grandfather, Bill Potter, who does not attend the religious ceremony, is facetious about the names, and the omniscient narrator sees into the minds of the parents and observes little true belief in all this ritual:

> The pattern of the genes is biological, is chemical, is human history. Naming is cultural, also history, another pattern. Both Simon Vincent Poole and Mary Valentine Orton were received into their culture with the inherited ceremony of infant baptism, though Daniel had doubts about the efficacy of vicarious vows and Thomas, Elinor and Alexander were at the least agnostic about renouncing the world, the flesh and the devil. But rites there must be. Mary was christened in St Bartholomew's by Gideon Farrar, in the absence of her principled grandfather and in the presence of two moved grandmothers. (pp. 251-2)

At the London christening of Simon Vincent Poole, there is a "practical, brisk chaplain, all things to all men", with whom Alexander has a "civilsed chat ... about continuities" (p. 253)

## 5.4 The Church and religious festivals

The fly-leaf of *Still Life* rightly asserts of this novel that "working always from the particular to the general, it illuminates the inevitable tensions between the demands of domesticity and ambition, of confinement and self-fulfilment, while providing a subtle and revealing insight into the intellectual and cultural life of England at a time of rapid and radical secularisation." But first, going back to *The Game*, we were given a view of the "old Church", for Cassandra had

converted from her childhood Quakerism to the Anglican Church. Her parish is particularly High Church, with incense and genuflexions, and when she takes the secularised Julia to a service, it is subverted by the old ladies, funny hats and bad singing, etc.:

> The service was more alien than she had expected, and large expanses of it were inaudible. She found Gerald Rowell, bustling to and fro in a stook of vestments, more than a little absurd [...] A choir sang [...] cracked and lagging and troubled notes from the old ladies. Julia would have liked to be moved by the words, but could not. Her response to them resembled too much the easy-flowing sentiment she bestowed on Christmas card crinolines and candles [...] Cassandra had always been one for ritual [...] Julia would judge it coldly, vestments, singing, clattering of bells, a tatty substitute for glory. (p. 120)

In the tetralogy, like the "practical and brisk chaplain" of the University congregation in London, in Gideon Farrar, the new vicar in the Potter family's Yorkshire parish, Byatt creates another example of change in the Church. As always, social change is supposed to be for the better, but firstly, it is usually resented by the traditionalists, and secondly, it may not always be what it appears, as is implied by the title of Chapter 10: "Norms and Monsters, 1":

> Daniel's vicar, Mr Ellenby, retired, and was replaced by a much younger man, Gideon Farrar [...] He had met Farrar at a diocesan gathering and told Stephanie that he was known as a live-wire [...] She went to hear his first sermon, aware

> of the anxiety and even meagre anger of parts of the congregation around her. He had moved things: the sentimental Victorian crucifix was gone from the altar, the branched candesticks had been replaced by plain square wooden candleholders, the embroidered altar cloth by snowy austere linen. Stephanie, who had disliked the epicene body and sweet half-smile of the hanging god, was surprised at her own resentment of his whisking away. She wondered if the new broom was about to sweep away also the very ugly embroidered carpet in the sanctuary, made by church ladies to commemorate the fallen [...] (*Still Life* p. 130)

The Christian traditionalists resent this sweeping away because their ritualistic symbols and objects are of vital importance to them, and having been venerated for nearly two thousand years, they feel they should not be done away with overnight. People feel comfortable with religious artefacts, as symbols concentrate their ideas and perpetuate them, and their formal expression can represent the aesthetic ideals of the age. Moreover, as Lakoff explains with one example, they are not arbitrary, and although metaphorical through metonymy, they are grounded in our physical experience and are part of us:

> Cultural and religious symbols are special cases of metonymy. Within Christianity, for example, there is the metonymy DOVE FOR HOLY SPIRIT. As is typical with metonymies, this symbolism is not arbitrary. It is grounded in the conception of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology. There is a reason why the dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit and not, say, the chicken, the vulture, or the ostrich. The dove is conceived of as beautiful, friendly, gentle, and, above all, peaceful. As a bird, its natural habitat is the sky, which metonymically stands for heaven, the natural habitat of the Holy Spirit. The dove is a bird that flies gracefully, glides silently, and is typically

> seen coming out of the sky and landing among people.
>
> The conceptual systems of cultures and religions are metaphorical in nature. Symbolic metonymies are critical links between everyday experience and the coherent metaphorical systems that characterize religions and cultures. Symbolic metonymies that are grounded in our physical experience provide an essential means of comprehending religious and cultural concepts. (Lakoff, 1980, p. 40)

With the move towards Ecumenism after the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), there was a tendency in the Church to reduce religious symbols to those acceptable to both Roman Catholicism and Protestant sects, or at least Anglicanism. Hence the simplification and modernisation of Farrar's church interior. As Lakoff says in Chapter 23: "Metaphor, Truth and Action" (1980, p. 157), people in power get to impose their metaphors: "The acceptance of the metaphor, which forces us to focus *only* on those aspects of our experience that it highlights, leads us to view the entailments of the metaphor as being *true*."

Austerity, then, is part of the metaphor of the new Anglican Church. The personal and the sociological are also aspects and formed the keynote of Farrar's first sermon:

> I want us to think about modern interpretations of the old sense in which the parson --the word *means* person-- was taken in the past to be the persona, the representative man, *persona exemplaris*, the representative of the *personal nature* of the community or parish. And I want, thirdly, to consider the contribution of the new science of sociology to our thinking about personal relationships [...] Bonhoeffer confrorted fearlessly the fact that our society has found that it can do without God, in science, in politics, even

in morals [...] (*Still Life* p. 131)

The new vicar attempts to be friendly and to offer personal contact with every one of his parishioners. In the days of the disintegration of the family (there is not one happy family in the whole collection of A. S. Byatt's novels --but then happiness is largely boring and is not the stuff that novels are made of) he preaches the importance of family life: "The family is the primordial group: what we are with our family influences profoundly how we shall behave in other groups, and in Christ's family." (p. 132)

He is the supreme hypocrite, because whereas he gives the appearance of having a united, loving, modern extended family -- one child of his own and three adopted of different races-- the truth of the matter is that he is violent, especially with his own son, and is a womaniser and child-molester. The family is very unhappy.

He instituted the practice of "modern Family Meals" with his parishioners in his and their homes. He suggests that these ritualistic meals, metaphorical of his apparent life-style, with him making bread and washing up, are more "real" than the Communion. But Byatt subverts the meal to which Stephanie's family is asked, for as Gideon is perorating on with his clichés about weakening the fabric of society, union being "good" and a "privilege", there is a comic undercurrent of hostility between Mrs Orton (Daniel's mother) and Marcus, giving the lie to all

this. Mrs Orton is being greedy: "Mrs Orton was scrambling ham into her mouth with concentration" and Marcus is resenting it: "Marcus thought: she is *no* use. She hopes he will offer her more ham. She does not want to be of use. She eats." (p. 135)

Another ritual meal that is subverted to show that all is not what it appears, this time going back to *The Game*, concerns not only the Church and spiritual beliefs and their manifestation, but also University life, or the life of the modern, independent woman. Things are not easy for Stephanie, the thinking woman who wants to write and wants a family at the same time. But at least domestic life in a way keeps her sane, she is able to see things as they are. Cassandra, who has renounced family life in favour of a career, in her professional-cum-social role is remote and awkward. Marcus's pin in the excrement reminds us of Cassandra's crucifix in the tomato sauce of the spaghetti. Firstly, she is upset by disorder, her images and metaphors in her journal attempt to give order to life:

> I told him that what I found saving was the order and structure one could see in things, smooth-running, meaningful. The growth of plants, the circulation of the blood, networks of working muscles, veins on leaves, movements of planets and shoals of fish. A harmony one could see. This is what we are for, to pay attention to this beautiful network of designed movement that we and our tragedies are held in. (*The Game* p. 75)

She invites her socially pretentious sister Julia to the ceremonial ritual of Dinner in Hall. This turns out to be an ordeal for Julia, though Cassandra, whose dignity is most

subverted, is less aware: "Cassandra was enveloped in the folds of a black gown [...] like a bundle of old stuff". The figures and clothes subvert: "Buckled belts riding over high bellies or dropping on shrunken hips", also the noise: "told her with enthusiasm in a piercing near-shout, how much she regretted not having taken a degree." The quality of the food is also subversive: "The main course was dried lamb chops, dried mashed potatoes, and drying tinned spaghetti in tomato sauce." Cassandra is dehumanised, she is mechanical: "carrying spoonfuls of soup regularly to her mouth", sexless, like her companions, and with a hand like a rapacious bird:

> Cassandra, leaning across to address someone, entangled her dangling crucifix in the spaghetti. It had to be wiped clean. Julia was rigid with embarrassment, obsessed by an image of the bloody loops of paste over the rigid, jewelled arms of the cross, she saw her sister ludicrous, even grotesque, and could not meet her eye. (p. 108)

The incident is symbolic of Cassandra's uncontrolled life, and what makes the image grotesque is the word "bloody", as it is the connection between the Crucifixion and the tomato sauce, bordering on the sacrilegious. Christ is also the connection between Cassandra's spiritual beliefs and a process of eating, this time by a snake, which reveals attitudes to life. Byatt is particularly good at describing processes, and the description of the snake eating a frog (*The Game* pp. 76-7) functions on four levels. Firstly, there is the dramatic narration to the reader of the rather shocking event as it happened. Secondly, on the level of the process, there is the narration, for example: "The

snake suddenly stretched out and sank its teeth into the frog" interspersed with Simon's commentary: "It can digest one end of the frog whilst it's still swallowing the other. For instance, it may digest the feet before the frog is dead." Thirdly, Cassandra's reactions and feelings are recorded:

> He explained to Cassandra what was happening, as though, she felt, the knowing accuracy of his description was a defence against the fact of the frog's being swallowed [...] Cassandra sat still, and neither protested nor wriggled [...] A loss? One cannot suffer with all frogs and pigs. One cannot. (p. 77)

The fourth level, the attitudinal, becomes apparent because Byatt places the description straight after Cassandra has reread parts of her teenage journal and realised that she and Simon have changed position in terms of faith. The Roman Catholic Simon has become agnostic, whereas the Quaker Cassandra, with a vigorous inner, spiritual life, has become Church of England, High Church. She has ceased to be concerned with the historical truth of Christianity and has succumbed to wishful thinking, to the human need to believe in something that justifies suffering:

> Now I have come to see that the death of Christ is *imaginatively* necessary to us. It is the supreme event of both factual and imaginative worlds, it relates the factual world of meaningless suffering to the imagined world of where action is meaningful, love is purposeful. We are *in need* of this relationship. (p. 76)

Cassandra feels that even then, their later attitudes

towards secular and spiritual life were present, Simon's adolescent rebelliousness, and her need for explanations and justifications of disorder: "our present attitudes were implicit in the way we watched the snake feed, that afternoon." (p. 76) The human need for religion is a conclusion George Eliot came to regarding the public at large, and one wonders if Byatt has this in mind in her conception of Cassandra.

**Christmas**

Another example of different reactions to a ritual depending upon the attitude of the observer is that of the Nativity Play in *Still Life* (pp. 39-41). Firstly, Byatt's narrator subverts the annual socio-religious act by revealing the reality beneath the surface:

> Now, as every year, Mary, back to the pews, bottom upended, fumbled in Mrs Ellenby's old wooden crib and brought out her best and largest doll, smiling, pouting, celluloid, with hard eyes on a metal hinge that clattered open and shut [...] Three diminutive kinglets, carrying a Kelly lamp, a silver sugar castor, Mrs Ellenby's Chinese enamelled cigarette box [...] a blond choirboy, in sheet and halo [...] accompanied by a very limited multitude of the heavenly host. (p. 40)

Secondly, the narrator intervenes to explain why this clumsy annual ritual has the power to move certain watchers:

> The parents were moved in a confused way. They were moved by their own flesh and blood acting out the motions of birth and parentage with that mixture of awkwardness, ignorance, seriousness and imitation which can be observed in the necessary games of mothers and fathers. It is the childishness of Mary and Joseph that

> moves, nothing to do with the celluloid Babe which is always somehow redundant in this set of emotions. Parents are moved because childhood is so swift and vanishing. They are perhaps also more darkly moved by some threat in the law of flesh and blood itself. These small creatures are the future, they are only acting out what they will be. Not only childhood vanishes: men and women, having handed on their genes, are superfluous. To watch this acting is to be marginally caught between times, between rôles. Mary looks protectively at the doll: Mary's mother looks, moved and protective, at Mary's childish body and soft face. And time runs on. (pp. 40-1)

Similarly, rite is revealed as illusion in the Christmas in hospital episode (p. 38) where Daniel is Father Christmas, his black clerical clothes showing beneath the red, and his sleigh almost revealing itself as a hospital trolley. The children are duly frightened. The Family Christmas of the Potters, a typically unhappy family, is ruthlessly exposed as a pretence:

> The nuclear Potter family had practised a muted and aimless version of the British family Christmas rite. They had inhibitions about concentrating on what might be called the Dickensian essentials [...] (p. 34)

Winifred and Bill Potter are used by Byatt as a vehicle through which to comment on social change in the mid-twentieth century, from the frugalities of wartime to the uncertainties of the mid-fifties:

> Their household gods were created, not inherited, and were meagre and fleshless. This was partly --in the Dickensian context-- because of uncertainty of manners, owing to upward social mobility. They had

> ideas about repectability and propriety which as intellectuals they despised but as Christmas dinner-eaters they endorsed. Daniel's Dad, the engine-driver, when living, had got drunk in the pub first and at home later: there had been gusto, joility, somnolence and regret. Bill Potter took a glass of sherry [...] No neighbours called [...] There was no singing [...] There were no games [...] So, apart from opening presents, they watched each other and waited for Christmas to be over so that they could resume their intense and private working lives. (*SL* pp. 34-5)

Stephanie makes more of an effort when she has her own family, aiming at quality and difference (Cumberland sauce and boiled chestnuts, Marcus's polyhedrons instead of Father Christmases and frosted and stencilled fruit), but even then it is a farce: "Sentence by meaningless sentence they held the occasion together." (p. 45) Human beings need rituals, but as Byatt shows, sometimes a traditional view of an institution is made up of false discourses. "Dickensian" is interesting because although we conventially mean that, for example, on Christmas cards we see scenes of nineteenth-century people in crinolines and top hats, Dickens was supreme in exposing the reality of poverty and marginalisation in which the majority of people lived. Conventional ideas like that Christmas must necessarily be a happy occasion, or that the traditions and beliefs of the Church must be stable, are mercilessly undermined by Byatt in the tetralogy and in *The Game*.

## 5.5 The middle classes and fashion as semiotic

Stephanie's attendance at Midnight Mass is an excuse for Byatt to meditate upon the English, and through the distancing device of Stephanie's literary meditations, to see what is unpleasant about them, their appearance, beliefs and customs:

> Her mood of hostile detachment persisted through Midnight Mass [...] They sang that gloomy invocation, 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel'. [...] They stood there, still and dark and hatted in rows. The English are ugly, Stephanie thought, not for the first time. There was a preponderance of middle-aged faces, plum-coloured, ashen, pasty, pursed into a combination of too much patience, caution and suspicion. They were not outdoor faces, they were not easy faces. Nor were they suffering faces. They were the faces of people concerned predominantly either with what people thought about their behaviour, property, social standing. They were more uncertain than their parents had been about these things. It was a generation that had had to be brave and now did not know how to be peaceful. (p. 41)

The same repulsive, materialistic bourgeois qualities, Stephanie realises, had been rejected by George Eliot just one hundred years earlier (a perspective that was to be developed at length in *Possession*):

> She thought instead of *The Mill on the Floss*, that cruel social history of English religion, locating its true centre in the Lares and Penates, a dense structure of *things* which defined who you were and what your relation to others was, spotted damask, sprigged china, the graduated expense and display of bonnets kept to be worshipped rather than worn. This had, and George Eliot knew it, little or even nothing to do

> with Christ's injunctions to his followers, and certainly nothing at all to do with the Incarnation which was now being celebrated as the congregation sang 'Unto us a Boy is Born' as Daniel at the white-draped altar, with its lovingly embroidered white cloth, watched with Mr Ellenby over the bread and wine. George Eliot, Stephanie thought, was a good hater. She looked long and intelligently at what she hated, with curiosity to see exactly *what* it was, and the necessary detachment to imagine it from within and without, these two breeding a kind of knowledge that was love. George Eliot had loved the bonnets and sprigged china --because she knew them, or because writing them down gave her power over them, made her gentle and generous to their meaning? She tried to relate this sudden vision of the *things* of the pieties of the Dodson sisters to Daniel's Mum's instructions about how to cook Christmas pudding, and largely failed. (pp. 42-3)

The dark church hats metonymically evoke the 1950s middle classes, just as "spotted damask" metonymically evokes, not only the 1850s, but the whole Victorian aesthetic and morality. Only ten pages later in *Still Life*, Frederica's first visit to Provence allows Byatt to extend the historical comparison to a national, even racial, one, comparing the English with the Mediterraneans. The *tisane*, the dark blue bedroom and yellow painted bedroom furniture, everything, from the clothes to the food and furnishings --mostly evoked metonymically again-- is alien, perhaps less comfortable but more lively. Looking ahead to Frederica's later, wiser, visits, Byatt gives a broader and more distant perspective on the different cultures in those times:

> In the 1970s Ezra Pound's laminated view of vital and moribund cultures, centred

> partly on Provence, made her see M. Grimaud's easy educating communications about the land, the lore, the language in which she found herself, as a sign of real energy in his community which had been ersatz, or only wished-for, in post-Festival of Britain Yorkshire. Bill Potter had his local pride: his evening class students collected local words, described patterns of social behaviour and family interrelationship with a kind of Fabian zeal, but without the sun-saturated liveliness of M. Grimaud's sense of what was shared and perpetual in his world. (p. 54)

We know from the work on semiotics of Roland Barthes that social judgements are encoded and that the cultural objects articulated in the codes have a special significance, they are not innocent, but culture-bound and culture-laden. Fashions in clothing, furnishings, cars, food and drink, social gatherings, even professions, down to the most commonplace objects or activities, have a symbolic meaning in addition to their practical function. To harness the power of these codes and the special significances of their entities, a novelist has two techniques open to him or her: one is the metaphoric and metonymic, as David Lodge says (1981, p. 180): "usually the selected details are heightened, or defamiliarised, by metaphor or simile, extending their range of connotations." He refers (*op. cit.*, pp. 179-80) to Tom Wolfe, who has shown that playing metaphorically with metonymic detail can unleash great comic power through ludicrous juxtaposition. A. S. Byatt's works abound in instances of this technique. The second is the opposite of the metonymic, it is the all-inclusive, particularly characteristic of the early works of her sister, Margaret Drabble. As Lodge continues, referring to Wolfe, the devices of realistic fiction

which the New Journalists borrowed or rediscovered are such devices as the recording of everyday gestures, habits, manners, customs, styles of furniture, clothing, eating, behaving, for these symbolic details build up "the whole pattern of behaviour and possessions through which people express their position in the world [...] the details, being products of culture, are already full of signification." (Lodge *op. cit.*, pp. 179-80) However, one cannot state everything, there must be selection, and it is difficult for the selection to be arbitrary, innocent or neutral. Therefore, in the end, even the all-inclusive approach cannot escape being metonymic. An example of this approach is cleverly integrated into Byatt's dramatic working out of the changes in the Church:

> Something had happened to the dark Victorian rectory. It smelled of new paint, which was mostly lemon yellow and white. Walls had vanished, and small, stuffy, private rooms had disappeared. The old drawing-room and the old dining-room were now joined by a large arch and light shone through from the road to the back garden, now resembling a children's playground. There were circular chairs in clear colours --geranium, peacock, lemon-- on spiky black metal legs. The thick Turkish carpets were gone and the floors were covered in pale rush matting: gone were the polished mahogony and glass-fronted cabinets, and in their place were a stripped pine refectory table, long benches, a pine dresser with Finnish tumblers and Denby stoneware, pine green inside, matt white outside, with ears of wheat on them. There were white linen curtains spattered with gold and silver irregular discs. On the walls were the Picasso child holding a dove, a Chagall cockerel, some Miró playfulnesses. The windows remained what they had always been --

> heavy suspicious Northern shutters against the outside world. It was perhaps the windows which made the scale seem paradoxical, a Swedish barn condensed into a suburban house. In Mr Ellenby's day the rooms had seemed large, high and cluttered. Stephanie reflected on the human propensity to require things to be as they always had been, to resist change. The clutter had depressed her and its vanishing alarmed her. (*SL* pp. 132-3)

An example of the former, the defamiliarisation of metonymic details is the use of "blazer" and "flannels" in the description of Lucas Simmonds:

> The attraction of Lucas Simmonds had been that he had appeared to be confidently, unusually, happily 'normal', good friend, good sport, reliable leader, bright chap, blazer, flannels and smiling face. He had been able to appear 'normal' because he was abnormal, he was an outsider, he was mad, he saw and desired normality with a piercing vision of what it might ideally be thought to be. (*SL* pp. 30-1)

All Byatt novels are deliberately fixed by date, as changes since the war have tended to be manifest in decades rather than generations, and each decade is seen to have its particular style. If in the 1950s, blazer and flannels denoted the uniform look of a conservative young teacher, things were already changing: "students, mostly female, swing-skirted [...] in the Fifties [...] cannabis..." (*Possession* p. 114), and within a decade, all this had completely changed. There is a fifteen-year gap between the events of *Virgin* and the beginning of *Still Life*, and the Prologue to *Virgin*. At the gathering in 1968 round the portrait of Elizabeth I, to whom dress was so important, everyone

seems to have come in fancy dress. But this is the late 60s, the days of flower power and the Hari Krishna, and apart from the aesthetic norm: "Pencil skirts and batwing sweaters and spiky stilettos [...] and all that red *lipstick*" (*Still Life* p. 5), it was also normal to adopt virtually any identity that was remote from your own, as the metonymic details show: "Jesus boots, kaftans" (*Virgin* p. 10), also the metaphors: "a platinum blonde Pocahontas" (p. 11)

In the continuation of the saga of the Potter family, in *Babel Tower*, we see Frederica change her appearance overnight as she escapes from her County environment into almost hippy freedom, then the changes in her hair, the hem of her skirt, come periodically. But *Babel Tower*, which speaks of the "increasing youthfulness of the Sixties" (p. 227), also brings out the rebelliousness at the root of the changes of the 1960s: "'slashing Rembrandts and Vermeers because young painters don't get enough attention. Such *anger*--'" (p. 227) Back in *Virgin*, only the fifty-year-old Alexander and the Americans are "well-dressed", but then they have money: "Under English mackintoshes, English tweed, Emglish cashmere, American tourists" (p. 10). This seems ironic as some of the rôles in the fancy dress were inspired not only by the Beatles, but also by American pop singers, television and film:

