, objective and businesslike. The book is remarkably free of typographical and other errors, apart from the rare mistake in the Notes and the odd howler in the text — such as repeatedly calling the womanizing theatre director of *The Garrick Year* "Farrah" instead of "Farrar" (47 ff), thus conjuring up the wrong connotations altogether.

Creighton's informing argument is that Drabble's "mediating and often equivocal position between the traditional and the modern" (8) generates the major interest of her novels for reader and critic alike:

The resonances of her work, I will argue here, grow out of her strong sense of the powers and resources of existing literary traditions, coupled with her intelligent portrayal of the familiar problems of people in modern society, and her awareness of the moral and formal changes this forces on the contemporary novelist. She mediates between determining contexts, be they "male" or "female" concerns and traditions, literary or popular issues and perspectives, individual or societal needs and obligations, traditional or modern ways of perceiving and writing. Her Forsteresque attempt to "only connect" diverse strains in English life and literature, along with her willingness to accept accommodation, irresolution, and openness to contingency, account for the distinctively "Drabblesque" tone of her fiction, so compelling to some readers, so exasperating to others, a tone which is, above all else, contemporary and serious. (9)

Finding Drabble's distinctive "personal narrative voice," especially her "double-voiced feminism," the most compelling aspect of her fiction, Creighton applies this theory of tension primarily to Drabble's narrative technique, with the intention of demonstrating its development. In fact, the organization of Creighton's book is dictated by narrative method as well as chronology.

Chapter 2, aptly titled "Bird-cages" (37-64), discusses the "equivocal breaking out of the constricting bird-cage of female identity" (39) of Drabble's early solipsistic heroines by examining their first-person confessional narratives in four of her first five novels: *A Summer Bird-Cage* (1963), *The Garrick Year* (1964), *The Millstone* (1965), and *The Waterfall* (1969).

Chapter 3, appropriately called "Golden Realms" (65-90), groups together *Jerusalem the Golden* (1967), *The Needle's Eye* (1972), and *The Realms of Gold* (1975), "the third-person novels of Drabble's middle period," showing how these central novels "explore a more graphic exodus from the constricting world of childhood: its geography, class-bound values, moral outlook" (65). Conflict is against the dominant principle, as "The generating tension of these middle novels resides in the apparent freedom of the individual to create a new self coupled with his or her necessary circumscription within geographical, communal, and historical contexts" (67). The major tension is viewed again in terms of narrative method: "while these novels do, in fact, link up to that tradition, they still continue to be in many ways double-voiced and equivocal, mediating between traditional humanistic realism and modern perspectives" (66).

The fourth and final chapter, entitled "Urban Ground" (91-112), is perhaps the least interesting of the three chapters on the novels, because *The Ice Age* (1977) and *The Middle Ground* (1980) — Drabble's latest two novels and the subject of this chapter — do not really fulfil Creighton's thesis by developing Drabble's narrative skill. While they continue the narrative techniques introduced in the middle phase of Drabble's fiction, they apply them to a broader urban focus. But "Broader is not necessarily better" (111), in Creighton's words, and she concludes this section with a negative criticism of the "shapeless diversity" of Drabble's latest novel, declaring that "Social scope does not always compensate for the loss of psychological depth, or the loss of unique particularity" (111).

Here, at last, in the final few pages of the study, we have some controversial judgements. Creighton finally sheds her caution, concluding categorically: "The view that [Drabble] is a fictional and ideological traditionalist clinging to pre-modernist values and ways of perceiving and writing is quite wrong" (109). Ultimately, she extends her negative criticism of *The Middle Ground* to Drabble's later novels in general, judging that Drabble's narrative voice cannot extend to her new communal focus:

I especially regret the smugness and complacency of Drabble's successful women like Francis Wingate and Kate Armstrong: the feminist discourse is no longer double-voiced and searching. Perhaps Drabble has personally worked through feminist issues so satisfactorily that they no longer generated the tensions which have enriched her fiction. Although she does not believe that fiction must necessarily grow out of personal conflict, the most successful kind so often does. She is now voicing communal concerns, communal conflict. It is a voice she hasn't yet quite found, however interesting her attempts have been. I think it a difficult voice to find because her work is in many ways less resonant when it is more explicit, when

metaphors are on the surface rather than embedded, when conclusions are drawn, characters 'pegged,' judgments made. (111)

In short, while Creighton's thesis is that Drabble's narrative method develops, she finds the later novels less satisfying than the earlier, especially in terms of narrative voice. A contradiction?

These last few pages of evaluation and prediction (which should have been presented as a concluding chapter, rather than simply tacked on to the chapter on the latest two novels), suggest the kind of study that Creighton, free of the gridiron of a series format as well as the restrictions of her personal acquaintance with the novelist, might have written. This book is an excellent introduction to Drabble's fiction, but this reader would rather see Creighton take Drabble's measure without tailoring her manuscript to the Contemporary Writers pattern.

*University of Alberta*

NORA FOSTER STOVEL

Susan Stone-Blackburn, *Robertson Davies, Playwright: A Search for the Self on the Canadian Stage*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1985. pp. 249. \$27.95.

That Robertson Davies began his literary life as a dramatist and continued to write plays for nearly forty years is a fact often dismissed in the greater contemporary interest in his achievements as a novelist. Susan Stone-Blackburn's new study, *Robertson Davies, Playwright: A Search for the Self on the Canadian Stage*, is the most comprehensive and thorough analysis of his plays and life in the theatre up to the present time. Her approach offers a new evaluation and advocacy through close textual readings that show how the plays combine Davies's personal concerns as a writer, the conditions of the theatre in Canada for which he has written, and his traditionally based ideas of drama itself.

In these days of increasing academic interest in Canadian drama and theatre history, the first part of the book is a timely reminder that for more than a decade of the post-war era Davies was generally viewed as the most important modern playwright in the country. These were the energetic years of the Dominion Drama Festival, revitalized after the hiatus of the war, when certain enterprising Little Theatres, particularly the Ottawa Little Theatre, sought to encourage new Canadian writing for the amateur stage by annual competitions and the Festival itself offered special awards for the performance of new work. Two prize-winning plays by Davies soon became standard Canadian fare, the one-acts *Overlaid* and *Eros at Breakfast*, thus encouraging the playwright to venture

into the more ambitious *Fortune My Foe* and *At My Heart's Core*. By the early 1950's professional theatre was establishing itself, not only at Stratford but also in Toronto, notably at the Crest where two other Davies plays, *A Jig for a Gypsy* and *Hunting Stuart* were premiered in 1954 and 1955 respectively. Davies, who had initially tried unsuccessfully to write for the English stage, gained his Canadian reputation primarily through his satiric comedies about the very conditions of cultural deprivation and provinciality that, in Stone-Blackburn's words, "caused him initially to look away from the Canadian stage"; these were subjects he was also beginning to explore in his Salterton novels.

A recurring point of interest throughout the study is its specific indication of how Davies's plays anticipate, often by years, the subjects of his fiction. *Hunting Stuart* is the first overt indication of his interest in Jung; here by means of comic fantasy he introduces the theme of the buried life and the individual's need for self-knowledge in his maturing years, a variation on the later subject of *Fifth Business*. *General Confession*, a more complex Jungian play written in 1956, dramatizes the psychic growth of the aging Casanova, of lady-killer fame, in which Davies introduces archetypal representations of persona, anima, shadow, and wise old man through dream charades depicting various phases in the hero's life. In Stone-Blackburn's view this is Davies's "dramatic masterpiece" and may also be "the neglected masterpiece of Canadian theatre."