> [V]ariously uniformed, uniformly various.
> Grimy thonged feet under, silky, fluffy,
> matted beards over, sari and saffron robe.
> Military jackets from Vietnam and the Crimea,

> barely sprouted moustaches and poultry-thin necks popping out of gilded collars above tarnished epaulettes. Rubber-hard girls in silver tights and silver boots, with silver skirts bouncing on compact rumps. Limp girls in black velvet dangling meshed-metal purses, with paper flowers in the coils and curtains of their artificial hair. Several George Sands, Mesdemoiselles Sacripant, in trousers, frilled shirts, and velvet berets. Shuffling, sexless people [...] (*Virgin* p. 10)

The distancing attitude of the narrator comes through in adjectives and metaphors like "poultry-thin", "tarnished", "several Georges Sands". In addition to the use of the narrator's value-judgement-laden adjectives, Byatt has Alexander consciously meditate on this deliberate variety, this "modern parody" and the possible reasons for it:

> It seemed to him, who did not understand or like it, undirected and aimless; they imitated anything and everything out of an unmanageable combination of aesthetic curiosity, mocking destructiveness and affectionate nostalgia, the desire to be anything and anywhere other than here and now. Did these soldiers loathe or secretly desire warfare? Or did they not know? Was it all a considered 'statement', as the painter would have said, about accommodated and unaccommodated man? Or was it just a hysterical continuation of childhood dressing-up? Alexander himself had considerable knowledge about the history of clothing, could place a shift of seam or change of cut in relation to tradition and the individual talent almost as well as he could a verse-form or a vocabulary. He watched his own clothes and his own poetry in the light of these delicate shifts of subdued innovation. But he was apprehensive that at that time there was no real life in either. (pp. 10-11)

At the end of this passage, we see how closely related

fashion in clothes and in literary creation can be, and the last sentence sums up the hopes for the new Elizabethan Age and the disappointments later felt. Ironically, or perhaps naturally, given the speed of the changes in the twentieth century, as this fancy dress delights in escaping from the severe lines of the immediate post-war suit, within a quarter of a century, the elegant dresser is returning to an expensive version of this austerity. In the 1980 Prologue to *Still Life*, the successful Frederica is not so much parodying the 1950s as feeling at home as never before in the style of her youth: "Fifties *and* post-impressionism, thought Alexander, connecting [...] He remarked on the parody-young." (p. 5)

The 1980s sees the middle-aged Frederica and aging Alexander professionally successful and affluent. But they did not have an easy time of it in the post-war years. *Still Life* has a character, Alan, who at Cambridge has to disguise his working-class background: "a rough background of struggling to survive amongst Glasgow teenage gangs, who could tell, at discreet moments, hairy stories of bicycle chains, flick knives, knuckle dusters" (p. 121). He is like the heroes in Amis, Wain, Osborne, Larkin and Storey, recipients of university grants who have moved from their lower- or lower middle-class origins, through the university and out into a society which they would not otherwise have known, and in which it is not easy to define their new function and class designation. Byatt shows that as class structure has become markedly more fluid, and education has permitted many people to acquire both the necessary skill and the

necessary interest to consider changing class identities, the view that reality might indeed be constructed, that different discourses are adopted in order to hide a different situation underneath, seems to be a valid one. We cannot mention Alan without mentioning his counterpart, Tony. "Tony the socialist" is the opposite, and he is like Jude Mason later: young men from affluent and conservative backgrounds who do not wish to uphold the status quo (as Nigel Reiver, Frederica's husband does), but who through their education, their sensibility and their politics, feel impelled to reject it. Naturally, therefore, it is Tony and not Alan who makes Frederica go to a lecture by Kingsley Amis (*SL* p. 123). Frederica expresses her lack of sympathy with these writers of the working-class hero, an attitude that is Byatt's own. One reason why Byatt is not in agreement is that in his writing, Amis, like Wain, and even Angus Wilson, frequently satirises those who glamorise art as some divine goddess. She shares with them the disapproval for the man who worships at the shrine of his politics or morality, but draws the line at art, either because it is more harmless, or more worthwhile.

*Possession*, the book of the 1980s, reveals an England still very divided in terms of class. Roland is in a Romance of class distinction (pp. 424-5), and in a way, the Quest is a chase of social climbing. In spite of his brilliant academic record (he is dated by "The Aneurin Bevan School", p. 10), he is now "essentially unemployed". He is a "latecomer", not through his own fault: "In the expansive 1960s he would have advanced rapidly

and involuntarily." (p. 10) His cat-piss-sodden flat is a metaphor for the frugal life of students after the oil crisis, as is the tough pheasant full of shot for deflated attempts to be different, "exciting and civilised" (p. 13) His girlfriend Val comes to mix with the well-to-do horsey set, with their aristocratic breakfasts of kidneys and kedgeree (p. 416), while her separated mother lives on social security in a council flat (p. 13). Her two different 1980s "uniforms" indicate her double life. References to AIDS (p. 384), to the ozone and the Brixton Riots (p. 400) further fix the novel and show the public social concerns of the last two decades of the twentieth century. The terrible disappointment for the children of the post-war baby boom as they struggle to find financial security is well expressed by Byatt. The acceptable metaphors of "The whole ferment and brightness and journeyings and youth of the 1960s" are deflated by the deadening cliché of "the blissful dawn of what he and his contemporaries saw as a pretty blank day" (p. 10) The metaphor involved here is Lakoff's A LIFETIME IS A DAY.

In *Possession*, Byatt gives us glimpses of different life-styles. For example, the stereotyped English versus the American: Beatrice Nest, with her nostalgia for the invitations to dance and whist in wartime, is meticulous and painstakingly slow, hence publishes nothing, whereas Leonora and Cropper have a string of publications. American speed and resourcefulness is conveyed metonymically through Cropper's numerous faxes to and from his data base, and his inherited dishonesty ("piratical ancestors", p. 491) through his black box micro-photocopier.

Byatt also uses bathrooms to indicate social status and social change, furthermore, she suggests that bathrooms reveal character. Maud's is of course clean and virginal, white and green and representative of life. Cropper's has gold taps. Mrs. Daisy Wapshott's is typically lower-middle-class, and the daughter's bedroom is preserved from the 1950s, as so often happened either through sentiment or neglect as children grew up and left the parental home. Exact literal description is used for subverting, as is the name, Daisy Wapshott.

In *Possession*, Byatt is able to criticise English society on two time levels. This is because the novel is an example of what David Lodge has called "crossover fiction". When Lodge reviewed his 1969 essay "The Novelist at the Crossroads" twenty years later, he had the following to say:

> The crossroads between realism and fabulation still hold good. Aesthetic pluralism now is a generally accepted fact of life. [...] I am also struck by how sturdily traditional realism has survived the obsequies pronounced over it by Scholes, and by a number of other writers and critics in the Sixties and Seventies, and how clearly it remains a serious option for the literary novelist today.[...] Foregrounded intertextuality, the overt citation or simulation of older texts in a modern text, has frequently been used to achieve the crossover effect in this period, from John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* at the beginning of it, through Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* and *Chatterton*, to Antonia Byatt's recent *Possession*. (2)

Although the reader knows that the story of Ash and Christabel is pseudo-Victorian fiction, we tend to suspend

disbelief and behave as if we were reading Dickens or George Eliot laying bare the shortcomings of English life over a hundred years ago. As Byatt gives us a view of the life of the respectable middle classes of the times, she confirms what John Fowles has called the "double life" of the Victorians, the famed "doubleness" (*Possession* p. 110) of the overtly respectable family man who in his secret life went with prostitutes. For Ash is "a man [...] who lived a quiet and exemplary married life for forty years" (p. 8) and is ultimately revealed to be a fraudulent hypocrite. The letters written to his wife from the Yorkshire expedition, those of a "solitary husband" are seen to have been written with Christabel by his side (p. 215). The twentieth-century suspicious mind (Fergus Wolff) also makes us wonder about Bertha, the servant in Ash's household who got pregnant. As always, a man can lead a double life with impunity, unless he rejects the dishonesty like Fowles's Charles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. But a woman, unless she is of independent means (p. 159), has to submit to "the genteel slavery of governessing" (p. 157), a problem stated by Jane Austen in *Emma* almost a hundred years before. Blanche and Christabel exemplify the difficulties of literary women in Victorian times, they make a "Sealed Pact" and their chosen way of life, without men and attempting self-sufficiency, is to renounce the "cramped Daughterly Devotion to a worldly mother" (p. 157). The near-impossibility of the success of this is shown in Blanche's suicide, as, quite apart from Christabel's infidelity, she had reached a point of financial dependence upon Christabel which she found unacceptable. She was painting at the time of Van Gogh, and

in the style of the pre-Raphaelites, and the reader hopes that, had she been a real person, her art might have been posthumously vindicated. Christabel's seclusion after her relations with Ash and the death of Blanche is the reverse of the fate of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Lodge also reminds us that it was the late Victorians who had the "Condition of England Novel", and that it "invites us to consider England as a social organism whose health is suspect [...]" (3). As he says, "The Condition of England question was not merely economic, but part of the continuous cultural debate about the place of human values in a society given over to materialism." (Lodge 1966, p. 216) That society can be seen as a "social organism" or form of being in itself, is confirmed by Lakoff talking about society in the Great Chain:

> Part of its essential nature is that it consists of the interactions of individuals with one another, and so the workings of society are by nature interactional [...] On the Great Chain, society is a step above the level of individual people and a step below the level of the cosmos.
> (Lakoff 1989, p. 208)

If we consider the complete fictional works of A. S. Byatt up to the present, we see that she offers us myriads of examples of interactions of individuals which build up into a global view of English society, focusing on the four decades 1950-1990. Together they suggest the notion "The Condition of England", with the three novels of the proposed quartet particularly doing so. Furthermore, the view she gives us is of an organism "whose

health is suspect". There are defects and deficiencies, both physical and attitudinal, in individuals, social groups and in the whole nation, as she portrays them.

## 5.6 Rites of passage II: weddings, a Coronation, old age and death as closure

The supreme social and national occasions or rites of passage are the wedding for the family group and the Coronation for the nation. In her pastiche, if it is pastiche, or copying, if it is authentic, of *The Times* newspaper, the Coronation is called "the nation's feast of mystical renewal" (*Virgin* p. 152). In *Virgin*, Byatt juxtaposes the two sacramental occasions, with the wedding of Stephanie in Chapter 29 running closely parallel to the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (June 2nd. 1953) in Chapter 27. One of the reasons for this is that she is tempted, as usual, to subvert the ritual of the wedding and to show public and private reactions to the Coronation. The comparison shows the professionalism of the staging of the national event and the deficiencies in the reality of Stephanie's wedding:

> The Coronation commentaries lavished superlatives on the English genius for ceremonial. The events which constituted the Potter wedding were characterised by muddle, ill-temper, and aspersions on the church service. (p. 252)

Things did not augur well from the beginning for Stephanie. She was not enthusiastic about the relationship with Daniel, and too easily giving up hope of Alexander, submitted to Daniel's

stronger will through her placid nature and inertia. It is deliberately ambiguous whether her father's opposition made her more determined or made no difference:

> My God, Stephanie, you aren't going to tell me you can honestly want to go and join an institution with St. Paul's views on women, and views, no doubt, about breeding and the sanctity of recurrent parturition. You'll become a cow. A cow and a slave and a tweedy tea-pourer. (p. 198)

Frederica never forgave her sister her "surrender to bourgeois solidities" (p. 190), and to make up for her unsisterliness, went to the local department store to look for a "good" but "cheap" "silly present". The description of the episode in the store allows Byatt to give both 1950s details of furnishings and clothing, and a 1970s overview, but also, through Frederica, to subvert the whole idea of the traditional virginal bride-in-white and the whole gamut of weddin rivolities. The bridal-scum metaphor Byatt creates (pp. 193-4) is a fine example of the "one-shot" metaphor which also fits in with a global concept: LIFE IS A GAME. It is also an example of Tom Wolfe's "playing metaphorically with metonymic detail" for comic effect. For Byatt picks on *one* part of a particular game, the rugby scrum, and exploits the similarities and the opposites, and makes a metaphorical statement about marriage. This is combined with a third device, the almost all-inclusive literal description, which serves to deflate, and through complete explicitness, to make things seem ridiculous:

> Around the central figure a kind of rugger-scrum of brides-to-be were easing and squeezing their hips. Outside was cold and wet: inside was hot: steam rose from tweed and gabardine and fur-lined bootees. A larger ring of attendant mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters stood like seconds in an enclosure around the working throng, and clutched umbrellas, hats, and damp parcels. It was possible for the girls to get their heads to the counter, and to stretch their necks in the direction of the many stalked and circular mirrors that stood on the counter among the veiling. It was almost impossible for them to make space for their bodies to follow. They bent their trunks acutely forward, their bottoms wedged, elongated themselves unnaturally and obliquely, and reached, clutched, wavered, at the crowns above. When they had reached these, and lowered them onto their damp hair, they had to keep up a steady shoving and wriggling of their lower parts, in order not to lose their balance. Some, having peered in the mirrors, twisted their torsos to display a framed face to the attendant relatives, tilting, nervously clutching, sometimes, as though in a wind. Frederica watched, fascinated. Inside the frames of veiling, over the bulky, too solid bodies, the faces changed. There was an occasional smirk of embarrassment, or grimace of distaste, but most of these faces, revealed with a classical gesture of a hot damp hand suddenly taking on a produced, shy grace, composed themselves into a remote and reverential expression, round faces, horsey faces, prim faces, anaemic faces, faces with steel-rimmed glasses, all with parted lips and eyes stretched in a kind of ritual amazement at an as yet unachieved new self, new world. Frederica thought it was touching and absurd, and looked at their legs, stumping, thumping, jostling on the muddy floor. (p. 193)

The metaphor is effective for the reason given by Eva Fedor Kittay mentioned earlier, that the more disparate the semantic fields of the source and target domains, the more striking the

metaphor is. Byatt deliberately chose two opposing fields --that of feminine frivolity: pure, white virginal beauty, and that of masculine earnestness: the game of rugby, one of the most masculine of sports, thus opposing the white bride to the mud-bespattered, sweating, macho rugby player. It is an example of the sublime and the ridiculous, though which is which depends on the reader's own priorities. The similarity, or the "slot" in the structure of the rugby game that fits into a corresponding slot in the field of the bridal department as it is mapped onto the latter, is in fact an anomaly. Bridal departments of large stores are, these days, deserted places, but on the occasion in 1953 that Frederica passed by, there was an absurd agglomeration of females, a sort of mêlée. So it is the visual, physical conformation of the group, surrounding a subverted figure "a harassed plump girl revolving jerkily", and the pushing and shoving, quite improper to the occasion, and of course, the heads-down, bottoms-up positions of the "players". Once a person leaves his upright position, he is vulnerable and liable to become comical. The objective here is not a ball, but the bridal crowns, and the juxtaposition of the top half of the girls, brides-to-be in crowns and frothy veils peering at this "new self, new world", with the bottom half, truly like rugger players, "too solid bodies", "their legs, stumping, thumping, jostling on the muddy floor" is comical and subverts the idea of marriage, or at least the marriage ceremony.

Stephanie's reluctant acquiescence to the ritual of the wedding ceremony is made explicit, and is symptomatic of the

growing agnosticism of the age:

> There was a general feeling that the bride was somewhat unresponsive to events. She had her own sourish thoughts about ceremony. Like most little girls she had played ritually, pruriently, narcissistically, at "my wedding". Like most citizens she craned to peer into white- ribboned cars to see The Bride pass briefly, some unrecognisable typist, duchess, riding-instructor, schoolmistress whom she would neither see nor recognise again. Primitive societies had ceremonies for circumcision, puberty, hunting, shooting, fishing, birth, marriage and death. Bodies were decorated with knobs, scars, blisters, paint, leaves, flowers and feathers. People marched in the Queen's wake with slashed cheeks under English hats and helmets. It was habitual. Her distaste for the Church enactment was to do, as was her family's, with Daniel's presumed belief in the real efficacy of the ceremony. No God for Stephanie stared down from the rood-beam, nor would touch the ring with true magic, nor knit up handclasp or eyebeams. Nevertheless, there she would be, murmuring Cranmer's prose in a cloud of white veiling. Her thoughts flirted persistently with blasphemies and indelicacies. (p. 253)

Her father boycotts the wedding and there are arguments over who should have a bath first, Frederica uses Stephanie's new makeup, spitting on the mascara, and the verger tells horror stories of brides tripping up, smashing their glasses and getting black eyes. The narrator describes in five stages of verb + object, the congregation's reaction to seeing the bride, down to their inner thoughts:

> They judged the dress, they were caught in the throat, they remembered their own moment, or looked forward to it, they divested the woman of her clothes in their

mind's eyes, they speculated about what she knew and did not know. (p. 259)

Inner thoughts are made available to us: as Vicar Ellenby delivers his sermon, which is "vaguely literary in honour of the bride" ("Spencer's epithalamium and Milton's celebration of the nuptial bliss of Adam and Eve" p. 260), he reminds the groom that he is a man of the Church, as he suspects that Daniel is "more than half pagan", and that, ironically for the reader, Stephanie may convert him, but she is harbouring "savage thoughts about the essential shiftiness of argument by analogy" (p. 261). In part, it is the access to these inner thoughts, through the omniscient narrator, that lays bare the undercurrents of misunderstanding, disagreement and hostility that subvert the concept in the description of the wedding. The narrator describes the public Coronation ceremony as "how it should be done", hence the flawed wedding comes off the worse for the comparison.

Just as Byatt shows that literary creation is made up of bits and pieces of different discourses, so she shows that the popular view of a great event can be made up, as if artificially, in discourses, and has no essence in itself. One of her metaphors for literary creation is "patchwork". A work of art is made up, like a mosaic, of lots of different little pieces. They may be left-overs or they may be gems, but the value they have is in their aesthetic effect after having been arranged into a pattern, with motifs highlighted and seams hidden. Very rarely is a novel like a coverlet cut straight out of a piece of fine fabric. The description of the Coronation is made up from many components.

Basically, we can detect in the process Lakoff's causation metaphor THE OBJECT COMES OUT OF THE SUBSTANCE (or THE SUBSTANCE GOES INTO THE OBJECT) (Lakoff 1989, Chapter 14), and here there is a multiplicity of substances. The advantage of incorporating many "substances" into the "object", the description of the Coronation, is that they offer the multiple viewpoints on an event or concept which the author knows make up the possible truth of the matter.

The Coronation coincided with the conquest of Everest and television transmission in Britain on a large scale. This enables Byatt to present the event, the culmination of the novel, in national terms, paralleling performance of Alexander's play as dramatic culmination, as the English contemplating their own hopes and pride. The main characters of *Virgin* are collected together in the Headmaster's home to watch the coverage. The different pieces of patchwork are their spoken opinions, the narrator interpolating extracts from the newspapers, television commentary from Richard Dimbleby and Robin Day and speeches by Churchill, and through the narrator, the private thoughts of the spectators on all of these things and other matters. The different attitudes of the viewers there that day to the monarchy and the ceremony, are summed up in a rapid exchange:

> 'What a farce really,' said Wilkie's girl. Miss Wells made a distressed little noise. (p. 238)

The occasion is used to advantage by Byatt to consider

certain factors related to television: firstly, the morality of its intrusiveness. Seen from the vantage-point of the 1990s, the scruples of the self-conscious seem ridiculous: "Might there not be something unseemly in the chance that a viewer could watch this solemn and significant service with a cup of tea at his elbow?" But the relentless intrusion into the private lives of Members of the Royal Family by the media in the last two decades of the century force us to confront the problem anew. Secondly, the "changing style in public communications" (p. 240) is considered by the narrator also, through Frederica seeing Alexander on television twenty years later:

> Alexander analysed shrewdly, Frederica thought, the flimsy vocabulary, the trumped-up, wilfully glistening sentiments which juxtaposed words now no longer permissible, like gleaming, drifting, visionary, jingling, glittering *etcaetera*, Churchill's courtly phrasing, itself already vapid, with the new awkward technologico-Benthamite pieties about the 'resources' of science, industry and art, these three 'mobilised' to ease every man's burden to produce new 'opportunities' of life and 'leisure'. (p. 241)

Frederica and Alexander see the events both at the time and in retrospect as a hopeless national fraud:

> Years later [...] he had written a parodic screenplay around the Coronation, trying to capture his sense of it as an attempt on style in a time of no style, a watery bright nostalgia created in weak, meandering, failing rhythms [...] had surely some kind of unintentional dying fall. (p. 244)

Frederica:

> she came to associate her obsession with the *Four Quartets* with the Coronation, with the Coronation's gestures towards England, history and continuity. It had tried and failed to be now and England. (p. 242)

But putting aside the media's "pervasive receding narcissism, mirror on mirror mirrored" (p. 241), there was an innocence about the hope and lyricism of the occasion, the "tenuous pastel hopes of 1953" (p. 242), it was what it was, and no one likes to agree with the mournful Proust: "True Paradise, Proust said, is always Paradise Lost." (p. 242) The English may be ugly, uncommunicative, overpolite, and may expect too much, but there is always another side to the coin, and after the jamboree of the Coronation and Stephanie's wedding, Alexander "felt happy and English" (p. 267)

Old age

Similarly, the last stage in our lives is not the most aesthetic. Old age is not even equated with wisdom in Byatt's philosophy, but with selfishness and mental decline, manifested in petty rituals. But we bear with it as our memories allow us to see simultaneously two opposing vistas. In Daniel's mother, Mrs. Orton, at her son's and Stephanie's wedding, Byatt gives us a description of the physical decrepitude of old age:

> His little mother, with her thick humped pad of flesh across her upper back, with her small body now shapelessly squared above her narrow, bowed legs and thickened ankles. He was amused by the structure of

> her face, tremulous, greying, spattered with brown skin-stains, petulant with vanished prettiness like a ghost in the pout of the mouth and the pleat of the eye-corners. She wore on her head a kind of shiny, squashy bowl of unreal violet straw with a bundle of plastic holly-berries, cloth cornflowers, limp marguerites and bristling emerald feathers. Under this her thinning hair was permed into rigorous little coils [...] She was hung about in a square crêpe dress with large purple and white flowers on, a modesty front of fluted lace, a rusty black winter coat. He did not like her. But with some quite other part of him he was simply delighted that she was there, just as she was, and that he knew it. He was even delighted that he knew that, and how, the grey coils had been gold. (p. 267)