The failure of this work to find a stage, she suggests, even after its publication in 1972, was the turning point of Davies's career as a playwright and "a significant factor in his conclusion that his taste is out of step with the current taste in Canadian theatre." Another such factor may have been the trauma of the Broadway failure of Tyrone Guthrie's production of Davies's own adaptation of his novel *Leaven of Malice* as *Love and Libel* in 1960; although revived in later years in Canada, notably at the Shaw Festival in 1975, its reception was mixed. Davies's last major effort for the Canadian stage was *Question Time*, commissioned by Leon Major for the St. Lawrence Centre, also in 1975. Another Jungian play, in which he explores the loss of personal selfhood in the political arena (its prime minister hero was mistakenly taken by the audience for Pierre Trudeau), this work, like *General Confession*, seems to appeal more to literary critics than theatre directors; it failed to find a second production, perhaps a confirmation that Davies the dramatist stands apart from the contemporary movements of Canadian drama.

Stone-Blackburn is the first contemporary critic to insist on taking Robertson Davies wholly seriously as a dramatist in his own right, not as a dramatic purveyor of ideas (cf. Patricia Morley's brief

monograph of 1977) nor as a novelist manqué. Thus she scrupulously fulfills her main intention, to trace how "the tastes and concerns of one of Canada's leading writers have been given dramatic expression." Her procedure is to study the plays chronologically as dramatic literary texts, governing her analysis by close consideration of dramatic and thematic structures. She also incorporates performance information and some reviewer response in order to give the reader a sense of the state of the theatre and its audiences concurrent to the performance of the plays. Further, she has had a continuing correspondence with the playwright himself since 1976, useful for confirming or expanding on particulars.

What emerges is the depiction of a playwright whose basic dramatic principle is anti-realistic, one for whom theatre is "more dreams than waking reality; not verisimilitude but psychological truth" its proper goal. Although Davies's inherent theatrical taste is for spectacle, romance, myth, and ritual, he early turned to satiric comedy and discussion drama, for example *Overlaid* and *Fortune My Foe*, in order to argue purposefully for Canadian society to become more receptive towards the arts. Behind his attack on restrictive puritanism and cultural philistinism was an ideal of "wholeness" and "balance" for which he also found an early dramatic outlet in the entirely mythical setting of *King Phoenix*, his version of "old King Cole." Here he gave rein to his inclination towards magic and romance in a dramatization of the conflicts between "passion and intellect." Stone-Blackburn's study reveals this dual theatrical direction in much of Davies's subsequent drama, reconciled most effectively perhaps in the explicitly Jungian plays where the dominant theme shifts to the quest for self-knowledge as the essential key to wholeness and the archetypes provide the rationale for fantasy and myth. In the process towards this kind of reconciliation, Stone-Blackburn's analysis of the 1950 historical play, *At My Heart's Core*, seems particularly appropriate: here she demonstrates how the theme of intellectual and cultural deprivations (the central characters are Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, and Frances Stewart, three pioneer women of note) combines in a subtextual fairy-tale paradigm that "succeeds in capturing both a sense of historical reality and mythical grandeur."

There is an indication in the introductory chapter that Stone-Blackburn believes Davies the dramatist has been unjustly neglected in favour of the later novelist. She also finds it ironic that while "Canadian playwrights have won their battle for a place in professional theatre, Davies's plays are rarely among the many Canadian plays receiving professional productions." That she is implicitly and often explicitly trying to rehabilitate the dramatist throughout the book is clear. This bias, along with her developmental critical

approach through which a play, in effect, is judged by its own intentions and its relation to other plays within the writer's own canon, results in a problematic lack of critical detachment. In addition, the negative criticism of others emerges here more as a failure in *their* understanding than in weaknesses of the playwright. There is one exception to the partisan method of relative rather than objective evaluation in the chapter dealing with Davies's adaptation of *Leaven of Malice*; here she clearly shows through her comparative analysis of both texts where the dramatic failure lies. However, this does not lead her to consider the possibility that Davies's better artistic *métier* is actually the novel or even to entertain this as a legitimate critical question as raised by others in connection with Davies's drama.