One imagines that Frederica and especially Alexander will mellow into old age with more dignity, but cannot expect other than that their creator will always expose their hidden indignities. For celebrating beauty and dignity, and at the same time exposing truth in Elizabeth II's Britain, the Queen has quite justifiably decorated the woman who described her Coronation, and portrayed her as a "postage-stamp-sized", "matt and twinkling tiny doll." (p. 239)

**Death as closure**

Death comes as a natural closure or ending to the linearity of our temporal, eathly lives. Sometimes, as with an untimely death like Stephanie's or Blanche Glover's or others we have seen in Byatt's work, the death forms no proper closure, as the end comes in the middle, as if, in Lakoff's LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, the destination were reached when one had hardly set off. Other deaths in novels form the true closure to a work, and of course as such, death becomes a narrative device for the

author. The artificiality of this device has caused it to fall into disrepute in the post-war novel, but, for example, in *Possession*, Byatt is writing a Romance, so can use contrived narrative devices if she wishes. In the most self-conscious passage of *Possession*, she has Roland meditate upon life and art, arbitrariness and artificial patterning, like layers of plot and pseudo-autonomy:

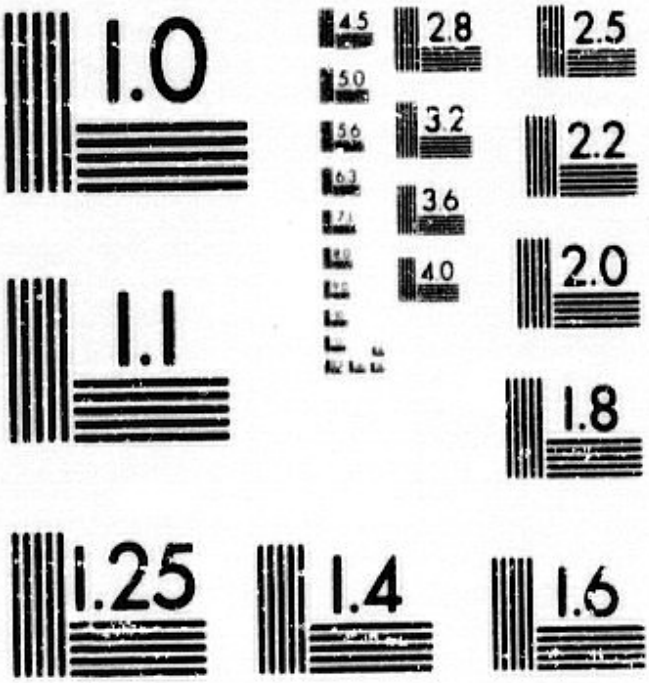
> Somewhere in the locked-away letters, Ash had referred to the plot or fate which seemed to hold or drive the dead lovers. Roland thought, partly with precise postmodernist pleasure, and partly with a real element of superstitious dread, that he and Maud were being driven by a plot or fate that seemed, at least possibly, to be not their plot or fate but that of those others. And it is probable that there is an element of superstitious dread in any self-referring, self-reflexive, inturned postmodernist mirror-game or plot-coil that recognises that it has got out of hand, that connections proliferate apparently at random, that is to say, with equal verisimilitude, apparently in response to some ferocious ordering principle, not controlled by conscious intention, which would of course, being a good postmodernist intention, *require* the aleatory or the multivalent or the 'free', but structuring, but controlling, but driving, to some --to what?-- end. Coherence and closure are deep human desires that are presently unfashionable. But they are always both frightening and enchantingly desirable. (pp. 421-2)

In this passage, the "unknown" narrator of the Romance appears to have forgotton he/she was supposed to be thinking through Roland, and has become rather dominant. Byatt decides to fulfill the reader's human desire for closure, and "postpones" Ash's death until the end. Ash was already dead at the beginning,

and had been for a century, but Byatt, in metafictional fashion, saves the description or conveying of certain information about the death until the narrative's end. Other writers of metafictional novels have used this device, for example, Muriel Spark in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, where the reader is told in the first chapter or two by the God-like narrator (who sees into the future as well as into the past) that Mary McGregor died in a hotel fire and that Miss Brodie died of cancer after being dismissed from her post. While death remains a closure to the story, the emphasis shifts from the "what happens?" to the "why?" In the case of *Possession*, the emphasis was never on the "what happened to Ash?", but on knowing the exact circumstances, the degree of knowledge on certain issues. The key information withheld until the end, first by Christabel, then by Ellen, then by the letter spending a century in his coffin, unopened, was that he had a daughter, and that she married at aged twenty-eight. In terms of the narrative, the interesting twists are that the twentieth-century characters possess information which Ash did not, and it was his right, and that Maud learns that she is descended from Ash.

The death of Ash therefore contains several contrived elements: firstly, that Maud should turn out to be descended from him, thus relating the twentieth-century characters to the nineteenth-century ones by blood. The second point is that through artificial means, Byatt can suggest that the individual death is not the end, but that the genes are handed on. In this we remember also Stephanie, and the ghost of her in her daughter

Mary, and no doubt her gifts. Another idea that develops the concept of death as only part of an ongoing metamorphosis, is that of the after-life. In this novel and in the novella "The Conjugial Angel" in *Angels and Insects*, Byatt portrays Victorian characters holding séances in the hope of getting in touch with the spirits of their dead ones. In this latter story, the poetry of Tennyson, and the mechanisms at work in the production of this, are focused upon. In *Possession*, the literary intertextual presence in Ash's death is that of Dickens's *Great Expectations*. This is the third aspect of the contrived and artificial nature of the verbal construction of a death in a novel. The twentieth-century characters have exhumed Ash's body, or at least his coffin, to see if there were any interesting items in it, and of course, since the Romance is a Quest and a Treasure Hunt, there were. A sealed letter is seen to contain a photograph (Maia on her wedding-day --exactly one hundred years before the narrative of the Romance, which began in 1986, based upon 1859 + 28yrs). Upon seeing the photograph, Leonora remarks upon the likeness to her idea of Miss Havisham. Christabel communicates the information about the lost daughter in the same way, even similar words and tone, as did Pip to Magwitch, who then died. The only difference is that Magwitch received the information and died happy, whereas Ash had the information withheld. Magwitch manipulated the narrative throughout, whereas Ash thought he was in control and was not. Dickens uses classical realism enlivened by fairytale elements like Cinderella, while Byatt's approach is truly postmodern and metafictional in its self-reflexivity. But Byatt knows that the reader secretly enjoys the satisfaction of




MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

Mary, and no doubt her gifts. Another idea that develops the concept of death as only part of an ongoing metamorphosis, is that of the after-life. In this novel and in the novella "The Conjugial Angel" in *Angels and Insects*, Byatt portrays Victorian characters holding séances in the hope of getting in touch with the spirits of their dead ones. In this latter story, the poetry of Tennyson, and the mechanisms at work in the production of this, are focused upon. In *Possession*, the literary intertextual presence in Ash's death is that of Dickens's *Great Expectations*. This is the third aspect of the contrived and artificial nature of the verbal construction of a death in a novel. The twentieth-century characters have exhumed Ash's body, or at least his coffin, to see if there were any interesting items in it, and of course, since the Romance is a Quest and a Treasure Hunt, there were. A sealed letter is seen to contain a photograph (Maia on her wedding-day --exactly one hundred years before the narrative of the Romance, which began in 1986, based upon 1859 + 28yrs). Upon seeing the photograph, Leonora remarks upon the likeness to her idea of Miss Havisham. Christabel communicates the information about the lost daughter in the same way, even similar words and tone, as did Pip to Magwitch, who then died. The only difference is that Magwitch received the information and died happy, whereas Ash had the information withheld. Magwitch manipulated the narrative throughout, whereas Ash thought he was in control and was not. Dickens uses classical realism enlivened by fairytale elements like Cinderella, while Byatt's approach is truly postmodern and metafictional in its self-reflexivity. But Byatt knows that the reader secretly enjoys the satisfaction of

proper endings, like the one Dickens was forced by his public to provide in *Great Expectations*. Death is the end in *The Game*, for here, life is a gambling game, the player loses, and the penalty is death. Death is not the end in *Still Life*, as Byatt self-consciously underlines:

> A funeral [...] was a rite for the living. [...]
> The decorum of the novel, on the whole, requires that time not be given to grief. In detective stories, where deaths occur thick and fast [...] the text looks forward to the next death [...]
> There is a temptation to hurry over the next part of their lives [...] It feels a little like discretion: it is both English and composed to turn away for a time, and take up the narrative again when there is something to narrate. Once novels ended with marriages: now we know better, we lumber on inconclusively into the sands and swamps of married life, ending in a query, an uncertainty, a bifurcation of possibilities that allows the reader to continue the story with his own preferred, desired projection. Death is more of an end than marriage. (pp. 342-4)

**NOTES TO CHAPTER 5**

1. Yelin refers in her article to an interview Byatt gave to Mervyn Rothstein for the *New York Times* after the American edition of *Possession* came out: Mervyn Rothstein "Best Seller Breaks Rule on Crossing the Atlantic" *New York Times,* (31 Jan. 1991), Sec. C, p. 17.

2. David Lodge, "The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?" in Bradbury & Cooke (eds.), *New Writing: an anthology I,* (London: Minerva in association with the British Council, 1992) pp. 203-216, at pages 209, 205 & 208 respectively. See Lodge 1971 for the original 1969 article. In this anthology, *New Writing I,* at pp. 263-291 is Byatt's story "Artwork". Also, Byatt herself coedits, with Alan Hollinghurst, the fourth in this series, *New Writing 4,* Jan. 1995.

3. David Lodge, *Language of Fiction,* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, 2nd. ed. 1984), especially Chapter VI "Tono-Bungay and the Condition of England", p. 217.

# PART II SHORT FICTION

# A. S. BYATT'S SHORT FICTION, CHRONOLOGY AND EDITIONS USED

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **SUGAR AND OTHER STORIES** | 1987 | LONDON: CHATTO & WINDUS |
| (EDITION USED | 1988 | HARMONDSWORTH: PENGUIN) |
| **ANGELS AND INSECTS** | 1992 | LONDON: CHATTO & WINDUS |
| **THE MATISSE STORIES** | 1993 | LONDON: CHATTO & WINDUS |
| **THE DJINN IN THE NIGHTINGALE'S EYE** | 1994 | LONDON: CHATTO & WINDUS |

## CHAPTER 1 A. S. Byatt's Short Fiction and its Place in the Post-war Scene.

### 1.1 A brief view of the state of the art in short fiction

Until not long ago, writes Lohafer (Lohafer 1989), the only people who theorised about short stories were the ones who wrote them, such as Edgar Allan Poe, Chekov, Henry James, H. E. Bates, Frank O'Connor and Eudora Welty. But now, short stories are the object of "pure" critics. Since the seminal work, C. Brooks' and R. Warren's 1943 classic anthology *Understanding Fiction*, much work has been done. Valerie Shaw, among others, begins her 1983 work, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (Shaw 1983), with reference to the fact that the short story has usually been considered the poor cousin of longer fiction. Chapter One of this work is entitled "Only Short Stories", and considers the estimates that have been made in comparison to novels, examining possible explanations. She passes review of the place of the wonderful and the sensation story in short fiction. The small-scale characterisation she defines as "Glanced at through a window" (Chapter 5). Lohafer and Clarey, the editors of *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads* (Lohafer & Clarey 1989), show how recent short story theories have focused upon problems of definition; for example, Chapter 1 is the "Genre Question". In the same work, Charles E. May writes in his essay, "Metaphoric Motivation in Short Fiction", that "The theme and technique of

the short story perhaps have always focused on the power of metaphor and story itself to answer that cry of [the] heart of each of its characters, '*Who am I?*'" (Lohafer & Clarey 1989, p. 73). After a consideration of "Recalcitrance" in the short story, there is a discussion by William O'Rourke on "Morphological Metaphors for the Short Story: Matters of Production, Reproduction and Consumption" (Lohafer and Clarey 1989, pp. 193-209), which is highly appropriate for a writer like A. S. Byatt, with her artful narrations about how writing itself is done.

Most critical works on the subject have the typical development, as in *The Short Story* by I. Reid (1977) of definitions, growth and essential qualities. The three essential qualities, as set out by M. Kilduff et al in *Working With Short Stories* (1991) are: unity of impression, moment of crisis and symmetry of design. This is corroborated by Walter Allen in his *The Short Story in English* (1981). For Allen, the modern story dates from Walter Scott in a short work of fiction like "The Two Drovers" in *Chronicles of the Canongate* of 1827. He suggests as a definitional paradigm that "we recognise a short story as such because we feel that we are reading something that is the fruit of a single moment of time, of a single incident, a single perception." (Allen, 1981, p. 7).

From the United States, Edgar Allen Poe gave us a definition of the short story when reviewing Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* in 1842: "The short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal." (Allen, 1981, p. 10). But

genre does not depend only upon length. Allen continues to quote Poe:

> A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or *single* effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents--he then combines such effects as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. [...] In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. (p. 11)

Allen, talking about Robert Louis Stevenson, and such a fine modern short story as "The Beach at Falesa", written on Samoa in 1891, shows how he brought a new theme into English short fiction, the interaction between the exotic--the Pacific and its peoples-- and Western Europe. However, the story's strength lies not only in the subject matter, but in the treatment. In this, Stevenson's reading of Flaubert was crucial. Allen quotes Flaubert:

> To desire to give verse-rhythms to prose, yet to leave it prose and very much prose, and to write about ordinary life as histories and epics are written, yet without falsifying the subject, is perhaps an absurd idea. [...] But may also be an experiment and very original.... I believe that the rounding of the phrase is nothing. But that *writing well* is everything, because "writing well is at the same time perceiving, thinking well and saying well." (Buffon). (Allen 1981, p. 18)

After Flaubert, treatment became everything and subject was relatively unimportant. Writers could now create characters who were poor, humble or afflicted, as beings in their own right and not as eccentric, marginal or comic figures.

Allen points out the influence of journalism on the short story in the closing decades of last century, especially in the United States, with such writers as Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser. Naturalism was also an influence, and the mass increase in literacy, which produced writers of lower middle-class origin, with their own peculiar subject-matter.

The Irish contribution has always been strong, we think of dominant figures like Oscar Wilde, but Allen discusses the Irish story of the two decades leading up to the 1990s:

> During that time, it has charted with the utmost delicacy and precision and in all their fluctuating subtleties of nuance the developments and changes in a people's perception of itself. (Allen 1981, p. 380)

Allen quotes V. S. Pritchett in his preface to David Marcus's anthology of 1976, *New Irish Writing,* where he talks about "the sense of Ireland itself, its past or its imagined future, as a presence or invisible extra character in the story." Pritchett, by contrast, finds no such presence in English writing, except perhaps in Kipling.

Allen finishes his book with no closure, because, as he says, "a book of this kind, the survey of an art form still living, unfolding, changing, can have no satisfactory ending." (Allen 1981, p. 388)

Apart from Susan Lohafer, already mentioned, perhaps one of the principal critics of short fiction today is Charles May. In 1994 he revised his old *Short Story Theories* (May 1967) as *The New Short Story Theories* (May 1994), continuing to answer the call made in the former for a theory of the form. Just last year (1995), he brought out *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice* (May 1995), in which he goes over the old ground of the possible mythical origins of the genre, the possibility of a definition of the short story as a separate genre, and introduces new aspects such as the influence of the self-consciousness of the postmodern on short fiction, and the new data being thrown up by subjecting the individual short story to analytical processes developed with the new technology available to critics in a revival of critical interest in the short story, which he has detected since the 1970s. We will look at each of these in turn, as May has an important contribution to make.

May claims that the short story has its origins in the beginnings of a nation's culture:

> Although there is some justification for the common claim that the short story as a distinct literary genre began in the nineteenth century, the wellsprings of the form are as old as the primitive realm of myth. Studies in anthropology suggest that brief episodic narratives, which constitute the basis of the short

> story, are primary, preceding later epic forms, which constitute the basis of the novel. (May 1995, p. 1)

May quotes Philip Wheelwright, who points out that the mythopoeic outlook most often is represented in the form of particular concrete narratives. A myth not only expresses the inner meaning of things, but it does so specifically, by telling a story. (Wheelwright 1968, pp. 148-53). We might suggest as a corrollary that if we turn this around, a short story that adds to its concrete narrative something of the mystical essence of things has the ingredients to become truly great.

May also quotes Henry James when he says in *What is the Short Story?* that what most interests him is the pattern or form of the work --its ability to transcend mere narrative and to communicate something illustrative, something conceptual: "It must be an idea --it can't be a 'story' in the vulgar sense of the word. It must be a picture; it must illustrate something ... something of the real essence of the subject." (1)

This is partly to do with the short story's singleness of effect. The philosophical anthropologist Ernst Cassirer is also quoted by May as agreeing with Poe on this:

> It is as though the isolated occurrence of an impression, its separation from the totality of ordinary, commonplace experience produced not only a tremendous intensification, but also the highest degree of condensation. (2)

May has his ideas on why Irish writers have been more

successful than the English in this genre, and bases himself on the writings of Lionel Stevenson (Stevenson 1972) and Frank O'Connor (O'Connor 1963):

> Although the short story has always been popular in America, the English, with the exception of modern Irish writers, have never excelled in the form. The reason may have something to do with the English emphasis on a cohesive society: critic and literary historian Lionel Stevenson has suggested that as soon as a culture becomes more complex, brief narratives expand to reflect that social complexity.
> As Frank O'Connor and other short story writers and critics have noted, the short story seems to thrive best in a fragmented society.

Wendell Harris, in his "Vision and Form: The English Novel and the Emergence of the Short Story" (Harris 1975, p. 11), says that the fragmentation of sensibility necessary for the development of the short story did not begin in England until about 1880, at which time the form came to the fore as the best medium for presenting it. With this fragmentation, perspective or "angle of vision" becomes most important in the short story, which does not present a world to enter, as does the novel, but a vignette to contemplate. The short story is the natural vehicle for the presentation of the outsider. The outsider, the lonely person, abounds in the short story. Perhaps in the wide canvas of a novel such a person would pass unnoticed, making no impact at all. Among contemporary short story writers opining on the short story, Frank O'Connor and Nadine Gordimer have pointed out the pervasiveness of loneliness in the form (3). An intense awareness of human loneliness permeates it. Indeed, one does not

have to look far among A. S. Byatt's stories to find lonely people.

There is loneliness, and also mystery. Other contemporary short story writers suggest the mystery of a story as being its attraction. Eudora Welty, Randall Jarrell and Joyce Carol Oates have written upon this topic. Oates asserts that the short story is the "dream verbalized". (Oates 1971, pp. 213-4) The component of dream and mystery may come from the putative mythical origins of the short story, but as a conscious formal element, its entry can be attributed to the Modernists. From the time of Robert Louis Stevenson, the short story focused, in the words of Harris, upon "the moment whose intensity makes it seem outside the ordinary stream of time ... or outside our ordinary range of experience." (Harris 1975, p. 11). Kipling built upon the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, and Conrad built upon Kipling, adding metaphysical issues and venturing on great philosophical generalisations.

To return to May, who discusses the contribution of Conrad in a more recent work:

> The basis of Conrad's symbolism/impressionism is his conviction, reminiscent of Poe, that fiction must aspire to the magic suggestiveness of music, and that explicitness is fatal to art. (May 1995, p. 15)

One often wonders if Byatt's all-inclusiveness and often patronising explicitness in her novels are not the factors which

in the end make her short fiction have the edge over the longer. For May, it is obvious that James Joyce's "The Dead" represents the zenith of the genre. May feels that Conrad lay the groundwork for Joyce to succeed in conveying a magical suggestiveness by focusing on concrete situations in the real world. May (1995, p. 17) uses "The Dead" as an example to show how in short fiction, the end of the story, in this case, when Gabriel accepts death, establishes a new criterion by which all the preceding, seemingly insignificant, details are brought together and made thematically meaningful. Perhaps the difference from the novel in this is that the ending must necessarily be unexpected or ironic, whereas this is not always necessarily the case in the longer form. One thinks of the striking endings of the novellas of *Angels and Insects* as examples of concrete cases, whereby the end makes everything before meaningful, but without dispelling the thick mystery that surrounds these nineteenth-century beings.

Before we leave Charles May, we will look briefly at his discussion of the postmodern in short fiction, notably the self-consciousness it displays. The quotation is long, but we include it since it is particularly apt in relation to Antonia Byatt's conception of her art:

> Although the term postmodernism is difficult to define, most critics seem to agree that if a major part of modernism in the early part of the century was manifested as James Joyce's frustration of conventional expectations about the cause-and-effect nature of plot and the as-if-real nature of character, then postmodernism pushes this tendency even further, so that contemporary fiction is less and less

about objective reality and more and more about its own creative processes. According to the basic paradigm that underlies this movement --grounded in European phenomenology and structuralism-- "everyday reality" itself is the result of a fiction-making process, whereby new data are selectively accepted and metaphorically transformed to fit pre-existing schemas and categories. One critical implication of this theory is that literary fictions constitute a highly concentrated and accessible analogue of the means by which people create that diffuse and invisible reality that they take for granted as the everyday. (May 1995, pp. 83-4)

The implications for the short story of this tendency to be more aware of the wordiness, not only of fiction, but of our perceptions of "real life", are discussed by May:

> The primary effect of this mode of thought on contemporary fiction is that the short story has a tendency to loosen its illusion of reality in order to explore the reality of its illusion. Rather than presenting itself "as if" it were real --a mimetic mirroring of external reality-- post-modernist short fiction often makes its own artistic conventions and devices the subject of the story as well as its theme. The underlying assumption is that the forms of art are explicable by the laws of art; literary language is not a proxy for something else but, rather, an object of study itself. William H. Gass notes that the fiction writer now better understands his medium; he is "ceasing to pretend that his business is to render the world; he knows, more often now, that his business is to make one, and to make one from the only medium of which he is master-- language. (May 1995, pp. 83-4)

May's conclusion on this particular topic is especially

relevant to the art of Antonia Byatt, where as we shall see in the discussion of collections like *Sugar and Other Stories* and novellas like "Morpho Eugenia", the subject as well as the theme is the making of verbal worlds:

> The short story as a genre has always been more likely to lay bare its fictionality than the novel, which with the exception of 'experimental' novels, has traditionally tried to cover it up. Fictional self-consciousness in the short story does not allow the reader to maintain the comfortable assumption that what is depicted is real; instead, the reader is made uncomfortably aware that the only reality is the depiction itself--the language act of the fiction-making process. (May 1995, pp. 83-4)

May proposes the notion that there is an inherent relationship between a characteristic short story structure and its theme. But this issue is controversial, and has divided critics into two camps. Many influential critics reject this and May's other assertion that a unified generic description of the short story is possible. They believe the short story is and always will be a poor cousin of the novel, though "poor cousin" is perhaps not an appropriate choice of metaphor. As one sees Byatt alternate between short and long fiction, simply varying the size of her canvas, incorporating separate stories into her long novels (*Possession, Babel Tower*) as in the style of *A Thousand and One Nights* and *Don Quixote*, who is to say these shorter works are "poorer" than the longer ones? The criterion cannot be one of length, or coming more lately, indeed, it cannot either be one of impact, or the short story would win hands down. Charles May tries to fathom out some of the secrets of the art

of short story writing by applying current intertextual literary theory and modern discourse theory to short fiction (May 1992, pp. 10-12). Perhaps this is the direction we should move in to discover how good stories work. Cognitive research has shown, as reader response theorists have previously insisted, that the knowledge of the world that readers bring to a story determines their understanding of it (4). Hence we are going to try to understand the underlying schemata activated by a reading of Byatt's work, and since the reduced extension of the short story lends itself to this minute study, this is another of the items we add to our list of what to look for in our study of Byatt's short fiction.

In our discussion of the short stories and novellas of A. S. Byatt, we are going to look for the factors mentioned: unity of impression, the single incident or perception, the moment of crisis, symmetry of design, myth and metaphor, verse-rhythms, ordinary characters, and finally, we are going to ask ourselves if there is a *sense of England* about *Sugar, Angels and Insects,* and *The Matisse Stories.*

## 1.2 Introduction to the four volumes: *Sugar and Other Stories*

Having established her literary reputation through writing novels--often long ones like *Possession* and *Babel Tower*--Byatt turned her hand to writing shorter fiction. The first volume of short stories, *Sugar and Other Stories,* dates from 1987, and between the great success of *Possession,* which launched her on

a hectic round of presentations, lectures and other promotional events, in addition to her usual activities dedicated to helping emerging writers, and that of *Babel Tower* she appears to have alternated between short and long fiction. Three more works have flown from her pen in rapid succession, not this time collections of several short stories (*Sugar* comprises eleven, including the title story) but fewer stories in each, and more extensive in length, more like novellas. The title story, "Sugar" made a great impact, and was very successfully translated into French, along with another memorable story from the collection, "The July Ghost".

### 1.3 More pastiche Victoriana: *Angels and Insects*

Her first publication after *Possession* was *Angels and Insects*; it came out just two years later, in 1992. The volume comprises two short stories or novellas: "Morpho Eugenia" and "The Conjugial Angel". While they are discrete stories, they are united by their Victorian setting. This time there is no overt double or parallel time scale as in *Possession* or something like John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*; only by the tiniest and subtlest hint is the reader reminded that he is not confined to a Victorian viewpoint. If the Victorian framework of social life, class divisions and morality gives coherence to *Angels and Insects*, what gives it an element of cohesion is the device by which the two stories are connected. While the first story is about insects, namely butterflies, and the second about ghosts and angels, the similarity between butterflies and angels,

beautiful metamorphic creatures with wings, pervades the whole. Furthermore, the sea-captain who enters the narrative at the end of the first story to take the protagonist to Brazil, is the same character who again enters the narrative at the end of the second story, "The Conjugial Angel". He is the long-lost husband of one of the characters, who has patiently waited for him throughout the duration of the second narrative. Since *Angels and Insects*, Byatt appears to have given the Victorian period a rest, maybe she feared becoming type-cast. It has indeed been productive for her: beginning with her non-fictional study of Wordsworth and Coleridge *Unruly Times* (1970/89), and the short story about Robert Browning in *Sugar*, "Precipicle Encurled", she went on to win the Booker prize with *Possession* and finally has seen success with *Angels and Insects*, which has been translated into Spanish, among other languages, and made into a film. The film version is of the first novella only, "Morpho Eugenia", and makes two rather important changes, an addition and an omission. There was a time when Byatt was in danger of being identified, if not with the Victorian era, at least with history, and could have been known amongst some readers, especially Spanish readers, at best as a writer of Victorian pastiche and parody, and at worst, as a writer of historical fiction, of pseudo-Victorian discourse. Perhaps for this reason, her most recent stories have been set in the present day.

### 1.4 The marginalised female: *The Matisse Stories*

*The Matisse Stories*, a volume comprising three lengthy short

stories, united by the figure and the paintings of Henri Matisse, came out in 1993. "La Chevelure" is a meditation on hair, on image, colour and creativity, both visual and verbal. "Art Work" continues the connection between visual and verbal discourse, also addressing the problems of the working mother and male-female relations. The third and final story "The Chinese Lobster" is more overtly about Matisse, in that we have art professors and a student doing an assignment on the artist, but it is still a pretext to discuss artistic creativity and differing views of art, communication and even power. In all of these stories, we have portraits of women who are middle-aged and on the outskirts or margins of life's action. There are also younger women in similar situations, so the emphasis is upon gender politics as much as upon aging and its consequences.

### 1.5 "Wonder Stories": *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*

Byatt's last fictional work to date is the collection of fairy tales *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye: Five Fairy Stories* (1994). Not all of these stories are new, for example, the first two "The Glass Coffin" and "Gode's Story" are taken from *Possession*. The third, "The Story of the Eldest Princess" was commissioned by Christine Park and Caroline Heaton for the Vintage Collection of adult fairy stories, *Caught in a Story*. Byatt writes: "Christine had the idea that writers should write the fairy-tale of their own life, and I have always been worried about being the eldest of three sisters." (*Djinn*, p. 280).

"Dragon's Breath", the fourth story, was also commissioned, this time by Ineke Holzhaus and Ilonka Verdurment of the Sheherezade 2001 Foundation, and was read aloud in a shortened version during their project for Sarajevo. As with *Sugar and Other Stories*, the story that gives the title to the volume and is the longest --by far the longest in the case of *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*-- is placed at the end. This strategic placing encourages the reader to draw strands together and to remember the characteristics and major themes of the predominant story. "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye" is a fairy story in the tradition of *The Arabian Nights*, and overtly inspired by this. But it is also an adult fairy story and a feminist fairy story along the lines of the reworkings of the old stories like *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood* or *Bluebeard* by second wave feminist writers such as Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood (5). It is also, like "The Story of the Eldest Princess", Antonia Byatt's own story, or the fairy story, if not of her, of a Byatt-like projection of herself. Byatt acknowledges at the end of the collection that "The British Council Literature Department has changed my vision of the world by sending me to many places. There was also a certain guide in the museum in Ankara..." (*Djinn* p. 279). The first part of this statement is true, the second part we are invited to conjecture about, in the light of the nature of the guide in the story. Again, this is not the first time that Byatt has created a female writer-lecturer character who travels to the East. Celia, the protagonist of "Loss of Face" in *Sugar* goes to an international conference, just as "Dr Gillian Perholt", the narratologist protagonist of this story, goes to

a narratology conference called "Stories of Women's Lives" in Ankara.

## 1.6 Models of analysis for the short fiction

In recent years, the irreconcilability of the linguistic and the literary approaches has been proved a fallacy. Stylistics, amongst other disciplines, has attempted to build a bridge by applying linguistic description to literary interpretation. Meaning produced by verbal art has been explained by linguistic analysis. Leech (1969, p. 226), has shown that the roles of linguist and critic are not, therefore, incompatible. Indeed, textual description based on linguistic analysis must now be a fundamental part of criticism. A more exact form of hermeneutical activity, says Short (1986, pp. 159-60), may grow out of a proper understanding of the verbal text and pragmatic context. This application can be carried out through a productive and eclectic integration of different theoretical frameworks, which do not have to be linguistic, but whose combination is vital for a synthetic and holistic study (see Carter 1986, p. 22 and Bennet 1974, p. 287).

In our work, we take this holistic eclecticism as a starting-point, since the description based on linguistic analysis is at once scientific and detailed, and provides us with the necessary tools and abstract models, while the textuak-cognitive approach and its more open considerations of narrative literariness address more global questions and lead us to the

overall interpretation of literary meaning. The combination of the two approaches should yield more satisfying results than the application of a single one. In the short fiction we apply the approach of textual criticism and we hope to see results that will confirm our hypotheses concerning the author's literary approach, and deepen our knowledge, not only of her literary approach, but also of the ways in which she constructs ideological meaning.

Due to the more manageable length of these stories, we are able to subject them to a deeper and more detailed analysis than in the longer fiction. As with the novels, the novellas and short stories are about creativity and about male-female relations, yet each volume is distinctive and makes an individual statement about a particular aspect of story-telling. Hence, we can subject each one to a different kind of analysis, using a different model, not so much expecting different results, as confirmation, in a different way, of the same. These are basically that, in her short fiction Byatt pursues the same general aims as in the longer works, and adapts the same strategies for the creation of coherent fictional worlds.

*Sugar* is the work of a writer who has a lot to say, and almost in a hurry, since it is a first short story collection. She says things, no doubt from her own experience, about life, death, memory and identity, especially identity through creativity. The last story "Sugar" is about views of the self, about story-telling, and the relationship between teller and

listener, writer and reader. It uses the paradigm of candy making as a metaphor for creating fiction. It is also about truth and lies in myth-making, about the relationship between reality and fiction and the importance, or lack of importance, in this. Because of the recognisable schema of the expert candy-maker, of the judge and the dying father, we have taken a model from Guy Cook's application of schema theory to literature in order to investigate the ways in which, in this story, Byatt draws upon her assumptions about her readers' expectations and reactions to certain definitions of reliability.

*Angels and Insects* has a theme which unites the two novellas, and that is verbal creativity, *composing*, whether it be prose or poetry. Indeed, Byatt seems to set out for us a paradigm of poeticality, moving from the most prosaic forms of writing at the bottom of the scale--attempts at accurate reporting of reality in the form of species of butterfly--moving through story-telling at different levels of sophistication, and finally, to end with the great poetry of Tennyson, and speculation about the relations between real life and the imagination, rationality and emotion, and tradition and innovation in his work. We have subjected the verbal world of the first story "Morpho Eugenia" to a lexical analysis using as a tool the model "Stepwise Lexical Decomposition" developed by Leocadio Martín Mingorance. The intention is to demonstrate the great range Byatt covers with the lexical dimensions of the concepts of creation, form and order, and at the same time to show how Byatt engages the reader in a connection-making chase

through these fields, out of which he or she emerges enriched.

Byatt has always been fascinated by the relationship between the visual and the verbal. From the focus on paintings and portraits in *Shadow* and *Virgin,* to the explicit expounding of the theories of Van Gogh in *Still Life,* the taking up again of Van Gogh in "Sugar" as the narrator's father is dying in Amsterdam, and in her non-fictional *Passions of the Mind* (6), Byatt has contemplated the thorny problems involving "reality", perception, conceptualisation and transformation into shapes, colours and combinations, and into the verbal equivalents.

In *The Matisse Stories,* she takes up another continental painter to use both literally and metaphorically in stories that are at once tales and theoretical contemplations. The use of Matisse involves an intertextual relation between apparently new material--contemporary stories of everday lives of women--and an established canon, not of verbal masterpieces, but visual. Because of the importance of the visual and verbal recreation of the visual, involving various kinds of intertextuality, we have taken up a model of intertextuality to record the different functions of the intertext in the three stories, which, while it is now rather dated, has peculiar strong points for our purposes. This is the view on intertextuality set out by Gérard Genette in his *Palimpsestes* (1982). Application of his paradigm of different types of intertextuality helps us to see more clearly the interesting innovations Byatt is making in the interface between the visula and the verbal, and to appreciate the complexity of

the connections she is controlling.

Finally, since the fairy stories in *Djinn* are adult fairy stories, and the protagonist of the title story is a narratologist and a woman, we have applied to it some of the findings on the erotic nature of fairy tale set out by such writers as Jack Zipes (Zipes 1986) and the feminist writers such as Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Henry James, *What is the Short Story?* in Eugene Current-García & Walton R. Patrick, (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, rev. ed. 1975) p. 25.

2. Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth,* (trans. Susanne K. Langer), (New York: Dover Publications, 1947) p. 33.

3. This is one of the main theses of Frank O'Connor's (1963) *The Lonely Voice.*

4. The Dutch journal *Poetics* dedicated its 1988 issue to this subject.

5. Angela Carter, *The Donkey Prince,* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), *The Bloody Chamber,* (London: Gollancz, 1979); Margaret Atwood, *Bluebeard's Egg,* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1983).

6. Byatt, *Passions of the Mind,* Chapter 21 "Van Gogh, Death and Summer", p. 292.

## CHAPTER 2. *Sugar and Other Stories*. Connections through schemata: Truth and Lies in Fiction

To initiate a discussion of Antonia Byatt's first volume of short stories, *Sugar and Other Stories,* we have at our disposal her own comments on the title story. We find these in *Passions of the Mind,* Chapter Two, which she entitles "'Sugar'/'Le sucre'", as she discusses Jean-Louis Chevalier's French translation, or rather rendition, of the story, as well as the story itself, since her theme is the ability or inability of words --English words or French words-- to convey perceptions and ideas:

> The idea for this story presented itself to me initially as a kind of temptation. I had been thinking about the problem of the relations between truth, lies and fiction all my life, first in the moral atmosphere of my childhood, and later as a professional matter, both as a writer of fictions and as a university teacher concerned with the nature of narrative. The formal patterns of 'Sugar' rose up before me, seductively elegant, some years after my father's death, when I had spent much time rearranging my thoughts about life, death, families and time. It seems important to say that it was the formal element that came first. I did not find an 'appropriate form', to quote Coleridge, in which to apprehend my father's death. Rather, I found I had used his dying--and secretly, my mother's later death also--in order to think about the nature of truth and writing. And that was something I had been brought up to think was wrong. (*Passions,* p. 21)

Most of the stories were published or broadcast separately, as Byatt states in the Acknowledgements. "The Changeling", "On the Day that E. M. Forster Died" and "Precipice-Encurled" were

first published in *Encounter*. "The July Ghost" was originally broadcast, as was "Rose-coloured Teacups" on the BBC's Radio 3, and was later printed in *Firebird I* and *The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories*. The title story "Sugar" first came out in the *New Yorker*. They were not composed to form a volume of stories, and yet, they have cohesion, since they share these themes of life and death, and the relationship between "reality" or "truth" and writing: truth, lies and fiction. Many of them refer outside their texts to English literature, particularly the penultimate "Precipice-Encurled", with its complicated intertextuality.

It is not inappropriate that Byatt should dedicate the volume to Michael Worton, who has done so much work on intertextuality. In this chapter, we shall look at the themes that recur throughout the stories, and hence contribute to endowing the volume with a peculiar sense of identity. We note at the same time those moments of crisis or purposes pursued singlemindedly to achieve a unique effect. Finally, we lead into a discussion of those formal elements of the title story "Sugar", to which Byatt refers as being primordial in the composition of the story. The conclusions drawn concerning form, visual schemata and "translation" into language, may be taken as applicable to other stories, and even to the novels, especially *Still Life*, as not only an authorial method, but also a paradigm for writer-reader relations. "Sugar" is about truth and lies in fiction, but also in one's sense of self, in isolation and in relation to others. The moment of crisis is the death of the father. Almost all the stories involve death in the family, so we will begin

there.

## 2.1. Connections through the family; death and fear of death

As we have said, the point of departure of "Sugar" is the father's death. This fictional version told by the narrator "I" as she writes the story ("More things come back as I write", p. 248) can be compared to the truthful version in the non-fictional *Passions of the Mind*. In the chapter on "Sugar" in *Passions*, Byatt tells us of her Quaker upbringing, and of the Quaker condemnation of giving too much importance to literature, and the intensely literary-orientated childhood she at the same time experienced. Her personal myth of the self emerges from a composite portrait of fact, fantasy, literary encroachments and projections:

> Yet I, as a child, it is not too much to say, was in some way kept alive by fictions. I was asthmatic and spent much time in bed: I read Scott, Dickens, Jane Austen. I lived in those worlds. I told myself long tales of other lives, in which I lived with other people in other worlds, from fairy-tales through epics to the seventeenth-century. I also retold my own life to myself to make sense of it. I recounted to myself the imagined sequence of events when my father would come back from the War, and occasionally looked, briefly, at the other possible events, when he would not. The wholly imagined worlds seemed simply good, the kings and princes, the flying horses, the paradisal forests. But these *real* imaginings, so to speak, had a contaminated quality. Fiction met lies. Necessarily, of course--we all tell our lives to ourselves, we must, to make sense of them-- but the moment we do, we exert a kind of power of fantasy over them, which we feel to be corrupt. (*Passions*, pp. 21-22)

Death, fear of death and death in the family are a leitmotif in eight out of the eleven stories: "The July Ghost", "The Next Room", "The Dried Witch", "On the Day that E. M. Forster Died", "The Changeling", "In the Air", "Precipice-Encurled" and "Sugar". We will examine each in turn.

"The July Ghost" sadly reminds us of Antonia Byatt's own bereavement. Like the female protagonist of the story, Imogen, she had a ten-to eleven year-old son "run off the Common" and get knocked down. Imogen the mother, also like Byatt, does not believe in life after death. It is the lodger, a virtual stranger, who sees the ghost of her dead son. The family is torn apart by the tragedy, and it is an outsider who, united to the mother by a sense of loss (he has just broken up with his girl-friend), has the strange privilege, or curious burden, of seeing her visual memories, through a form of telepathy (p. 51). As it is a ghost story, of course, the reader always has the option of believing in the ghost of the child simply as a ghost. If so, it is a ghost who chooses the people it wishes to haunt for its own purposes, in this case, in order to be reincarnated through a union between the lodger and his mother, and possibly to re-form a family.

"The Next Room" concerns a parent's death rather than a child's death. The pain is less acute, and it is attenuated by the feeling of freedom the fifty-nine-year-old daughter Joanna experiences upon her mother's death. After losing her mother, Joanna has a tooth out, and this loss--of a second tooth, not a

milk tooth, and which therefore has no replacement-- is seen as a sort of metaphor for the irreparable loss of the mother. As Joanna hears her dead parents quarrelling in the next room (whence the title of the story), she pieces together her memories of her parents. "Joanna's jigsaw-mother" (p. 64) uses the jigsaw puzzle as a metaphor for our piecemeal recall and seemingly haphazard putting together of the pieces of our memory. Byatt says in *Imagining Characters* (p. 217), talking about Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, where the protagonist is coming apart, that identity is seen as a collage and certainly not a linear recall. Access to the "truth" seems therefore not to be in the power of the image-maker, but the fact is that small amounts of "truth" are dosed out to the receiver in an apparently arbitrary fashion.

"On the Day that E. M. Forster Died" uses the great novelist's death in 1970 as a pretext to discuss writing, and particularly the aspect of the agonistic struggle of the new writer with the canon. The real death in the story is not actual, only possible. It forms the ironic twist which turns the story into a version of the moral prohibition on "counting your chickens before they are hatched". The protagonist, Mrs. Smith, lays wonderful plans for a new long novel, which will bring together all the beginnings of novels she has already embarked upon and not completed. Her purpose is momentarily deterred overtly by the actions of an old friend who turns out to be quite mad. Yet her purpose is really covertly and subtlely undermined by the dark threat of her own premature death, of which she is on that day quite unaware. The first person anonymous narrator

adds a short epilogue to the effect that she might have to change the idea of a long hold-all novel to a short story "in case there was not much time." (p. 146).

"The Dried Witch" initiates a number of stories which are studies in fear: fear of physical pain and death, in both old and young. *Sugar and Other Stories* is remarkable for its variety of settings, in time and place. "The Dried Witch" is set in a primitive village, no doubt somewhere in Africa. The protagonist is an old woman, whose experience and wisdom of age is interpreted, as in the Middle Ages, as being allied to witchcraft. Already dried up inside in sexual terms, she is tortured to death by being left out in the sun until she dries up completely and cracks open. Institutionalised torture and cruelty in a primitive people becomes atavistic and genetic. The story's interest focuses upon fear and the fear of physical pain, which is only relieved when the mind becomes separated from the body: "Her mind stood outside herself [...]" (p. 110). This story can be seen as feminist, as it describes an incident which can be fitted into the cultural history of the victimisation of the female. The female who is feared and the female who is no longer useful must be destroyed.

But seen in combination with the next story, "The Changeling", the victims of society's own fears are not only women and old. The victim in this story is a young man emerging from adolescence into manhood. Society appears to pick on him

because he is weak, or he self-destructs because he imagines this to be the case. The crux of the matter comes when he inadvertently, or perhaps deliberately, starts to victimise the protagonist. Like a changeling, he comes to supplant something in her mind, and her ensuing rejection of him causes him to commit suicide.

The young man, Henry Smee, comes to identify with a character, Simon Vowle, that Josephine, the protagonist, has created. Simon is a projection of herself, and part and parcel of her view of herself: "Josephine was her own creation, as was separate Simon [...] Josephine had made herself, with an effort of will, in opposition to her mother's fear, and what that might have made of her." (p. 156). Her mother was agoraphobic, and in an effort not to be determined by her genes, (like the villagers of "The Dried Witch"), Josephine creates an identity for herself, based on an outgoing personality. She makes a home which is open for herself, family and friends to enter and leave at will. Henry Smee's identification is seen as a usurpation of the self, albeit a false self:

> Writers are commonly asked what reader they imagine. There are writers [...] who can only function by imagining no reader [...] Henry's [...] 'identifying with' Simon, was a blow at her own carefully created, carefully worked, independent identity. (p. 156)

The overt symptom of the usurpation is writer's block, and this only disappears with the changeling's death. While the story is explicitly about fear of life, agoraphobia, and fear of the

other in institutions, especially, apparently, civilised institutions, but where clandestine barbaric behaviour goes on, as in boarding-schools, the description enravels processes of mental torture both of one or more persons upon another, and possibly within the self. A reader may wish to interpret Henry Smee, the cause of the writer's block, as being yet another projection of the self. There can be fear within writing too, and as we see in the next story, much fear is conjured up in the imagination.

One wonders if, in fact, "In the Air" is not meant also to refer to *in the imagination*. The protagonist is a sixty-three-year-old widow called Mrs. Sugden, who is obsessed by the fear of a man going to kill her. Her fear is focused upon open spaces, where she is more vulnerable. She could almost be the mother of Josephine of "The Changeling". Without the security of a family, she is alone. She listens to the radio, over the *air* waves, to the weather report to see if it will be fit to take her dog out.

Through taking her dog onto the Common, she meets a blind woman and her "eyes", her dog, and we have the ironic contrast that the sightless woman is not afraid, while the woman with sight is. The blind woman says that her vulnerability on account of her disability is such that there is not much point giving free rein to the imagination to conjure up fear. But a double twist of the irony comes when Mrs. Sugden sees something that the blind woman does not, and that is the knife flashed at her as a sinister warning to prolong fear by an apparently friendly young

jogger who has attached himself to them on the Common. "In the Air" therefore has several meanings, as the unemployed jogger goes out "in the air" on the South London Common, to get out of doors. The other meaning is that things have changed in recent years and there is now more evil "in the air" from muggers and other sadists.