Whether one agrees with her advocacy of Davies the forgotten dramatist or not, Stone-Blackburn is correct in her assertion that his playwriting career is part of the larger story of the development of the modern Canadian drama. This is undoubtedly a story that needs to be told, although this is not in itself the justification of her own work; there is no substantial reference to Davies's contemporaries on either the amateur or the professional stage beyond his own participation in it. Thus her further assertion that "Canadian drama and Robertson Davies, playwright, came of age together" is unsubstantiated and, in my view, misleading. In the heyday of the D.D.F., Davies gave voice to the very issues that were impeding the development of an indigenous professional drama and theatre in Canada. While historically these years as well as those immediately following are important, they prefigure rather than fulfil the real coming of age of Canadian drama that began with the alternate theatre movement nearly a decade after Davies's output for the stage had begun to dwindle. By the early 1970's a new generation of playwrights were beginning to touch the issues and people of their own day as Davies had done in the past.

Stone-Blackburn is on surer ground when she confines herself to her often stimulating textual analysis. While she is not prepared to confront the more difficult questions of the relationship of the dramatist to the novelist by which it might be possible to come to better terms with Davies's shaky status as the writer of neglected masterpieces for the stage, she has given coherent attention to a significant body of work by a literary man of stature.

*University of Alberta*

DIANE BESSAI

Katherine Dalsimer, *Female Adolescence: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Works of Literature*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986. pp. 149. \$16.95.

*Female Adolescence* is a rewarding book that succeeds in its principal purpose, to disseminate information about women's experience and problems during adolescence. In the belief that adolescence is particularly important because it is a stage during which the individual is able to reformulate the past and find new solutions for old problems before making the irrevocable decisions that will shape her adulthood, Dalsimer turns to literature to deepen the understanding of this phase of women's experience. She hopes, as well, to stir in the therapeutic community toward whom the book is directed an appreciation of the ways in which literature renders common patterns of human experience. Literature, she claims, adds depth to one's theoretical understanding of psychological processes, while theories enrich the reading of texts by highlighting specific narrative developments.

Dalsimer discerns three distinct phases within the adolescent years. The first, early adolescence, begins with the onset of puberty. In this phase the adolescent undergoes the painful process of separating herself from the family matrix, which involves both a deep sense of loss and a diminishment of the self-esteem that derived from identification with idealized parents. The critical eye that young adolescents turn on their parents as part of their strategy of withdrawal throws them into paroxysms of self-doubt that alternate with wildly grandiose views of their own abilities. Confused by the physical changes they perceive but unready to enter the sexual arena, they form intimate relationships with members of their own sex, by which they both detach themselves from their parents and gain compensation for their loss. The next stage, middle adolescence, intensifies some of these patterns but also involves an acceptance of the physical changes that both awakens their interest in the opposite sex and loosens their ties to friends of the same sex. Late adolescence brings awareness of the choices that will determine adult worlds and selves. In this stage men and women are treated and think about themselves differently, with more attention focused on the young man's experience in deciding his career while traditional expectations still minimize this aspect of women's experience.

The literature that Dalsimer uses to illustrate the emotional dynamics involved in the different stages of adolescence are Carson McCuller's *Member of the Wedding*, Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Persuasion*, which are arranged in the chronology of the adolescent stages they treat. Her book is strongest in its readings of these works. Her strategy of assuming that the defining circumstances of



the world in which the adolescent finds herself are expressive of her inner state leads her to observe the detail and structure in ways that do honour to the works' artistry as well as to the complex human dramas that they render. (The technique in itself raises some interesting issues to which I will return later.)