Yet looking back over the stories, we respond to the suggestion that evil and cruelty are always there, at the heart of the community, and have always been there, even in primitive societies. There are latent periods of calm, but it always comes full circle again to cause fear and panic in certain individuals. The family is always under threat, in times of peace as well as war, and the sensitive individual, logically, is always more aware of fear and its causes.

## 2.2 Writing and the nature of truth

Out of eleven stories, in only three of them, "The Next Room", "The Dried Witch" and "In the Air" are the protagonists not writers or artists (though in the last one, the protagonist was a school teacher, which is related). Verbal, and in "Precipice-Encurled", visual, creativity, is the subject, more or less explicitly, of the majority of the stories.

"Aesthetic longings" (p. 132) are discussed at great length in the seventh story, "On the Day that E. M. Forster Died", but all the other protagonists, apart from the exceptions mentioned,

experience aesthetic longings. In the first story, "Racine and the Tablecloth", there is a discussion of types of artistic creativity--poetry as opposed to embroidery--and the effect on creativity of a writer's assumptions about his or her readers. Byatt constants are present: in the clever female making out in spite of the system, which never changes; the ambitious mother who studied at Cambridge, has a family and later feels frustrated or guilty; her clever daughters who follow in her steps; an aged female relative who sews; the telling of ghost stories as a ritual at specific times such as Hallowe'en; the strongly-felt presence of the anonymous narrator.

In this story, the narrator is well in charge, and even addresses the reader: "[...] you may perhaps be wondering [...]" (p. 11). Yet, as the back cover of the book implies, with its rather contradictory "ruminative, precise, narrators", this narrator is also hesitant: "That is not it, either, not what I wanted to say" (p. 16). It is as if some truth exists, and the narrator is straining to get at it and convey it accurately in language. He/she is mock afraid of losing the "sympathy" of the reader: "You can do without a paranoid narrator" (p. 21). There are two types of reader involved here, the reader (us) Byatt is having her narrator address, and the imaginary reader that the protagonist, the schoolgirl Emily Bray, is trying to incarnate as audience to her own ruminations. One of the motivations of the aesthetic longings is a need to express oneself and identify oneself to a mythical but potent "Reader". This reader is related to a god-like Reader figure:

> [S]he had written for an imaginary ideal Reader [...] no such Reader existed, [...] if the real Reader did not exist it was necessary to invent Him, and Emily did so. (p. 6)

At this point, Emily is not yet a creative writer, but a fledgling critical one, as her writing is her A Level essays on Racine's poetry. Her readers being her teachers and examiners, naturally, her target reader is "adult", and endowed with "pitiless clarity" and "impersonal sympathy" (p. 18). Emily sees the art of Racine as "a world in which the artist was in unusual collusion with the Reader, his art like a mapping trellis between the voyeur and the terrible writhing of the characters." (p. 17)

Emily's great-aunt Florrie did wonderful embroidery, and Racine's verbal work and Aunt Florrie's visual embroidery are brought together in a metaphor for creativity: "lattice, trellis". The metaphor is taken from gardening, the training of climbing plants to intertwine up a vertical structure, and the narrator jumps ahead a generation at the end of the story to tell us that Emily's daughter is said to want to be a gardener. The metaphor is made explicit in the parallel between embroidering a tablecloth and composing poetical lines of the complexity of *Phèdre*:

> A tapestry of lines of verse like musical notation ran through Emily's imagination as though on an endless rolling scroll, the orderly repetitious screen of the alexandrine somehow visually mapped by the patterning of Aunt Florrie's exquisite drawn-thread work, little cornsheaves of threads interspersed by cut openings, tied by minute stitches, a lattice, a trellis. (p. 27)

Although the metaphor is visual, it also pays lip-service to the auditory, referring to the musical nature of poetry, turning the tapestry into the musical roll of a barrel organ or pianola.

The metaphor unites the ideas on creativity stimulated by the moment of crisis of examinations, and the ruminations end with the inevitable moral consideration. In theory, we must agree that embroidering a beautiful tablecloth, with all the skill and patience that this requires, is as meritorious as writing. But the narrator directly, and the protagonist Emily indirectly, suggest that this is not so. Women's work can be writing and not just sewing and home-making, and writing is important, does not have to be secondary, as the Quakers would have it.

The second story, "Rose-coloured Teacups" has certain leitmotifs in common with "Racine and the Tablecloth": the female writer protagonist, the generations of females, a female ancestor who sews, and sewing as a metaphor for verbal creativity. The story is a detailed description of a room inhabited by three women. The tablecloth reminds us of the previous story, and the teacups are a symbol of tradition, harking back to George Eliot and the Dodson sisters' heirlooms, yet reminding us of aestheticism in both living and creativity. Veronica, the narrator, writes herself in as an observer/listener:

> It was no good straining to see [...]
> she could always see [...]
> She could not hear [...]
> she mostly saw [...]

She was overdoing the pink. (p. 34)

In her imagination ("imagined not remembered", p. 38), Veronica has seen her mother at Cambridge, and now sees her daughter Jane "slicing up a pillow case and reconstructing into the curiously formed bandeaux [...] (p. 34), which can be taken for a metaphor for writing even if the girl does not write. The unity of the story is one of place: a Cambridge room, and of an age: undergraduate years. It is not one of the self, or of time. In fact, the protagonist becomes aware of the discontinuous self, living through linear, but discontinuous time. The teacups remind her of the past, and give her a sort of Joycean epiphany:

> The girl in her memory of that passively miserable day's packing seemed discontinuous with herself --looked in on, as much as the imaginary teaparty. (p. 37)

Veronica is the pivot of three generations (Veronica, her mother and her elder daughter) of taking up a place at Cambridge, a place in the same, imagined, room. As the mother is supplanted, she feels a sensation of exclusion: "The past had been made into the past, discontinuous with the present" (p. 37). The new generation's assertion of a right to a place can also be seen as metaphorical, a metaphor for the new writer demanding his/her own space, in the "here and now" (p. 37).

"Loss of Face" could almost have been called "The Tower of Babel", because it is about the added difficulties of getting at the truth and conveying it across different languages and

cultures. The protagonist with the symbolic name, Celia Quest, is a Byatt-like figure. She is a lecturer in English literature in the "depressed English Midlands" (p. 113), who is speaking on John Milton and George Eliot at an international conference somewhere in the Far East. The tower blocks in the modern city where the conference is held, together with her inability to understand or speak the language, remind her of Brueghel's "Tower of Babel" (p. 113).

Celia Quest has read the latest in literary theory: "Kristeva's views on Desire and Harold Bloom's map of misreading" (p. 112). Like her creator, she is not a whole-hearted enthusiast of the continental philosopher critics, but does, like her, embrace the problem of the place of the new writer in a tradition. At the conference, as in fact at this time, the teaching of the canon is questioned, in favour of giving room and a voice to Third World or marginal literature. Celia defends Milton, Wordsworth and George Eliot, on the grounds that they are her "roots" (p. 125). She would agree with Bloom that all art is intertextual, agonistic, and the metaphor of the magpie she uses aptly sums up the ambivalence of the present disdain of the realist novelist, and the valuable, if arbitrary, work of salvation done:

> Celia thought of art as a work of rescue. These fragments, said T. S. Eliot, I have shored against my ruin, speaking of various eclectically framed morsels of Dante, Wagner, Middleton, the Upanishads, *Hamlet* and so on, having equally eclectically neglected to canonize others. Realist novelists are humbler magpies of significant things. Aunt Pullet's unworn silk bonnets, forever

> fair and still to be enjoyed, splendidly démodé in the 1830s seen in 1858. David Copperfield's carving knives, Emma Woodhouse's purchased lengths of ribbon. (p. 120)

The history of English literature is stored in the mind like a treasure house of precious items, semiotically standing not only for the work of art, but for the artist's attitude to his or her age. Less overtly, Celia's reference to the permanence of art through the "forever fair" of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn", reminds us that truly great art is permanent, while the material and human referentials are not.

The title "Loss of Face" refers to that moment of crisis in which, to Celia's acute and horrified embarrassment, she had not recognised the eminent Professor Sun, whom she had, in addition, already met, thus showing in practice that she could not tell Orientals apart. This serves as a meditation on visual perception, verbal understanding and memory:

> She thought about the delicate process by which we recognise faces. Something in the brain constructs a face from circular elements, a visual equivalent of the hypothetical deep structure of language. Infants in their hospital cots are teased or titillated by perceptual research workers, who dangle over them paper suns or moons, adding eyes maybe, or a smiling mouth, sketched universals. And from there to the exact particular, how does the mind move? (p. 126)

Having unwittingly, but deeply, offended her host, Celia meditates upon the difficulties of communication where there is a difference of language and customs and even visual powers

of distinction. Again, this can be a metaphor for the process of verbal creativity, its difficulty and its problematic success. The world is united by innovations which have little to do with speech, Celia remarks, much to her regret:

> The universals haunted by the mocking various spirit were the plate-glass tower, the machine-gun, the deconstructive hubris of grammatologists and the binary reasoning of machines. (p. 127)

She understands the problems of the neo-imperialism of the English language, presented as a representation of Western bourgeois capitalism. Yet she can't help being English, or being a traditionalist, the fault lies not in the British Empire, but in the failure of the Babel project:

> Celia had always before been sorry for the amicable men of Babel, who had surely desired a good thing. (p. 127)

Yet if one considers the problem in binary terms, if it were not for human divisions and incomprehension, when the struggle to communicate is finally successful, it would not be meaningful or even noticed. The positive sense of communication through creativity depends precisely upon our ignorance and division.

"On the Day that E. M. Forster Died" is more explicitly about writing. The protagonist, Mrs. Smith, is a reading addict and a small-scale and frustrated writer, one who encounters manifold impediments to her aesthetic yearnings. The narrator begins by directly addressing the reader: "This is a story about

writing" (p. 129). Yet, the narrator tells us, the protagonist herself would not like the story she happens to be in. She is weary of the idea of writing about writing, and would never write about writers or writing as a paradigm for life. She rejects the self-conscious novel, or just does not like the idea. This is perhaps because she equates it with the great novels of Joyce, Mann and Proust, that are so great that they are a menace to her own pretensions, and she is "afraid" of them (p. 129). To locate Mrs. Smith's background, the narrator quotes the famous lines of T. S. Eliot about art being a substitute for religion, and D. H. Lawrence's about the novel being the "one bright book of life", and the "highest form of human expression yet attained" (p. 129).

Mrs. Smith is middle-aged like her creator. It has been observed frequently that the important female protagonists of Byatt and her sister Margaret Drabble tend to age with them. Mrs. Smith also has a cleaning lady who is battered by her husband, a motif which is picked up in a later short story "Art Work" in *The Matisse Stories*, where the cleaning lady comes to have unexpected prominence.

In this story, however, the focus is upon Mrs. Smith alone, her beliefs about art, her literary pretensions and how her immediate plans for future writing may be cruelly and arbitrarily cut short. The narrator, and their common creator, Byatt, share some of the literary tastes of the protagonist, and are at variance on other aspects. They agree about the necessity in a

novel for a strong plot:

> She liked things to happen. Stories, plots. History, facts. If I do not entirely share her views, I am much in sympathy with them. (p. 130)

The lack of unanimous agreement continues Byatt's practice of employing the multiple viewpoint and showing various possibilities. The predilection for action and the mixture of fact and fiction is exemplified in this tale, set in 1970 in the London Library, as we are presented with a physical attack upon the protagonist, which is at once comic and serious, and we have the fact of the death of Forster.

Mrs. Smith seems unlike Byatt in her attempts to separate art and life in her own life and have "isolated ideas": "She preferred to divide art and life" (p. 131). Perhaps she only *thinks* she can separate the two, as in fact she depends entirely on art for her well-being:

> The bright books of life were the shots in the arm, the warm tots of whisky which kept her alive and conscious and lively. Life itself was related in complicated ways to this addiction. (p. 130)

The narrator asserts that the story is not simply about writing, it is a story which has "a paradigmatic plot which, I believe, takes it beyond the narcissistic consideration of the formation of the writer, or the aesthetic closure of the mirrored mirror." (p. 130)

If then, it is more than this, what should the reader look for, and what does the reader get? Perhaps something to do with these complicated ways in which life is related to fiction? Perhaps the relations and connections branch outwards unendingly, in intellectual and moral counteraction to the mere aesthetic satisfaction of the ironic open yet closed ending?

Certainly, as the expression "aesthetic longings" is introduced at this point (p. 132), Byatt has the narrator apparently pick out of Mrs. Smith's mind the memories, thoughts and intentions that relate her physical life to her aesthetic life as both recipient (reader) and activator (writer).

There is a long section on the origin of ideas for fiction. This is followed by meditation on verbalisation, the process from perception to lexicalisation, and the need to compress and connect, in order to create a powerful discourse. Through Mrs. Smith, Byatt tries to describe how ideas come to a writer. While the reader is frequently made aware that Mrs. Smith's view is simplistic, even naïve, perhaps through the lack of her creator's multiple vision, he is still conscious of a basic truth in some of her findings. It seems fairly acceptable that material for fiction must come from the interface between life and reading. This exists in life and is the interplay between "life itself" as it happens to us, or as we direct it, with more or less artistry, according to our personality and tastes, and what we make of life from our reading. If we are avid, addicted readers like Mrs. Smith and Byatt herself, life cannot exist without

reading, but the source materials of reading lie in the external world, so there is constant interaction between the two. Mrs. Smith is wrong when she thinks they can be separated. But fortunately, she is not perturbed by the chicken and egg question of which comes first, conceptualisation or lexicalisation.

Mrs. Smith has written lots of beginnings to novels, but seems to lack the drive, inspiration, patience, time or whatever, to carry them through to the end. Some of the beginnings mentioned can be seen to equate to books which Byatt has carried through to completion. One was to be on "the private lives of various people at the time of the public events of the Suez landings and the Russian invasion of Hungary" (p. 131); this would seem to correspond to *The Virgin in the Garden*. Another was projected as "a tragi-comedy about a maverick realist painter"; one wonders if part of him went into the husband, Robin, in "Art Work" in *The Matisse Stories*. Thirdly, a parody of *The Lord of the Rings* would be mixed with incompatible "real" modern events; again, part of this may be seen in *Possession* and in bits of *Babel Tower*.

As Mrs. Smith has the sudden idea of bringing these diverse options together into a single book, new ideas occur to her. The narrator uses different similes, magical and mechanical, to convey the idea of the unstoppability of the process, once it has been triggered:

> [...] a fantastically convoluted, improbably possible plot reared up before her like a

> snake out of a magic basket, like ticker-tape, or football results out of the television teleprinter. (p. 132)

We suspect that Byatt, who should know, is speaking through the narrator when he/she says that such moments of insight concerning a work are as striking as falling in love at first sight (p. 132). Byatt and Mrs. Smith certainly share an admiration for Proust, and here, Mrs. Smith meditates on the all-embracing nature of Proust's fiction, and on his successful verbalisation of life as he recalled it:

> It would have to be a very long book. Proust came to mind, his cork-lined room stuffed with the transformation of life into words, everything he knew, feathers on hats, Zeppelins, musical form, painting, vice, reading, snobbery, sudden death, slow death, food, love, indifference, the telephone, the table-napkin, the paving-stone, a lifetime. (p. 132)

Mrs. Smith is challenged by the great writers and attempts to rise to the challenge. She thinks naïvely that she could write her own version of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, putting into the novel just what has been her experience, and welcomes the freedom ironically afforded by these limitations:

> Why does condensation of thought have such authority? Like warning, or imperative dreams. Mrs. Smith could have said at any time that of course all her ideas were part of a whole, they were all hers, limited by her history, sex, language, class, education, body and energy. (p. 132)

If Proust's writing was conditioned by the facts of his life, his living at a certain time, in France, in certain circles, with certain sexual inclinations and a certain state of health and energy, Mrs. Smith, by comparison, can be expected to produce something much more banal. Her very name suggests ordinariness (with all due respect to the Smiths of this world), and we are not invited to be on intimate terms with her by knowing her Christian name.

When she starts to write, the connections seem to take control, they emerge from the material and connect automatically in the fictional realm. This may be the case, perhaps Byatt is speaking here, but it does seem rather facile, unlike the supreme sacrifice Proust made, exchanging life for his cork-lined room and writing with discipline:

> She put pen to paper then, and noted the connections she saw between the disparate plots, the developments that seemed so naturally to come to all of them, branching and flowering like speeded film, seed to shoot to spring to summer from this new form. [...] she had the sense that this was indeed a growth, a form of life, her life, its own life. (p. 133)

Inspired by Coleridge's idea of the organic metaphor, she is encouraged to extrapolate from experiences she has lived to forms of fiction, with the connections endlessly growing. She tries to come to grips with her medium, language, but the apparent fluidity of Proust's use of language has disguised for her its problematic in relation to external life. She meditates

simplistically on the denotative and connotative functions of words, and is entranced by the power they appear to offer her:

> Everything was transformed. Everything was hers, by which phrase she meant, thinking fast in orderly language that at that time she felt no doubt about being able to translate everything she saw into words, her own words, English words, English words in 1970, with their limited and meaningful and endlessly rich histories, theirs as hers was hers. This was not the same as Adam in Eden naming things, making nouns. It was not that she said nakedly as though for the first time, tree, stone, grass, sky, nor even, more particularly, omnibus, gas-lamp, culottes. It was mostly adjectives. Elephantine bark, eau-de-nil paint on Fortnum's walls, Nile-water green, a colour fashionable from Nelson's victories at the time when this street was formed, a colour for old drawing-rooms or, she noted in the chemist's window, for a new eyeshadow, Jeepers Peepers, Occidental Jade, what nonsense, what vitality, how lovely to know. Naming with nouns, she thought absurdly, is the language of poetry, There is a Tree, of many One. The Rainbow comes and goes. And Lovely is the Rose. Adjectives go with the particularity of long novels. They limit nouns. And at the same time give them energy. Dickens is full of them. And Balzac. And Proust. (p. 134)

We have quoted this long passage as it demonstrates Byatt trying to convey how the connections come together in the mind of the writer who is specially sensitive to literature. The thinking of Mrs. Smith is overtly undermined by the narrator's word "absurdly" in the middle of the passage, and subverted in a more covert way by its own rambling nature. Her mind is seduced by connections like "eau-de-nil" and "Dickens", and her train of thought is whisked off at a tangent. At least Byatt allows her

to come full circle coming back to Proust. But the reader is made aware of the disparity between these thoughts and the writing of Proust. The intervening process, which here is absent, is that of discipline of the mind. Language is not lacking, but it needs harnessing, to use a metaphor for controlling something alive and strong.

While Mrs. Smith is in ecstasy over her apparent discovery of the ultimate adequacy of language, and the reader is judging her prolix style, Byatt maybe is allowing her to have a point underneath it all. Perhaps the only way to get at the "hard idea of truth", when the truth is complex or controversial, is not to attempt to be direct, but to make several verbal tries at it:

> How extraordinary and interesting it all was, how adequate language turned out to be, if you thought in terms of long flows of writing, looping tightly and loosely around things, joining and knitting and dividing, or, to change the metaphor, a Pandora's box, an Aladdin's cave, a bottomless dark bag into which everything could be put and drawn out again, the same and not the same. (p. 134)

Not only is circumlocution necessary, but also metaphor. The metaphors used here, looping and knitting, are feminine metaphors and relate to those of embroidering and dressmaking in the first two stories of the collection. Mrs. Smith unconsciously finds metaphor indispensible, and does not enter into the question of whether metaphor gives a more accurate idea of truth, or, in its attempt to elucidate it, merely falsifies it.

Mrs. Smith finds her aesthetic longings in danger of being cut short, and in this, she is like the artist of the penultimate story "Precipice-Encurled".

## 2.3 Truth, lies and the sense of self

In the story "On the Day that E. M. Forster Died", the protagonist, Mrs. Smith, is "curious about what held the personality together, what constituted the self." (p. 138). Her interest is sincere, but her vision is distracted. We have an example here of Iris Murdoch's "facile idea of sincerity", the attempt at "truth to oneself", as opposed to "the hard idea of truth" (p. 16). Mrs. Smith tries to get at the truth about herself, and the female narrator of "Sugar" also tries to pull together the fragments of her discontinuous self to form a whole, a sense of discrete and unique identity. Mrs. Smith and the narrator of "Sugar" stand comparison, but first let us see what Byatt says about "Sugar":

> There is a certain amount of defiance in 'Sugar'. Defiance of the moral imperative (my own, my family's, my culture's) that one should not 'eat up' life with the order of art. Defiance of the aesthetic imperative that all good fiction now is overtly fictive and about fictiveness. 'Sugar' is that, but it does try to be truthful. It does also, indicate that there are truths its author chooses to omit, not to tell, to ignore. It does indeed, also claim authorship for its author. (*Passions*, p. 25)

The last three stories, "On the Day that E. M. Forster

Died", "Precipice-Encurled" and "Sugar", are about the relations between art and life, about finding the truth about oneself, and about truth and lies in fiction. We will look at each in turn.

Mrs. Smith rebels against this moral imperative disavowing the preeminence of art which Byatt asserts as underlying our English education and culture:

> Nothing now, she knew, whatever in the moral abstract she thought about the relative importance of writing and life, would matter to her more than writing. (p. 134)

She relates this realization and the power of her decision about it to her age:

> This illumination was a function of middle age. Novels --as opposed to lyrics, or mathematics-- are essentially a middle-aged form. The long novel she meant to write acknowledged both the length and shortness of her time. (p. 134)

Absurd as this assertion may seem, it is logical in that the type of novel she has in mind, for example, a Proustian novel, requires length of life to have experiences to serve as material, and the urgency of the short time left to serve as impulse for the writer to put his or her thoughts and ideas about himself in order. As a middle-aged woman in 1970, the following is what she has lived through and therefore what not only is available to her as material for a long novel, but potentially characterises her and endows her with identity:

> A war, a welfare state, the rise (and fall) of the meritocracy, European unity, little England, equality of opportunity, comprehensive schooling, women's liberation, the death of the individual, the poverty of liberalism. (p. 134)

Material is not lacking, and the medium is also appearing to be less of a problem for Mrs. Smith. But as we have seen, as her enthusiasm grows and her certainty about herself establishes itself, her view gets more simplistic. In this story, we see Forster chosen to represent the tradition into which Mrs. Smith is trying to elbow her way. She must make a space for herself. She feels freer now that Forster, her "ideal of the English novel" (p. 135) is dead:

> Now I have room to move, now I can do as I please, now he can't overlook or reject me. (p. 135)

As we judge this neophyte struggling agonistically with her forbears in the traditon of the English novel, we cannot help feeling that she is confusing the man with the work. The fact that Forster is dead only means there will be no more Forster novels or criticism, the corpus is closed. The great writers will always be there in their works, to be struggled with and learnt from by upcoming writers. Byatt goes on to explain through Mrs. Smith's contemplations that this closure through death turns the work into a more accessible commodity, for somehow, it seems rather impertinent to take advantage of it during the lifetime of its owner:

> What she meant, she decided [...] was that he was removed, in some important sense, by his death, as a measure. Some obligation she had felt, which tugged both ways, to try to do as well as he did, and yet to do differently from him, had been allayed. Because his work was now truly closed into the past it was now in some sense her own, more accessible to learn from, and formally finished off. (p. 136)

The ironic twist at the end of the story comes through the juxtaposition of the death of Forster at an advanced age and the possible death of Mrs. Smith, cut short perhaps in middle age, not expecting it, and for a very prosaic reason like cancer, not for a dramatic, adventurous reason, as suggested by her crazy friend Conrad, with his music machine that supposedly kills with sound waves. By the end of the story, Mrs. Smith has given in to the demands of art and is willing to give up her life to writing a long novel, only to find that "fate" has been stalking her as she walked up and down Jermyn Street, and is not going to allow her.

A character very similar to her in this is Joshua Riddell, the young English painter friend of Robert Browning in "Precipice-Encurled". As Jane Campbell writes:

> Intent on capturing the appearance of an approaching storm, Joshua is swept from his perch on a cliff and dashed to pieces. The young painter and the old poet, the reader is made to feel, would have understood each other: they share a passion for accuracy about the most minute and insignificant details of the human and natural worlds. The plot thus embodies one of Browning's favourite themes, opportunity missed. This narrative itself

> is enclosed in, and encloses, two more stories on the same theme --stories of unfulfilled love. (Campbell 1991, pp. 115-6)

It seems likely that Byatt has taken this theme from Browning and worked it not only into "Precipice-Encurled" and "On the Day E. M. Forster Died", but even "The July Ghost" and the other stories about death. The arbitrary nature of the cruel death of her own son adds a personal note to the theme, worked out in the boy in "The July Ghost". Jane Campbell continues:

> The plot thus represents the intrusion of destructive chance happenings into the life of imagination and emotion. The title refers to the precariously occupied spaces of love and art, and the narrative method demonstrates the hazards of creativity. Through Browning's and Joshua's work and in its own movement, the story shows the creative mind's encircling, assimilating work --and the inevitable escape of 'the real thing' from the mind's grasp. In the words Juliet Dusinberre has used of Byatt's novel *The Virgin in the Garden*, this short story 'seems to declare that the real is beyond form.' (1)

The interplay of truth and fiction in creativity is literally at the heart of this story. The castle, like W. B. Yeats's tower, is symbolic of a space for isolated creativity. Here it is wrapped around by the precipice. The story comprises four parts, and as Jane Campbell points out, "The four-part structure represents the encircling work of the imagination as it appropriates its material." (Campbell 1991, p. 117)

The first part begins with a "lady" sitting in her house in

Venice, waiting for Robert Browning. Only at the end are we told that she is called Mrs. Bronson. This part appears to be fact, as in the story, the true existence of this friend of Browning's is attested by portraits, photographs and the information that Henry James gave her a small role in *The Aspern Papers*. She seems therefore to have been the model for *The Aspern Papers*' Mrs. Prest (just as we have a similarity between the poet Aspern and the fictitious poet modelled on Browning, R. H. Ash of *Possession*). Part two is seen through the eyes of a scholar, who is also similar to the narrator-biographer of *The Aspern Papers* and to Roland, the fictitious post-graduate research student, protagonist of the twentieth-century dimension of *Possession*. Roland is entirely fictional, but here, the apparently fictional scholar, not named by Byatt in the story, was real, based on the editor of the Browning-Bronson letters, Michael Meredith.

Part three centres upon Robert Browning, accompanied by his sister and remembering his dead wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Byatt's imagination has the poet wonder, like Mrs. Smith, about identity and the continuity of the self. In his doubt, his search for a "sense of self", he asks "What is a man, what is a man's soul?" (p. 190). If an author does not know himself and creativity is subject to chance, when a scholar brings a second sensibility to bear upon the so-called facts, these "facts" are then at several removes from the truth.

Jane Campbell takes the title for her fine article from the following lines Byatt has quoted from Browning's *The Ring and the*

> What's this then, which proves good yet seems
> untrue? This that I mixed with truth, motions of mine
> [...] Is fiction which makes fact alive, fact too?
> The somehow may be thishow. (2)

Browning suggests in his poem that the imagination of the poet or creative writer works upon facts and fabricates fictions as beautiful and valuable as gold. As Jane Campbell states:

> At the center of her story, surrounded by
> documented details of Browning's life
> and quotations from his work, and by an
> unnamed work of twentieth-century
> scholarship, Byatt has placed an example
> of 'fiction which makes fact alive'.
> By adding the comma where Browning
> did not use one, she suggests that
> fiction-making is inevitable wherever
> the imagination is at work on facts.
> (Campbell 1991, p. 117)

The outer and ultimate narrator, A. S. Byatt, seems to be embodying the fictional processes described by Browning in his poem. Jane Campbell demonstrates the fact that:

> By calling into question the existence
> of the boundary line between fact and
> fiction, Byatt daringly shows both the
> impossibility of originality and,
> conversely, the inevitability, in all
> writing, of invention and 'confection'.
> (Campbell 1991, p. 117)

She also identifies the intertextual presence in Byatt's story of the following texts, both factual and fictional:

Michael Meredith (ed.), *More Than Friend: the Letters of Robert Browning to Katharine de Kay Bronson* (3)

Robert Browning's poetry

Henry James, *The Aspern Papers* & "The Private Life"

Christopher Smart, *Song to David*

Andrew Marvell, "Mower's Song"

Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*

Dante, *Inferno*

Monet's theories of art

Byatt mirrors Browning's own putting together of fact and fiction in an imaginative way to create a new fiction. How the imagination deals with pieces of fact is a subject in itself. Part 4 of the story, though it comes temporally at the end, is the heart of the story, and this is signalled by its length and focus. It is a meditation upon the artistic process. We mentioned the parallel between Mrs. Smith of "On the Day that E. M. Forster Died" and the protagonist of this section, the painter Joshua Riddell. Riddell, the riddle, unlike the scholar and Mrs. Bronson, is not real. Mrs. Smith will probably never finish her long novel, and Joshua certainly never finishes his portrait of his fiancée Miss Juliana Fishwick, or his mountain picture, his "recording of the effects of these ashy whitenesses" of the Apennines (p. 208):

> He meant to be a great painter. He meant to do something quite new, which would have

> authority. He knew he should recognize this, when he had learnt what it was, and how to do it. (p. 196)

He dies while attempting to imitate Monet and his painting of light and "the act of seeing" (p. 210) in *Vétheuil in the Fog*. He is oppressed by his own "failures of vision", but finds fulfilment in his awareness of the contradictory "visible empty air" (p. 209) that reminds us of the air become visible in the process of confection of candy in "Sugar".

Jane Campbell has done the detective work in her article, to show exactly who died (a Miss Wade on the island of Ischia), who is real and who is not. She also shows the feminist subtext underlying the exchanges and the "language of incompleteness and shattering" (Campbell 1991, p. 122) in the scene of climax. The young lady acquaintance of Browning's friends, who died while sketching the sunset, is turned into a young man, inspired by Ruskin's vision and enticed to death by his own aesthetic longings. But one suspects that within aesthetic longings there is an element of vanity and ambition.

In the story, Browning's comments upon hearing of the death of the young painter are that he was "reaching after the unattainable" (p. 212). In Byatt's imagination, Browning is negative about the power of art to capture the truth. Jane Campbell endorses this, but with a sort of let-out clause concerning the exuberance of language and Byatt's control of it:

> [...] her story both openly and covertly-- and disturbingly-- displays the predatory activity of the imagination as it raids other texts in its fruitless attempt to get to the 'thing'. More optimistically, Byatt also shows the fertility of language. (Campbell 1991, p. 121)

## 2.4 Schemata in "Sugar": confection as a metaphor for the creative process

As we leave "Precipice-Encurled" and Jane Campbell's excellent discussion of it, we can take up two points she has made, as a lead in to our examination of the next and last story, "Sugar". Campbell's introductory paragraph logically sets out from the general and fairly obvious:

> Antonia Byatt's collection of short stories, *Sugar* (1987), continues her exploration of the struggle of language with things. In the title story, the last in the volume, the narrator recalls, on the occasion of her father's dying, the versions of family history that have been handed down. The central metaphor is of narration as confecting. As a small girl the narrator was shown by her grandfather, a candy manufacturer, how the stripes in the humbug candy were produced: 'It's the air that does it', he tells her. 'Nothing but whipping in air. There's no difference between the two stripes in a humbug but air.' ('Sugar' p. 244). Self-consciously reflecting on her own confections as she 'whips in air', the narrator struggles for accuracy, at the same

> time acknowledging its impossibility:
> 'The real thing, the true moment, is
> [...] inaccessible' (p. 248).
> (Campbell 1991, p. 115)

Firstly, we have the clearly explicit metaphor of narration as confecting, and secondly, Campbell's conclusion about "Sugar" is similar to that concerning the previous protagonist, Joshua Riddell. The complications for Riddell and his subject are compounded by the fact that even in his moments of inspiration, he is not alone with his subject, his thoughts are not authentically his own. This is because he can only verbalise-- albeit inwardly-- on the subject, the mountain and the light, his visual perception of it and the techniques for converting it into art, through the theories of famous painters and art critics like Monet and Ruskin. He thinks with their words. Equally, the narrator of "Sugar" is trying to get at the truth about her own personal history, but comes to realise that not only is it made up of a discontinued self --tableaux from different times and different angles-- but that these views that she has and holds are probably not "true" to begin with. There is an uncontrollable slippage here of the elusive subject. Through most of "Sugar" she is at pains to tell us whether the versions given to her where she was not a direct witness were true or not, whether her mother or father was telling the truth, telling a lie, or just under a misconception. There are therefore in fiction two levels of truth: one is a sort of ideal absolute truth, which may matter very much to some people at certain times. It may be more, or less, accessible, and may be a starting-point or an end-point. Then there is the ultimate "truth" of the work of art in its

final state. This truth is made up of everything that goes into the work, and at this point, the first truth loses its significance. The conclusion about inaccessibility which the narrator reaches and Campbell quotes, need therefore not be taken too seriously. Campbell in fact quotes Byatt on Iris Murdoch (4) and her way of expressing the infinite regression of language. Campbell at least takes this as only a temporary conclusion. She goes on to show how Byatt demonstrates that to get at a satisfactory view of a final truth in a work of art --painting, poem or prose-work-- which convinces the beholder, listener or reader, the medium must be stretched to its new possibilities in order to create a new fullness. The way in which, here, Monet painted light, and for Byatt elsewhere, Van Gogh did so, is a metaphor for stretching language to further limits of expression. The language is the same, as the candy is the same in the stripes of the humbug. But in one stripe air has been inserted. How has this been done? Not by straightforward insertion or injection, but by a complicated, time-consuming routine of circular movements, involving traditional knowledge and skill. In "Precipice-Encurled", the word used is "unattainable", in "Sugar" it is "inaccessible", but what is demonstrated is "the encircling work of the imagination as it appropriates its material", to quote Campbell (p. 117) again. The result is that Byatt's fiction has "made fact alive". The complicated combination of fact and fiction, truth and lies, is the new truth of fiction and the triumph of language in its communicative and also imaginative power.

In this section we are going to examine closely two aspects of the story, the first is verification of data and the concept of truth and falsehood in narration, and the creation of myths. The second is the presentation of candy-making as a metaphor for confection of fiction. The model of analysis we are going to apply is the same for both, since they each set up a framework in the form of a scenario in which events are enacted to dramatise these concepts. The model is that invented by Guy Cook to detect, analyse and describe the functioning of schemata in texts.

Firstly, we will map out the schemata that dominate "Sugar", and then, before we can apply it, we have to set out a detailed description of Cook's ideas and method. Following Cook's approach we identify certain key passages of the text and analyse them according to his criteria, before drawing our conclusions. Byatt opens "Sugar" with a quotation, in German, from Goethe, about characteristics inherited by a child from its father and mother. We are immediately involved with a schema of family. The first paragraph introduces us to the narrator's family and also to the fact that the narrator is a writer or at least is writing about the family. The second paragraph states that the narrator's father is dying, so we have a third schema, that of death and death of the father. In the same paragraph we have a schema of war, as the father had been away from home during the war. The third paragraph begins with the bald statement that the father was a judge. Hence we have the schema of the judge and all that this may imply. In the fourth paragraph the narrator says or

writes "As a small girl", so the reader learns that we are dealing with a father-daughter schema. Further details inform us that it is a large family, with a family business, run by the grandfather. We also learn that in the deathbed scenario, the father needs to recall and reconstruct his own father and his death, in order to tie up the ends of his own life and identity, his self, in order to face death. His daughter, the narrator, helps him in this recalling process, this revision of the family myth. There are schemata of origins, on a national as well as on a personal scale, involving *Ragnarök* and Van Gogh. The last two tableaux or schemata in the story, the dramatic culmination, are the narrator's childhood visit to the grandparents' house and to the candy factory, and finally, coming back to the contemporary events of the story, the funeral schema as the father dies. As epilogue, his daughter wonders if she has been successful in using memories, records, hearsay and facts, and above all imagination and language, to recreate her father as part of her own identity, and we see the parallels suggested between sugar, heating, whipping and the final product on the one hand, and fact, myth and imagination, language and fiction on the other.

## 2.5 Guy Cook's model for analysing schemata in texts

While the main work in which Guy Cook describes his findings is his 1994 *Discourse and Literature* (Cook 1994), he offered a preview of his ideas on schema theory in a plenary lecture at the *Primeras Jornadas Internacionales de Lingüística Aplicada* held at the University of Granada on 11-15 January 1993:

> The general proposal of schema theory concerning discourse processing is well-known: a schema is a mental representation of a typical instance, and various types of schema have been proposed. The relationship of schemata to discourse would be as follows: enough detail is given in a discourse to trigger the selection of a schema in the receiver's mind. This schema is then used in top-down processing. Other than that, details are given only where there is a divergence from the schema. Unmentioned details--default elements as they are called--can if necessary be retrieved from the share of knowledge, from the share of schema. (5)

In his "Introduction" to *Discourse and Literature*, Cook states his intention to clarify certain processes in writer-reader relations that underlie and account for the power of some texts. He says the following:

> [...] there is a type of discourse which has a particular effect on the mind, refreshing and changing our mental representations of the world. While the texts which perform this function will be different for particular individuals or social groups, the effect itself may be universal and answer a universal need. It derives, I believe, from an interaction of textual form with a reader's pre-existing mental representations. (Cook 1994, p. 4)

In his first chapter he traces the history of schema theory from its origins in the Gestalt psychology of the 1920s and 1930s:

> Its basic claim is that a new experience is understood by comparison with a stereotypical version of a similar experience held in memory. The new experience is then processed in terms of its deviation from the stereotypical version, or conformity to it. The theory applies

> both to the processing of sensory data and to the processing of language. After a long eclipse, schema theory received an enormous amount of attention in the AI work of the 1970s and 1980s, where it was developed for the help which it provides in the two crucial AI problems of visual recognition and the understanding of texts. (Cook 1994, p. 9)

In reviewing the general principles of schema theory, Cook acknowledges that pragmatic analysis of discourse assumes both shared knowledge and processing rules, and that he personally belongs to the school which stresses the importance of the former. His definition of the function of schemata is as follows:

> A theory of knowledge in interaction with text is provided by the notion of 'schemata'. These are mental representations of typical instances, and the suggestion is that they are used in discourse processing to predict and make sense of the particular instance which the discourse describes. The idea is that the mind, stimulated either by key linguistic items in the text (often referred to as 'triggers' (see Pitrat 1985/1988), or by the context, activates a schema, and uses it to make sense of the discourse. In this sense schemata are 'norms' and individual facts are 'deviations'. (Cook 1994, p. 11)

The mental ability in the reader to add to the norm, to supply details by reading them in in their absence, is of particular relevance to literary narrative. The reader is prompted by a point of reference and left to use his knowledge or imagination to fill in the possible gaps. This filling in is not totally arbitrary, but governed by the limits of the schema.

Cook shows how schema theory went out of fashion and was revived

in the 1970s to be pressed into the service of Artificial Intelligence. The postulation of the functioning of schemata at both a conscious and a subconscious level can help to provide answers to some questions natural language skates over. A principal question would be possible causal relationships between factors in a representation of the world. Schema theory cannot exactly prove whether causal links are filled all along the chain at the subconscious level, and in a possible connection of linguistic and non-linguistic representations, but it can account for the mechanisms of ommission and retrieval and the background conditions for the activation of these processes. Cook picks upon the seminal model of schema theory put forward by Schank and Abelson in their 1977 book *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding* (6).

Despite ongoing modification by the authors, Cook maintains the superiority of this model for his purposes. The main advantage of schema theory, as set out in their model, to explain effects in literature is that while schemata enable us to omit a sequence of well-known causal links, thus saving time (and also making for the compression of thought Byatt so admires), they enable us to provide them if needed. Hence a writer can assume that a reader is following him or her, since once a schema has been activated, the links in the chain underlie the overt representation made by the selected items, and the reader may be either consciously or subconsciously aware of them. If a writer wishes to explicitly mention all the links, he or she has that option available for whatever purpose, which, in the case of A.

S. Byatt, is usually that of showing the richness and versatility of the language.

Cook claims that the Schank and Abelson version is one of the most "detailed, rigorous, well-known, and influential" versions (Cook 1994, p. 80) of schema theory, but before we can apply it to "Sugar" we must obviously show how Cook explains and applies it himself. We refer particularly to Chapter Three of *Discourse and Literature*. Here, Cooks shows that the basic claim of schema theory is that human understanding, and here, text understanding, can be represented as a hierarchy of levels of schemata in which failure to understand on one level can be corrected by referring to the level above. A theory of coherence may be extrapolated from this, whereby failure of correction at a lower level may be referred to a higher one. What exactly are these levels that we are talking about? Schank and Abelson define them in the following paradigmatic terms:

THEMES

GOALS

SUB-GOALS

PLANS

SCRIPTS

Cook explains these, working through the categories from bottom to top.

SCRIPTS

Scripts are structures "that describe appropriate sequences of events in a particular context [...] a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation" (Schank and Abelson 1977, p. 41). They fall into three main categories:

- situational scripts (for example, restaurant, bus, jail)
- personal scripts (for example, being a flatterer, pickpocket, spy, jealous spouse)
- instrumental scripts (for example, lighting a cigarette, starting a car, frying an egg)

A script may have a number of "tracks", which are different but related instances of the same general category. In the restaurant script, the tracks are such instances as Fast Food Restaurant, Coffee Shop, Italian Restaurant etc. Each script is represented from the point of view of one of the participants and his or her role in it. Each script also has an "essential precondition" and a "main consequence". The essential precondition for a customer's restaurant script is "wanting to eat", and the main consequence is "having eaten". In addition, each script has a number of "slots" (similar to default elements) whose realization can be assumed unless there is information to the contrary. The slots in a script are:

- a number of props
- the roles of participants
- the entry conditions
- results

- scenes and their sequence.

The distinguishing feature of scripts, as a type of schema, is that these slots are instantiated by quite specific entities and events. Cook (1994, p. 81) gives us the example of a "trial" script from the point of view of a judge. The props would be a wig or a gavel, and the roles would be defendant, lawyers, witnesses, etc. The entry condition would be "being appointed to hear the case"; the result would be the verdict and punishment or exoneration, and the scenes would be indictment, plea, defence case, etc.

A script, it is claimed, is activated by any one of a number of "headers" concerning the preconditions, for example, "needing to smoke" may activate a "lighting a cigarette" script. It can be activated by specific mention of one of the participants, the occupant of a slot, or a location habitually associated with the script. In text understanding, script activation enables details to be bypassed, or provided by the default elements of the script, as required.

Almost no script would function in a straightforward way within a text, however, or it would have little to recommend for itself. Most are complicated with obstacles, deviations, and errors, usually to foreground one aspect or other. Cook lists the following to look for:

- the incidental mention of potential "headers" for other

scripts

- the concurrent activation of rival scripts which will then compete to be the one used in understanding
- the concurrent running of more than one script, or of one script as part of another
- "headers" which may create "scriptal ambiguity" as to which of a number of scripts that share them is the one to activate
- obstacles to the course of events which may necessitate either a loop back to an earlier point, or script abandonment
- unexpected events which may lead to scripts being abandoned or held in abeyance until the event has run its course
- movement from one script to another. (Cook 1994, p. 82)

PLANS

Schank and Abelson define plans and distinguish them from scripts by saying that there are experiences which are so novel and unpredictable as to demand interpretation with reference to a structure which is not so specific in its elements. A "plan" is therefore a schema in the sense that it consists of ordered slots, but it is far less explicitly connected to specified places, individuals, or locations. Plans are ordered in that they realize goals, which may themselves be subordinate to higher goals. The recognition of the goal, or sub-goal, and the stages of the plan to realize it, establishes coherence. Suspension of goal revelation by the writer is accompanied by growing demand for knowledge of the goal on the part of the reader, which must be satisfied at some later point.

## GOALS AND SUB-GOALS

Schank and Abelson identify five main goals as objectives of possible plans or scripts of agents in a discourse. They are:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Satisfaction* | of hunger, sex, sleep, addiction |
| *Enjoyment* | of travel, entertainments, exercise, competition |
| *Achievement* | of possessions, power, job, social relationships, skills |
| *Preservation* | of health, safety, offspring, people, property |
| *Crisis handling* | of accident, fire, storm, etc. |

The dividing line between goals and plans is fuzzy, but there are certain "basic" goals most people can agree upon. Literary writing very often concerns itself with departure from expected goals.

## THEMES

Just as plans and scripts demand goals, so goals need explanation too. In text comprehension, if a goal is not recognized, or is unfamiliar, recourse may be made to some higher level. Schank and Abelson propose the category of themes, divided into three, as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Role themes* | "being a lawyer", "being a garbage |

collector" etc.