There are, however, some problems in the relation of the readings to the theory that they are designed to illustrate, problems that stem from the lack of historical relativity. Dalsimer claims that her interpretations of literary works account for their historical particularity, and to some measure they do. Her discussion of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, for example, traces the vital way in which Anne integrated the historical nightmare through which she lived into her personal adolescent drama. However, she treats the ideal of maturity non-historically. Defining maturity as the achievement of a self-authorizing individuality which gives the person autonomy over the shape of his or her life, she speaks of Juliet finding her own authority at a time when her Romeo would not come into his until the death of his father, and then would expect to live as he did. This lack of a historically relative definition of adulthood forecloses questions about the effect of different social expectations on the dynamics that are her subject. This objection may not be important, since she focuses on the modern adolescent: aside from *Romeo and Juliet*, only *Persuasion* — of all Austen's novels the one that most looks forward to a modern ideal of womanhood — predates the modern world.

But Dalsimer's lack of a historical perspective leads to deeper problems. Both her theory and her interpretations assume that the road from puberty to maturity can be travelled only by accepting one's gender identity through heterosexual relationships. While clearly one's gender identity is important, it is not necessarily the only or the most important aspect of person's struggle toward maturity. Furthermore, if women looked forward to an adulthood that was not defined differently from that of males, gender identity as such would be less rather than more significantly determining of personhood. By emphasizing the biological rather than sociological determinants of maturation, Dalsimer reinforces an unnecessarily limiting conception of female identity. She sees in the literature she studies warnings of the dangers of girls remaining fixed in the first phase of adolescence, thereby turning intimacy with other girls into a permanent lesbian choice. Though she mentions Anne Frank's expanding intellectual interests, she emphasizes the correlation between Anne's achievement of a more mature and impartial view of her parents, hating her mother and loving her father less, with her love for Peter Van Daan. Discussing *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, she correlates Sandra's betrayal of Miss Brodie and her

choice of a nun's life with her failure to resolve her ambivalence toward her mother and thereby to achieve heterosexuality. Of Romeo and Juliet, Dalsimer observes that their language becomes individuated as they mature through love, and Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*, for the seven years between her rejection of her lover and his return, remains in a kind of limbo. Her readings do no violence to the books she has chosen, but that choice seems influenced by a stereotypical assumption that romance must be central to a girl's development.

Though Dalsimer clearly wants to liberate women from stereotypes, in generalizing a norm from the particularities of the literature she confirms rather than loosens their grip. The sensitive and generous spirit that informs the book makes it unlikely that Dalsimer judges all of the following as in an arrested state of adolescence: nuns, lesbians, or women too shy or withdrawn or frightened to fall in love with men; women who establish their sense of separate identity in dedication to the violin or literature or physics; women who for one reason or another fare badly on the sexual marketplace. However, her theory and her readings open no space for a different conclusion. Dalsimer ought to have made clear that even if the most travelled road to a self-authorizing maturity is through heterosexual experience, what matters is that one achieves it rather than how one does. It is an important failure of this book, one that could give considerable pain to a troubled adolescent or her parents who happened upon it.

There is another and related theoretical problem, though one less important for the effect of the book on its readers. Dalsimer describes with poignancy the extreme loneliness and confusion of adolescence. However, both her book and the works she studies are directed toward adult readers not only because we remember our adolescent turmoils but also because readers of many ages recognize in the same fictions aspects of their own experience. Characters in stories must be of some age, but it doesn't follow that readers of other ages do not find their experiences mirrored. Though one hopes that the increased awareness won through the passing years moderates adolescent excess, losing loved ones, falling in love or failing to, loving unrequitedly, and experiencing anxiety about one's sexual normality, identity, and self-worth seem to be part of life. Geriatricians will find much in *King Lear* that confirms theories of aging, but a diminished reading follows from understanding it as a drama of old age. Fearing loss of selfhood in love and isolation without it is a common literary theme; many of Dalsimer's observations about *Romeo and Juliet* apply as well to *Antony and Cleopatra*. Though Dalsimer does not explicitly limit the ways in which

the works she discusses may be generalized, her approach subtly perpetuates a stereotypical view of adulthood.