*Interpersonal themes* rated on scales of positive/negative, intimate/distant, dominant/submissive; realized in relationships such as "lover:lover", "father:son", "boss:employee"

*Life themes* under headings such as personal qualities, ambition, life-style, political attitude, approval, physical sensations; realized in such manifestations as "being a communist", "liking luxury living", "wanting to become rich"; "being honest". (Cook 1994, p. 80)

Cook refers to G. Edelman's *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire* (Edelman 1992), in his conclusion about themes and our understanding of them in texts. He refers to a possible genetic role in the interface of "intelligence" and neurophysiological activity (the object of research of Marcus in Byatt's *Babel Tower*):

> This process of explanation at higher and higher levels is potentially endless, but the explanation of themes, as *SPGU* point out, is beyond the scope of the investigation of text understanding. Further speculation would need to consider such issues as the interaction of the nature of intelligence with the neurophysiology of the brain, and the degree to which an intelligence is 'programmed' genetically or environmentally. Indeed, the notion of themes correlates well with the neural Darwinist notion of an innate,

> individually variable, value system dictating
> the development of cognitive structures
> (Edelman 1992). (Cook 1994, p. 90)

Cook summarises his theory of schemata before making his analyses in Chapter Four, and offers the following symbols:

$ = script
Π = plan
I = goal (sub-I = sub-goal)
Θ theme.

These themes may be followed by a "type" (for scripts and themes only), a "viewpoint", and a "name". The following abbreviations are used for script types:

SIT = situational
PERS = personal
INST = instrumental,

and these for theme types:

ROLE = ROLE
INTERP = INTERPERSONAL
LIFE = LIFE.

The following abbreviations are used for viewpoints:

R = reader
C (or name of character) = character
R/C = reader and character

Cook says he includes the last group in spite of the fact that the schemata are only illusory for the characters, just as their autonomous existence is illusory. All schemata are readers' schemata. We mention this, since certain of Byatt's characters, notably Frederica, pretend to believe that they don't have an autonomous existence but are merely characters in literature. This added complication is one of the examples Cook warned us about, where schemata rarely come in a straightforward manner, and not always singly. There may be occasions where we, the

reader perceive the same schemata as Frederica or the narrator or "Sugar" as they read texts, and others where we are treated to double schemata by Byatt, since we are allowed to detect other schemata of which the fictional characters are not aware.

Cook applies his version of the theory to the beginning of a translation of *Crime and Punishment*. He starts by identifying scripts and plans, relates them to goals, sub-goals and themes, and then explains the "contents" of these schemata (Cook 1994, pp. 99-109):

> The name of the schema refers to its contents. Thus $ SIT LANDLADY CITY means 'a situational script about a city from the landlady's viewpoint'. Plans and goals have no type, but only a viewpoint and a name. TI LANDLADY GET RENT means 'the landlady's plan to get the rent'. (Cook 1994, p. 97)

The city here, of course, is St. Petersburg, and the landlady that of the as yet unnamed young man at the start of Dostoevsky's novel. Afterwards, Cook discusses his analysis, noting that the naming, classifying and assigning of schemata in this way is "highly speculative and highly problematic". Yet it is worth the attempt as the results emerging are illuminating, as he shows in his final section on *Crime and Punishment* about schemata and coherence (Cook 1994, p. 109). Coherence is created, or may be, depending on the reader, when the reader perceives connections between schemata. The connections may be causal, or inclusive, in that one schema may be contained in another. Cook goes on to represent the connections between schemata in two

speculative hierarchical diagrams (pp. 110-111). Relationships of enclosing and excluding, and of linear sequencing can be demonstrated economically in this way.

Excluding processes may signal deviance. "Deviance" as part of a mutually defining binary pair along with "normality", can only have significance in relation to this norm. Since schemata represent the norm, for they encapsulate the reader's expectations once they have been triggered, the essence of schema theory is that "discourse proceeds, and achieves coherence, by successfully locating the unexpected within a framework of expectation." (Cook 1994, p. 130).

In Chapter Seven, Cook postulates a theory based upon a combination of discourse analysis, schema theory and literary theory: "A theory of discourse deviation: schema refreshment and cognitive change" (pp. 181-211), in which he shows how defamiliarization, to use the Russian formalist notion, can make a crucial contribution to a theory of the relation between literary text and reader's mind at work on the text. A writer may introduce a schema only to disrupt and radically alter it. In its static nature, an altered or subverted schema suffers the foregrounding of certain of its components or aspects. This deviation may have a meaningful or aesthetic effect which contributes to the power of the text. The levels at which the defamiliarization may take place are at those of language schemata, text schemata and world schemata. In a diagram (p. 191), Cook demonstrates three aspects to the introduction of

changes in schemata: existing schemata may be destroyed; new ones may be constructed, and new connections may be established between existing schemata. Cook calls this "schema refreshment", for which disruption is a pre-requisite. The different procedures are reinforcing, preserving and adding, and the disruptive procedures are refreshing through destroying, constructing and connecting. Cook claims that it is the primary function of certain discourses--particularly literary and publicitary ones--to effect a change in the schemata of their readers.

The culminating chapter of *Discourse and Literature* is Chapter Eight, where Cook applies his compound theory to three literary texts. Of the three, his analysis of Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw* is by far the most interesting for our purposes. The points in common with "Sugar" are that it is an extended piece of narrative prose, without being too extensive to deal with; in Bakhtinian terms (Bakhtin 1934 & 1981), it has the many narrative voices of the novel; it instances discourse deviation in the "refreshing" of schemata; and finally, it invokes reliability of discourse within a first-person outer discourse.

## 2.6 Analysis of the schemata of "Sugar"

"Sugar" is made up of long, long paragraphs. In order to analyse the immediate schemata, we shall examine paragraph one, after the German quotation, and the beginning of paragraph two:

My mother had a respect for truth, but she was not a truthful woman. She once said to me, her lip trembling, her eyes sharp to detect my opinion, 'Your father says I am a terrible liar. But I'm not a liar, am I? I'm not.' Of course she was not, I agreed, colluding, as we always did, for the sake of peace and of something else, a half-desire to help her, for things to be as she said they were. But she was. She lied in small matters, to tidy up embarrassments, and in larger matters, to avoid unpalatable truths. She lied floridly and beautifully, in her rare moments of relaxation, to make a story better. She was a breathless and breathtaking raconteur, not often, and sometimes overinsistently, but at her best reducing her audience to tears of helpless laughter. She also told other kinds of story, all the time latterly, all the time we were in her company, monotonous, malevolent, unstructured plaints, full of increasingly fabricated evidence of non-existent wickedness. But that is another matter. I did not set out to write about that. I set out to write about my grandfather. About my paternal grandfather, whom I hardly knew, and about whom I know very little.

When my father was dying, I came into his hospital room once, as he sat up against his pillows and looked at me out of his father's face. I had never thought of them as being alike. My father was a handsome man, in a very English way, blue-eyed, fair-skinned, with fine red-gold hair that very slowly lost its fire and turned rusty and then white. He had quite a lot of it still left when he died, very lively silvery hair, floating. He had a wide, straight, decisive mouth. None of these words recall him.
(*Sugar*, pp. 215-6)

The point of view adopted is that of the first person, and must therefore evolve according to Grice's unstated contract with the reader that the narrator will be co-operative by being clear, true, relevant and as brief as necessary (Grice 1967 & 1975, pp. 41-59). This must be accomplished within the limitations of what a first-person narrator can be allowed to know. The limitations of personal experience are extended by hearsay, reports given by different characters to the narrator. In *The Turn of the Screw*, with its embedded narrations, the initial fictional world of the author, James, can be insisted upon as fictional. James called the work an "irresponsible little fiction [...] a piece of ingenuity pure and simple" (7). It is impossible to give a definite judgement on the truth of the embedded narrative, as a result of what Cook called the "hearsay principle" (Cook 1994, p. 228). Hearsay evidence in court is inadmissible, since while a witness may be honestly reporting an account he or she heard, this account may have been untrue, and at every successive remove, the uncertainty increases.

Byatt's attitude to her story differs from that of James and his "irresponsibility". The writerliness of the text is corroborated by Byatt's affirmation in *Passions* (p. 25) that this story claims authorship for its narrator. Another difference is that the outside narrator, whose voice the reader most depends on to be reliable, being closest to him, is writing about a subject very close to herself, notably her father and mother, and

less so, her grandfather. Bearing this in mind, let us return to the opening of "Sugar" to see what schemata are activated and how, and what this has to do with the reliability of the narrative voice.

The opening activates schemata concerning Families, Story-telling, Truth, Falsehood, Complaints, Reports, Death, Hospitals, Genetics and Writing. The third paragraph activates schemata of Justice and Truth, and of Nationality or Regional Characteristics and Genetics:

> 1He was a judge. When I say that of him,
> I do not think of him as sitting in
> judgement. I think of him as a man
> with an unwavering instilled respect
> for evidence, for truth, for justice.
> When he delivered moral opinions,
> you could see that he was of his
> generation, time and place, a good
> man, a Yorkshireman, ambitious to
> better himself, aware, largely from
> outside, of social discriminations
> and niceties of class, a late-convinced
> Quaker, a socialist-turned-social-
> democrat. I respected his moral opinions
> I share most of them, I am his child.
> But more than these opinions I respect
> in him his wish to be exact, a kind of
> abstract need which is somehow the
> essence of virtue. You might say, love
> is the essence of virtue. We were very
> inhibited people. Even my mother, with
> her indisciplined rush of speech, fantasy,
> embarrassing candour, endless barbed outrage,
> even my mother was essentially inhibited
> in that sense. We didn't know how to talk
> about love. But truthfulness, yes. All
> those weeks, he kept looking at what was
> happening, with his respect for evidence.
> (*Sugar* p. 217)

Not every reader will find these schemata evoked in his or

her mind, obviously, but they are the most likely. The schemata in this tentative list fall into two categories: schemata about the world and schemata about discourse types.

**WORLD SCHEMATA**

| | |
|---|---|
| $S (script-like schemata) | Π (relevant plans) |
| $S HOME | Π C LIVE IN PEACE |
| $S HOSPITALS | Π C GET BETTER |
| $S MEN | Π C PROTECT, JUDGE, VERIFY TRUTH |
| $S WOMEN | Π C LOOK AFTER HUSBAND, RAISE CHILDREN |
| $S CHILDREN | Π C OBEY PARENTS, LEARN TAKE AFTER PARENTS |

**TEXT SCHEMATA**

| | |
|---|---|
| $S (script-like schemata) | Π (realizing plans) |
| $S POEM | Π ENTERTAIN, II INSTRUCT |
| $S CONFESSION | Π FIND TRUTH, II INSTRUCT |
| $S NARRATION | Π ENTERTAIN, II COMPLAIN |
| $S MEMOIR | Π REMIND, II INFORM, Π ENTERTAIN |

**DISCUSSION**

As Cook points out, "knowledge of what types of evidence are reliable is of crucial importance to an individual. To call assumptions into question is to undermine the basis of all knowledge." (Cook 1994, p. 232)

The dramatic culmination of the story is the father's struggle before death with his sense of self. By comparison, the death itself pales in importance. The dramatic situation into which this crisis is placed is the rather unhappy state of the relations between him and his wife. This is caused, we are told, by a lack of trust stemming from a fear of an assault upon the truth, which focuses, Chinese-box fashion, upon the death-bed scene of his own father in turn:

> It was his father's death that was one of the main points of dispute in his relations with my mother, during their last troubled years. I am nearly sure it was this dispute that gave rise to the direct accusation of lying which so distressed my mother. (*Sugar* p. 218)

Our assumptions are that a judge must always tell the truth, whereas a woman can be fallible and untrustworthy. The narrator, herself female and therefore vulnerable in this sense, tells the reader that her assumptions about her parents and the family history have been shaken:

> In any case, my father's evidence seemed on all logical grounds almost wholly preferable. It was just that I discovered, during those weeks in Amsterdam, that I needed an idea of the past, of those long-dead grandparents, and that the idea I had, which was derived from my mother's accounts, was not to be trusted and bore no very clear relation to truth or reality. It was also clear that my father, during those last weeks, was trying to form a just and generous idea of his own father, whom he had fought, at a cost to both of them. So his account had also its bias. (*Sugar* p. 219)

A child's assumption is that its parents tell it the truth, and a reader's assumption is that the main narrator is telling the truth. Here there is an obvious contradiction, if the father is telling the truth, the mother is lying, or vice-versa. In our considerations of reliability, there is a subtle feminist subplot, in which the mother asserts the right to be believed as truthful, and the daughter-narrator catches her father out in a lie, or at least suspects him of not being entirely

disinterested.

An effect of this is to disrupt schemata which attribute holding a monopoly of the truth to fathers and judges. There is in fact, explicit negation of male power: "My mother's contempt for male helplessness." (*Sugar* p. 230)

Two further passages evoke schemata which are interesting in relation to the topic of artistic creativity: one concerns Van Gogh, and the other the boiled sweets factory. We will look at each in turn and then see how the schemata interrelate and create connections and implicit cohesion.

> It was with my mother, on the other hand,
> that the Van Gogh myth originated.
> Her family name had a Dutch shape and
> sound to it. Her family came, in part,
> from the Potteries, from the Five Towns,
> and a myth had grown up with no found-
> ation in evidence, that they were descended
> from Dutch Huguenots, who came here in
> the time of William the Silent, practical,
> warm, Protestant, hardworking craftsmen,
> with a buried and secret artistic strain.
> [...] In Sheffield, after the war, we had
> various reproductions of paintings by
> Vincent Van Gogh around our sitting
> room wall. [...] When my father
> collapsed at Schiphol I was writing
> a novel in which the idea of Van Gogh
> stalked in and out of a text about
> puritanical northern domesticity.
> [...] Yet he remained steadily
> intelligent and analytic, mixing
> his colours, *thinking* about the
> nature of light, of one man's
> energy, of one man's death. [...]
> He was truthful and mad.
> (*Sugar* pp. 235-6)

When Byatt says that in "Sugar" the narrator claims authorship for herself, in spite of prohibitions to go outside the text, we cannot help but equate the narrator with her author. The novel the narrator was writing is Byatt's *Still Life* and here there is a comparison between Van Gogh and the narrator's father. In fact, in the text, the father turns out to be the opposite of Van Gogh in that he was not mad, but not truthful either.

The passage describing the factory is too long to quote in full, so we will include the beginning and the end of the section where the narrator says that this is the second time that she has described it, since she had written an essay on it at school. References to skipping ropes and plasticine as points of comparison for the humbug making lead into the concept of crystalization of this in words in the form of a composition.

> The works was gaunt and bare. The floor I remember as mere earth, though it cannot have been: it was certainly dark, not tiled, and dusty. It was all like an enormous version of the outdoor washhouses of the north, draughty and cold and echoing. On the left as we went in were large vessels I associated with the coppers my other grandmother boiled sheets in, stirring them with a huge wooden baton. I saw, or I remember, four of these. One was full of sulphurous yellow boiling sugar, one of a dark, cherry-red, one of bright green and one, which amazed me because it was an unusual colour for sugar, of a kind of pale inky colour, a molten sea of heaving, viscous blue glass. The colours and the surfaces were brilliant and enchanted. They undulated, they burst in thick, plopping bubbles, they swirled with curving streamers of trapped air like slivers of glass. [...] Men with paddles manipulated and spread it, ever finer, more translucent, wider,

like rolled pastry magnified numberless times, the colours paling so that magenta became clear peony-pink, so that indigo became dark sky-blue, so that topaz became straw-gold. And a kind of primitive mechanical tart-cutter descended and stamped these gleaming sheets, making rows of rounded discs. The process had things in common with glass-blowing [...] Humbugs ran not flat but in a long coiling serpent [...] a fat serpent coil, a heavy skein, like my mother's knitting wool [...] The man [...] began to whip it around [...] it was the regular turn of the playground skipping rope [...] a magnified version of school plasticine-rolling. [...]

I wrote about this, at East Hardwick School. It is the first piece of writing I remember clearly as mine, the first time I remember choosing words, fixing something. I remember still, two words I chose. Both were from my reading. (*Sugar* pp. 243-5)

Earlier, the narrator had written "I have inherited much from her. I do make a profession out of fiction. I select and confect." (*Sugar* p. 241) Confection of humbugs and writing therefore are seen to have things in common. Converting the molten sugar into sweets has things in common with school activities like skipping and rolling plasticine, which in turn are presented as metaphors for doing creative things with words, rolling around a subject and producing unexpected effects. Finally, in the long description of the making of the sweets, there is a reference to women's work "my mother's knitting-wool", which ties in with the embroidery of the first two stories: "Racine and the Tablecloth" and "Rose-Coloured Teacups".

SUMMARY OF A READER'S INTERPRETING SCHEMATA

We can postulate the following script-like schemata ($S) for the whole of "Sugar". Under each $S we name the words and phrases from the text referring to defaults, and the relationship they have to the main concept. These words are all "headers in the text". We see a dominance of qualities and attributes (IS) and actions (EVENTS). As Cook says "it is often shared attributes and actions which create a metaphoric link from one schema to another." (Cook 1994, p. 219)

1. $S FAMILY: MOTHER

PROPS: HAS husband and daughter, HAS Dutch name
HAS respect for truth, HAS "knitting-wool"
HAS characteristics to bequeath
IS "raconteur", IS "a terrible liar" ("She lied...", "She lied...", "not a truthful woman"

EVENTS: WANTS "peace"
MAKES complaints ("malevolent ...plaints, full of non-existent wickedness."

2. $S FAMILY: FATHER

PROPS: HAS wife and daughter, HAS English looks
HAS "respect for evidence, for truth",
HAS "moral opinions", characteristics to bequeath
IS like father
IS a Yorkshireman
IS a Quaker
IS a judge

EVENTS: WAS in war, in Mediterranean, at Nuremberg Trials
IS dying
WANTS an "idea of his own father", "to be exact"
"accuracy"

3. $S FAMILY: DAUGHTER
PROPS: HAS dolls, dog nightdress-case
IS writer, artistic
IS like mother and father
HAS "a respect for truth"
EVENTS: WANTS "an idea of the past"

4. $S JUSTICE
HAS "judge", default element: defendant
HAS respect for evidence and truth
EVENTS seeks truth
RESULTS punishes deviance from rules, rewards
truthfulness

5. $S HOSPITAL
PROPS: HAS "pillows", "nitro-glycerine drips and blood
transfusions"
HAS doctors (ARE Dutch, speak English)

6. $S ARTIST
INSTANCE: Vincent Van Gogh
IS Dutch, "truthful", "mad", "intelligent",
"analytic"

HAS "vision"

EVENTS: uses colours, paints light, life, energy, death, rejects the north and seeks the sun in the Mediterranean

RESULTS: paints "one man's death", "a cheerful death" (the reaper)

7. $S CONFECTION

INSTANCE: boiled sweet factory

HAS large vessels and buckets of coloured boiling sugar ("sulphurous yellow", "dark cherry-red" "bright green", "pale inky colour")

EVENTS: lengthy and complicated process whereby men work the sugar ("whipping in air", "rolled pastry", "serpent coil", "a heavy skein like my mother's knitting wool", "school plasticine-rolling", "the playground skipping-rope", "like glass")

8. $S SCHOOL

PROPS: default elements: plasticine, skipping-ropes

EVENTS: reading and writing

INSTANCES: Narrator reads Frances Hodgson-Burnett's *Little Princess* "spun-glass"; *The Ancient Mariner*: "as green as emerald"

narrator writes "account of the boiling sugar"

Parents met at school

RESULTS: Confects with words working on memory:
"But I do remember that I took pleasure
in writing my account of the boiling
sugar that I usually took only in reading.
Words were there to be used." (p. 245)
Pleasure: in reading, using colour and glass,
making and eating sweets, writing descriptions.

9. $S WAR

INSTANCE: Second World War, father
PROPS: Hitler, lying letters from wives, Nuremberg
Trials

10. $S DEATH

PROPS: sick person
INSTANCE: father
LOCATION: hospital, home
EVENT: dying
RESULT: funeral

PLANS AND THEMES

It is fairly obvious that the above schemata fall into the two groups of FAMILY and CREATION. Those relating to the family include the necessary institutions of education and health:

school and hospital. Those of creativity, the artist and the confectioner, also relate to education, as they involve skills which have to be learnt. These schemata associate with each other in various ways through a common plan for creating pleasure, related to the senses, whether it be visual or gustatory, and to the intellect.

## SCHEMA CONNECTIONS

The lower-level schemata include elements (default elements) which are not mentioned, like Justice: defendants; school: teachers and pupils; war: armies (though the narrator is understood to have been a pupil and the father enlisted). The contents evoked in the texts quoted yield a number of cross-references, even to default elements. Perhaps the most obvious is the paradigmatic relationship between the structure of the (patriarchal) family and the institutional structure of the law-court, even of the state, with its Head of State (instance: Hitler), and the subjects (father and his Englishness). The judge has patriarchal qualities, and the father has judgmental ones. The relationship of the judge to the defendants (default element) is similar to that of a father to his children. Mothers bear relationships to teachers (default element) and to doctors. Maternal pursuits like knitting, but also washing, are found in the confectionery schema. The works are "an enormous version of the outdoor washhouses of the north", the vessels like those "my other grandmother boiled sheets in", and the molten sugar is manipulated "like rolled pastry". All the males are experts: the

father an expert lawyer and judge, Van Gogh a master craftsman, the men who make the humbugs are entirely dedicated and skilled craftsmen too, even the Dutch doctors who failed to save the father's life are experts. Most of all, the coloured sugar relates to Van Gogh's work in colour and to colours invoked verbally in his letters to his brother, and in works of literature in the narrator's childhood reading.

## SCHEMA DISRUPTION AND DISCOURSE DEVIATION

In the MOTHER schema, we find the default elements of caring and teaching children honesty and truthfulness unmentioned and absent. In their place we find unexpected contradictory elements of lying and (albeit non-existent) wickedness. Words like "malevolent" and "wickedness" subvert the MOTHER schema and point to a different type of MOTHER schema, that of the STEPMOTHER. This discourse deviation signals another subtle sub-plot in addition to the feminist one, that is one related to fairytale. The mother has aspects of "wicked stepmother". This ties in with the SCHOOL schema, where the connection is children, and in this instance, the DAUGHTER, the narrator, reads Frances Hodgson-Burnett's *Little Princess*, and is familiar with *The Ancient Mariner* and its magical elements. There is also something magical about the process of humbug making: "The colours and the surfaces were brilliant and enchanted."; "The most miraculous moment was when my grandfather urged the man in the brown overall to show me how the stripes were made in the humbugs." (p. 244) The brown man is a gnome who possesses skills of magic. The molten sugar

is like a serpent, again a frequent element in fairy stories.

Through schema refreshing, the narrator, or the writer, leads the reader nearer to the truth she wishes to convey. Since the schemata of the perfect mother and the perfect father are destroyed, a more accurate version is constructed, in which the mother becomes aggressive, and the father is unsure of himself. The NORTH-SOUTH paradigm also contributes to the refreshing of schemata, and a consequential rethinking of attributes of location in the reader's mind. The instances here make up the tripartite and triangular locational structure of Yorkshire - Holland - Mediterranean. Holland, the site of Van Gogh's birth, his paintings in museums, the hospital, the mother's family, and the adult narrator's meditative walks, is the axis for the rejected North, site of the father's family and of the boiled sweets factory, and the desired South, source of light and inspiration. Here too, there is schema disruption, as the site of the family should include perfect security and happiness; in this instance, the narrator writes of "my father's idea of his family life as Eden" (p. 246), and its subversion. This Utopia is juxtaposed to memories of her parents specifically in war time, and even after the war the family is not happy. We relate the serpent of the humbugs to the serpent of Eden. Equally, the Mediterranean is seen as a site of war more than one of illumination or eroticism.