The lack of an historical perspective is also involved in the vagueness with which she handles the issue of gender difference, her announced focus. The specific differences she illustrates appear in her discussion of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, in which she attributes the girls' tittering curiosity about Miss Brodie's love life to the mystery that for adolescent girls surrounds sexual urges and their uncertainty as to what counts as one. She also emphasizes the images of inward joy in which Anne Frank describes her feelings about her budding sexuality. But in general the issue of specific gender differences gets lost in her successful efforts to counter the long-standing psychoanalytic tendency to ignore the kind of pleasure in their sexuality expressed in different ways by both Anne Frank and Juliet. Dalsimer also helps to right the balance that Freudian theory weighted so heavily in favour of paternal influence by emphasizing the importance to the process of maturation of a girl's relation to her mother. But she does not make clear whether her claim is that maternal ties, both actual and internalized, are important only for women and not for men, or whether it is important in a different way. The same confusion appears in her concluding comment that as more alternatives for self-definition open for women, the psychological ramifications of these social changes should spawn new studies of the distinctively feminine adolescent experience. While such changes might highlight the uniqueness of women's experience, it is equally possible that they would minimize the differences between the ways young men and women experience their adolescence.

Finally, I want to return to the problem in literary theory that follows from reading external circumstances as metaphorical expressions of the protagonist's emotional state. As I said, the richness of her readings flows from this device, but she uses it in a random way that raises questions about both literary criticism and her interpretations of the emotional dynamics rendered. To assume that the hermaphrodite Frankie encounters at the carnival is an externalized image of her own sexual ambivalence, or that Capulet's rage expresses Juliet's alienation, is to read events in literature as like those in our dreams. However, if some events in our dreams express the emotional challenge being confronted by the dream's protagonist, then all events do. And if some events in literature can or should be read as expressive of the work's protagonist, then one needs a rationale to explain why others should not be so read.<sup>2</sup>

This principle leads to different emphases from those in Dalsimer's readings. If an adolescent's problems are deepened by her mother's death, then a dead mother in a work of literature expresses

the protagonist's denial of difficult and conflict-ridden emotions. Frankie, whose mother died in childbirth, would then be like a dreamer who demeaned and deauthorized her mother by replacing her with a loving but black and one-eyed servant. Therefore, though she moves out of the maternal domain at the end, her image of mothering remains unresolved. The same observation would bear on *Persuasion*, in which her mother's death in Anne's early teens leaves Anne to work out her problems through surrogates. These readings are not at odds with Dalsimer's, but they suggest deeper and more enduring conflicts. However, if in *Romeo and Juliet* the great age of the adults and the family feud express Juliet's adolescent alienation, then the plague and missed timing that cause the lovers' deaths also express an inner state so conflicted as to render heterosexuality equivalent with death.

These difficulties do not cancel the merits of *Female Adolescence*, particularly the force of some of Dalsimer's excellent readings — of the significance of the diary itself for Anne Frank, of the nurse's ambivalent role in Juliet's life, and of Anne Elliot's argument about the effects of women's limited circumstances upon their emotional lives, for example. The literary commentary is so good and the organizing idea is so potentially rich that one wishes that they had coalesced more successfully.

University of British Columbia

KAY STOCKHOLDER

#### NOTES

- 1 See George Bak, "Being in Love and Object Loss," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 54 (1973): 1-7.
- 2 See my article, "Worlds in Dream and Drama: A Psychoanalytic Theory of Literary Interpretation," *Dalhousie Review* (Autumn 1982), 356-74, on the use of dream theory which assumes the protagonist to be dreamer of the work in which he or she appears.

Devon L. Hodges, *Renaissance Fictions of Anatomy*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1985. pp. 153. \$17.50.

Devon Hodges sees in the genre of the "anatomy," exceedingly popular in the sixteenth century, a reflection of the hermeneutical crisis of culture occurring at the point when the analogical discourse of the Middle Ages was giving way to the empiricist scrutiny of nature. Her study, which locates itself retroactively alongside Timothy Reiss's *The Discourse of Modernism*, attempts to do the same kind of thing for literary anatomies that Reiss does for literary utopias. Hodges argues that the projects of the "anatomists" she examines — from Vesalius and Bacon to Nashe and Shakespeare —

were essentially paradoxical and self-defeating, for in laying bare the inner structure of the body they dissected, they also destroyed it. As medical dissection brought about the decay of the human body and the displacement of man as microcosmic centre, so Lyly, with his antithetical rhetoric of dissection, freezes narrative progression, precludes the discovery of final truth, and limits himself to playing with painted surfaces; so Nashe, dissecting the "bodies" of other texts, creates a style both murderous and ultimately suicidal; so Bacon and Burton, attempting to invent a discourse capable of investigating the natural world, construct instead languages which unravel it. What all of them discover about language is what contemporary theorists are discovering, that it is not referential, but self-referential; that its surfaces are its depths; and that there is no "inner truth" which the scalpel of language will not destroy as it lays it bare. Attempting to document the "particular powers and kinds of anguish associated with a crisis in discourse" (1), Hodges produces in effect a series of close readings of five discrete authors, unified by the underlying idea of dissection.

Her most substantial chapters discuss *As You Like It* and *King Lear*. Hodges argues that both these plays posit love as the reality "located beyond all order," which "can only express itself by saying what it is not" (53), and that both plays, aware of the destructive and fragmenting nature of verbal dissection, question and undercut the order which they appear finally to achieve. Hodges presents the Forest of Arden as a place whose inhabitants conduct an anatomy to bring what is hidden to the surface; she sees Touchstone and Jaques as anatomists whose words lay bare "the essential fictionality of the world" (64) and the corruptibility of the human body; she discusses Rosalind as an anatomist whose wordplay, which would defer indefinitely the closure towards which comedy moves, necessitates the intervention of the god Hymen; and she defends Jaques's final refusal of festivity on the grounds that "the whole play has emphasized the affirmative power of negating forms and going into exile" (66). Her reading of *Lear* is equally bleak. Proceeding from the assumption that, in an allegory, evil characters embody bad aspects of the virtuous ones, Hodges demonstrates that all the characters in the play exhibit the impulse to anatomize which motivates Lear's initial acts. Indeed, Lear, when he "anatomizes" Regan, is seen as participating in the empiricist discourse which Shakespeare usually reserves for the villains in the play, and as furthering, rather than circumscribing, the process of decay.

Hodges's examination of the anatomy as a specific genre produces some interesting insights. The opening chapter, with its shrewd commentary on Vesalius's magnificent illustrations, is particularly suggestive, and the analyses of the two Shakespearean plays are

thoughtful and percipient. But the volume as a whole does not add up to more than the sum of its parts. By identifying every analysis, classification, or exchange of "inside" and "outside" as an "anatomy," Hodges undercuts the explanatory power of the paradigm. The metaphor of anatomical dissection is at once too specific and too general to serve as a useful investigative tool: too specific because some of the works she deals with have to be slightly skewed to fit into the "anatomy" model, with the result that the most valuable things she says about them often do not depend specifically upon it; too general because her argument often amounts to no more than the assertion that, when nature is fragmented by empiricist analysis, "something is lost that cannot be restored" (121). Hodges often gestures in the direction of Foucauldian analysis, but without very much supporting "archival" data. And there is something both arbitrary and banal about her selection of canonical writers. Hodges deftly manipulates the language of contemporary critical theory to link these writers together in a new way, but the book seems to promise a more radical and significant synthesis than it finally provides.

*York University*

MARJORIE GARSON

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