There are many more minor connections which construct, reinforce and connect schemata. To mention just one, as the

narrator walks round Amsterdam's canals, she remembers that Camus had compared the concentric canals to the circles of Dante's Hell. Hell is the opposite pole of the Eden-Hell axis, over which God the "Maker" (p. 238) presides. Furthermore, Camus writes this in his novel *La Chute*, in which the hero "calls himself a *juge-pénitent.*" (p. 238).

Connections work logically, but also almost miraculously in the imagination. In the narrator's mind the father is related, as judge, almost to God, or at least to an angel. This stems from the gold wings on the buttons of his Air Force uniform: "The gold-winged, fire-haired figure in the doorway is and was a myth." (p. 248). The story ends with the narrator listing significant things from her past which she calls "markers". This rather cursory study has covered the most obvious schemata and their main elements, but even these tangential but significant items can be fitted in:

> Fast, fast these things took and take
> their place beside other markers, the
> tea-pot, the horse-trough, real apples
> and plums, a white ankle, the coal-scuttle,
> two dolls in cellophane, a gas oven, a black
> and white dog, gold-winged buttons, the
> melded and twisting hanks of brown and
> white sugar. (*Sugar* p. 248)

All of these "markers" can be related to the schemata discussed.

the tea-pot: MOTHER (subverted, as grandmother travels great distance just to pour

tea: evidence of male helplessness)
WAR (petrol rationing)

the horse-trough: MOTHER (subverted as instance of child neglect; related to HEAVEN-HELL polarity, father's childhood "Arcadian" days before motor-car; play on words, child found "lying".)

real apples and plums: FATHER (his Edenic days)

a white ankle: FATHER (Edenic: "somehow untouched")
DEATH ("how alive it was", p. 238)

the coal-scuttle: FATHER/DEATH (subverted as he faints, p. 224, narrator associates two blacknesses: coal and loss of consciousness.)

two dolls: FAMILY and North/ ARTIST ( a gift to the narrator and her younger sister from her aunt Gladys. Gladys was her father's sister, but knowledge of her came through her mother, with such attributes as marriage to coalminer (Lawrence), Yorkshire (*Jane Eyre*), red hair, madness (Van Gogh))

a gas oven: DEATH/WAR/ARTIST (related to the myth of Sylvia, another of her paternal aunts whom she did not meet. Again, "knowledge" of her comes, not from her brother the father, but from the (lying?) mother. Her myth is confused

with that of (the unmentioned) Sylvia Plath, in the gas oven, also "brilliance and sexual passion" (p. 228).

WAR: (Hitler's gas ovens)

a black and white dog: FAMILY, CHILDREN (a nightdress case called Wops, inherited from Sylvia and her small daughter--the narrator's cousin--whose life Sylvia took along with her own.)

gold-winged buttons: FATHER, WAR, EDEN (as explained above also the wings for flying back home from the war.)

the melded and twisted hanks of brown and white sugar: MOTHER, CONFECTION, ARTIST (the narrator's childhood memories are in brown and white; also, as explained, there are links between the mother's knitting wool, Van Gogh's colours and the narrator's writing.)

In addition to all this, there are subtle sub-plots of both class and sexuality. The MOTHER-FATHER relation is made difficult by a Lawrentian class difference: "The hero of the wedding story was her own father, a red-whiskered, extravagantly open working man who had done her proud and had also in some way been hurt, or so I deduce." (*Sugar* p. 220)

1.0
1.1
1.25
1.4
1.6
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
2.5
2.2
2.0
1.8
MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)
1:24
MILIMETROS
PULGADAS

with that of (the unmentioned) Sylvia Plath, in the gas oven, also "brilliance and sexual passion" (p. 228).

WAR: (Hitler's gas ovens)

a black and white dog: FAMILY, CHILDREN (a nightdress case called Wops, inherited from Sylvia and her small daughter--the narrator's cousin--whose life Sylvia took along with her own.)

gold-winged buttons: FATHER, WAR, EDEN (as explained above also the wings for flying back home from the war.)

the melded and twisted hanks of brown and white sugar: MOTHER, CONFECTION, ARTIST (the narrator's childhood memories are in brown and white; also, as explained, there are links between the mother's knitting wool, Van Gogh's colours and the narrator's writing.)

In addition to all this, there are subtle sub-plots of both class and sexuality. The MOTHER-FATHER relation is made difficult by a Lawrentian class difference: "The hero of the wedding story was her own father, a red-whiskered, extravagantly open working man who had done her proud and had also in some way been hurt, or so I deduce." (*Sugar* p. 220)

The sexual sub-plot involves the North-South paradigm. Sylvia, like Gladys, marries for love. But she marries a South African, who is cold in the North. Van Gogh also must leave the North for the heat and light of the sun in the South. Discussing Van Gogh's portrait of the Zouave, the father defines it as "'a very powerful image of pure male sexuality.'" (*Sugar* p. 237). The narrator's father, as a judge, fulfils all the reader's expectations regarding attributes of class (high class--having risen from "lower-middle-class" p. 238), and sexuality (powerful male sexuality as judge, victorious airman in War, hero returns triumphant in one of the children's visions, fathers several children, writes a novel and successfully provides for the family.) He attributes his brother's death to "'wine, women and song'" (p. 222). The mother bears the children--the narrator and her siblings--cares for them, with certain reservations, and bequeaths to her daughter her love of reading and powers of narration. The mother's stories have created a composite myth which comes to form the narrator's sense of self and origins.

In conclusion, as we said earlier, the reader expects the first person narrator to tell the truth, but she shows not only how our sense of our own history is precarious, but the final artistic product is made up of a myriad of choices that involve truth and falsehood, deliberate and unwitting, and various blends of the two. The conclusions emanating from the GENETICS or HEREDITARY aspect of the FAMILY schema are that the narrator inherits genetically certain characteristics from a lying mother

and a mistaken father. A lying mother can be read metaphorically to mean those aspects of fiction which are not "true". In her profession, the grown-up narrator selects and rejects. As Cook showed with the "unreliable" narrators of *The Turn of the Screw*, the elements of untruth are compounded at each level:

> [...] and so hypothesis became the stuff of fact. [...] I have inherited much from her. I do make a profession out of fiction. I select and confect. What is all this, all this story so far, but a careful selection of things that can be told, things that can be arranged in the light of day? Alongside this fabrication are the long black shadows of the things left unsaid, because I don't want to say them, or dare not, or do not remember, or misunderstood or forgot or never knew. I left out, for instance, the tear gas. I wanted to write about Amsterdam as clean, and reasonable, and enduring, and so it was. [...] To omit them is a minor sin, and easy to correct. But what of all the others? What is the truth? I do have a respect for truth. (*Sugar* p. 241)

What is important here is not the literal meaning, however much of herself Byatt puts into the narrator of "Sugar", but the metaphorical meaning. When Byatt/narrator says "'I select and confect.'", we are to understand that this interplay of selecting, rejecting and processing different materials of differing truth value, through knowledge (mind), memory, will, daring or lack of it, to produce a product which is "true" --a story told, a bag of perfect humbugs, a written story--is an attempt to use words to get at and recreate a reality either in the outside world, only in the writer's mind, or in a combination of the two. In "Sugar" we have a product with not only the process by which the product was made written into it, along with

illuminating parallels from other artistic areas and spheres of life, but we also have written into it the processes by which its authoress was made. The narrator writes the story herself, and writes into it who and what she is and why. Yet this is, of course, an illusion. The narrator doesn't write "Sugar"; A. S. Byatt writes it. If we wish to equate Byatt and narrator, then we must remember that the authoress is "A. S. Byatt, the writer", not to be confused with the person of Antonia Byatt. Since Antonia Byatt has such intellectual honesty however, and does make comments on her art and her conception of life, it is interesting to note that there is also a parallel between her view of art as being like the skein of candy, and her view of life as being "a vulnerable twisted knot that eventually gets cut off" (Todd 1997, p. 54).

What we have tried to do in setting out the schemata evoked is to demonstrate the common ground not only artistically between the different materials the writer uses, but also the common ground the writer knows exists in her mind and the minds of her readers.

In the tables that conclude this study, we set out first, in Table 1, a list of the narrators in "Sugar", showing who gave information to whom. We also indicate what other characters, real and fictional, people the mind of the narrator. Table 2 attempts to demonstrate the richness of the discourse of the short story, in its varied types. In this and Table 3, the layers and types of narrative in the story, we try to underline the importance of

the interplay of reliable and unreliable narrations, and how some of these are undermined by schema disruption. Finally, Table 4 lists the expressions used by Byatt, made to emanate from the pen of the narrator, indicating how sure or unsure she was of her "facts". The list shows the foregrounding in the story of truth and untruth and reliability in narration. It demonstrates the use of words to get at the "truth". It indicates how Byatt offers an intricate interplay between the following binary opposites:

knowledge / ignorance
voicing / silencing
understanding / misunderstanding
remembering / forgetting
truth / falsehood
truth / myth
deliberateness / unwittingness.

Logically, greater certainty is related to adulthood and first hand witnessing (seeing or hearing). However, our imagination and our viewpoint betray us. An instance of this is that moment of total certainty in which the narrator, in her imagination, recalls the words of her grandfather's employee making the humbugs. Yet she was a child with only a vague memory, mostly of colour and movement. And yet the child's mind offers the compensatory qualities of innocence of intention and goal, and impressionability, rather like that of Van Gogh in his attempt to get at the primitive vision of light and colour and shape.

**TABLE 1. NARRATORS AND CHARACTERS IN "SUGAR"**

Byatt

"I" + ? sisters & 1 brother

| Mother | Father (+5 brothers and sisters) |
|---|---|
| maternal grandfather | paternal grandfather |
| maternal grandmother | (man in brown overall + other men in factory) |
| | paternal grandmother |
| Mrs Haines, the cleaning-lady | Dutch surgeons |
| | Humanist social worker |

**OTHER CHARACTERS MENTIONED**

| REAL | FICTIONAL |
|---|---|
| D. H. Lawrence | Jane Eyre |
| Conrad | Mr. Brocklehurst |
| Charlotte Brontë | Queen of Hearts |
| Auden | The Prodigal Son |
| Van Gogh, Vermeer | Prospero |
| Adolf Hitler | Mr. Murdstone |
| Christ ("The Resurrection") | (David Copperfield) |
| Frazer | Wotan |
| William the Silent | Gunter & Gutrune of |
| Camus | *Götterdämmerung* |
| Dante | Ragnarök |

God ("his Maker", "Allfather")

Frances Hodgson-Burnett

Mrs. Thatcher & the miners

(Sylvia Plath not mentioned but

alluded to)

**TABLE 2 LAYERS AND TYPES OF NARRATIVE IN "SUGAR"**

| DISCOURSE TYPE | MODE | VOICE | PRONOUN USED |
|---|---|---|---|
| short story | writing | author/narrator | I/we |
| poem | written in verse | German poet | I |
| eyewitness death report | written | narrator | I/we |
| speech (of chars) | speech | characters | I/we |
| recollection | speech | characters | I/we |
| myth | speech | characters | I/we |
| school essay | descriptive writing | narrator | I |
| letters (falsely optimistic during war) | writing | female characters | I/we |

**TABLE 3 RELIABILITY ATTACHED TO SCHEMATA OF NARRATORS**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| NARRATORS | | | |
| 1) | "I" (writer) | - child --> adult | R- |
| 2) | Father (judge) | - old man | R+ |
| 3) | Mother (liar) | - young --> woman | R- |
| 4) | Dutch surgeons/paternal grandfather (experts) | - middle-aged --> old | R+ |
| DISCOURSE TYPE USED BY NARRATORS 1-4 | | | |
| 1) | "factual account" | - | R+ |
| 2) | deathbed confession | - | R+ |
| 3) | family myth | - | R- |
| 4) | report or factual explanation | - | R+ |
| MEDIUM USED BY NARRATORS 1-4 | | | |
| 1) | writing | - | R+ |
| 2) | speech | - | R- |
| 3) | speech | - | R- |
| 4) | writing | - | R+ |
| TEXT SCHEMA ACCORDING TO NARRATORS | | | |
| 1) | outer narrative | - | R+ |
| 2) | inner narrative | - | R- |
| 3) | inner narrative | - | R- |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4) | inner narrative | - | R- |

GOAL OF NARRATORS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | "truth" | - | R+ |
| 2) | "truth" | - | R+ |
| 3) | truth + entertain | - | R- |
| 4) | truth | - | R+ |

KEY

R+ = a schema default of reliability

R- = a schema default of unreliability

**TABLE 4 DEGREES OF CERTAINTY AND RELIABILITY IN NARRATION**

**EXAMPLES OF THE NARRATOR LYING, NOT KNOWING, OR NOT BEING ABLE TO GET AT OR CONVEY THE TRUTH**

I agreed, colluding;
my paternal grandfather, whom I hardly knew,
and about whom I know very little;
None of these words recall him;
I am fairly sure;
I have never heard and cannot imagine;
I don't know if;
he was a silent man;
inhibited;
inexactness;
playing with words;
his eyes were not taking his speech seriously;
or so my mother said;
as though I knew, which I didn't;
"What do they mean?";
confused;
I am now almost sure;
my own shaky sense of my origins;
I had a vision...derived largely from Victorian novels;
in my imagination;
I do not know;
I have no idea what;

the idea I had ... was not to be trusted and bore no very clear relation to truth or reality;

It was also clear that;

As a small girl I believed what I was told;

The idea ... is skeletal and discontinuous;

or so I deduce;

in my childish imagination;

I can't remember;

This imagination was daunted...;

I think that is my invention;

I had a clear vision;

No one has told me, I do not know anything about him;

my mother's version;

I must have been too young to be told it;

I couldn't really *know*;

I never dared to ask;

I cannot remember;

I think;

I have nothing else certain to hold, or imagine;

I had almost forgotten;

In my memory (twice);

I was never sure;

I am almost sure;

It was then that I saw that much of my past might be her confection;

the large errors;

*little* trivial myths;

so hypothesis became the stuff of fact;

I don't want to say them, or dare not, or do not
remember, or misunderstood, or forgot or never knew;
confused (again);
I don't know;
I remember (4, later many more);
I noticed;
I thought;
I had no idea;
Now I have it, now, almost, I hear his voice;
at first hand;
I knew;
I am sure of, from my own experience;
I remember (4) Or am I wrong?;
I confuse;
(And how to be sure [...]?);
I don't remember. I remember, I do remember;
The real thing, the true moment, is as inaccessible
as any point along that frantic leap;
None of these words, none of these things recall him;
myth.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. Campbell 1991, p. 116. The title referred to in this quotation comes from Browning's poem "De Gustibus", in which the poet declares: "What I love best in all the world/ Is a castle, precipice-encurled,/ In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine." (lines 14-16).

2. Robert Browning, *The Ring and the Book* lines 695-700, see Roma A. King Jr. (ed.), *Complete Works of Robert Browning*, (9 vols. to date), (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press & Baylor University Press, 1969-).

3. Michael Meredith (ed.), *More Than Friend: The Letters of Robert Browning to Katherine de Kay Bronson*, (Waco, Texas: Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University, Wedgestone, 1985). This book contains appended texts such as two appended reminiscences of Browning by Mrs Bronson.

4. "Byatt has praised Iris Murdoch's sense of 'a contrary tug of value between attempts at form and attempts to live with the knowledge that (in Murdoch's novels) what *does* exist is brute and nameless, it escapes from the scheme of relations in which we may imagine it to be rigidly enclosed, it escapes from language and science, it is more and other than our descriptions of it.'" Campbell 1991, p. 122. The quotation is from A. S. Byatt, *Iris Murdoch*, (Harlow: Longman, 1976) p. 14.

5. "Top-down Misunderstanding", in J. Fernández-Barrientos & C. Wallhead (eds.), *Temas de Lingüística Aplicada*, (Granada: University of Granada Press, 1995) p. 146.

6. R. C. Schank & R. Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding*, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1977). Cooks refers to this in the text as *SPGU*.

7. E. A. Sheppard, *Henry James and "The Turn of the Screw"*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

## CHAPTER 3 *Angels and Insects*. Connections through Lexical Fields and Intertextuality: Creativity as Spirit, Form and Metamorphosis.

### 3.1 Angels and Insects: form in narration and the creation of fictions

All Byatt's novels are set in the Britain of the second half of the twentieth century. The period is seen as one of instability and multiplicity in terms of ideas and beliefs. Post-war insecurity is not dissipated by increasing material wellbeing, but deepened by financial crises. In each novel, this contemporary situation is compared to and contrasted with a previous age characterised by order and stable, monopolistic belief. The first novel, *The Shadow of the Sun*, harks back to the classical age where mortals worshipped a number of deities, who, apart from certain cataclysmic interventions, tended to live and let live in harmony. The second, *The Game*, is about a character who lives less in contemporary reality than in the literary world of the Middle Ages. In her professional life and in her intimate life of the imagination, Cassandra works with medieval systems of society and belief. She feels a nostalgia for the order of the medieval period, when everything in the cosmos, from God to man, to the humblest animal form to the minutest atom, had its fixed place. She cannot find an inviolable identity or stable place for herself in the society in which it has been her fate to live, so she takes her life.

Moving on chronologically both with the novels and the historical ages they refer to, *The Virgin in the Garden*, obviously in its historical dimension is based upon the world of the English Renaissance. In spite of the upheaval in Europe caused by the Reformation and the divisions between Protestantism and Catholicism in Britain, also the Copernican displacement of the Earth as centre of the universe, religious belief in Renaissance England still guaranteed the individual spiritual stability and harmony. The tradition of the Great Chain of Being still held, and assured the individual an identity and a fixed place in the overall system of things.

Even the gap of the Age of Reason, which Byatt appeared to have leapt over, has now been filled with *Babel Tower*. The penultimate novel, *Possession*, and its predecesor, *Still Life*, had both compared contemporary Britain with the nineteenth century. The other time dimension in *Still Life* is that of Van Gogh and the Impressionist painters; that of *Possession*, of course, Victorian England. With these last three novels, the previous age being evoked for comparison is *not* characterised by order and harmony. Even her penultimate work of short fiction *The Matisse Stories*, although contemporary, points, through Matisse, back to the first half of the twentieth century.

In the same way as Byatt undermined stereotypes of the family and of parenting by disrupting schemata in "Sugar", in *Babel Tower*, she shows us the dark side of the eighteenth-century mind. The self-assurance of the eighteenth-century thinkers and

leaders, driven by reason and logic, is seen to be undermined by baser passions. Likewise, in the novels with a nineteenth-century dimension, Byatt recreates for us the uncertainties of an age characterised by the clash between the Christian tradition and the agnosticism engendered by the growing evidence of the scientific discoveries. This spirit is inherent in all the assertions of *Angels and Insects,* and asks the reader to contemplate the problem of creativity within the framework of this postulation.

What *Still Life, Possession, Babel Tower* and *The Matisse Stories* have in common is their European extension: the French Connection. The three early novels, especially *The Virgin in the Garden,* are noted for their Englishness. It is as if Byatt had defined Englishness in her early work, and had gone on to further define it with reference to our relations with our neighbours, and in recognition of that new element in England's history, which is the fact of the European Union and the country's place in it. In *Still Life* and *The Matisse Stories,* Byatt holds up as models two continental geniuses at work. She shows them struggling to express in paint their particular views of the universe in their changing times. Some artists are seen to have a greater struggle: Van Gogh more than Matisse. A parallel to this can be seen when one artist, the painter husband of the protagonist of "Art Work" in *The Matisse Stories,* has a greater struggle to express his own creative vision than his cleaning lady, who pours out art works by the dozen. In the first story of *Angels and Insects,* "Morpho Eugenia", we see several

characters trying to be creative, and each having a greater or lesser struggle, and each meeting with greater or lesser success. In *Possession*, we have an invented genius figure, though modelled on real English poets. The principal inspiration for Ash, Robert Browning, has loomed large, as we have seen, in the discussion of creativity undertaken in "Precipice-Encurled". Another English poet, Tennyson, is the source of inspiration for a further discussion of poetic inspiration and creativity in the second story, "The Conjugial Angel". In *Possession*, the genius figure is open to European, indeed world, currents of thought. He is the subject of research in the 1980s of equally fictitious characters, who are aware that the English intellectual is enjoying an unprecedented linguistic hegemony, but are also aware that they must take into account continental, and reluctantly, American, philosophical and aesthetic trends.

In *Angels and Insects*, her next publication after *Possession*, Byatt continued to exploit the knowledge of Victorian literature, customs and mores which she had accumulated in her research for *Unruly Times* and *Possession*. For once, the fiction is *not* set in the second half of the twentieth century, but in the equivalent period of the previous century, with no explicit references to set it firmly in the twentieth century, just certain ways of narrating, which will be discussed later.

*Angels and Insects* comprises two novellas, "Morpho Eugenia" and "The Conjugial Angel", the first dealing more in insects, and the second in angels. But both treat in their different ways the

question of the existence of God, man's place in the cosmos, life after death, and how thinking men--scientists in the first story, and poets in the second--tried to come to terms with the question of the possible "death of God".

In "Morpho Eugenia", Byatt's "new" material, studies of ants and butterflies, is presented on the side of Darwinian objections in the debate on the question of God and his Creation. In "The Conjugial Angel", angels intervene in the human story through the power of the desire of the followers of Swedenborg to persuade themselves of the existence of God and life after death in the eternity of His Creation. We are reminded that man comes midway between the angels and the insects on the scale of the hierarchy of existence. Both novellas discuss at once implicitly and explicity the subjects of Divine Creation and human creativity. To do so they refer to other texts outside their own, and contain various often overlapping layers of narration and meaning. They are good examples of what David Lodge, in relation to *Possession*, called "crossover fiction" (Bradbury and Cooke 1992, p. 208). They combine within the general mode of realism two very differing modes, that of non-fiction and that of fabulation. While both novellas use this approach, they discuss creativity in rather different ways. "Morpho Eugenia" foregrounds narration and form, whereas "The Conjugial Angel" foregrounds intertextuality, and through this, imposition of form. We will discuss each of these novellas and their strategies in turn. The discussion will be less prolax than in the preceding chapter, which had to be exhaustive, since the results of the detailed

analysis are applicable to the rest of the fiction. The use of interlaced and renewed schemata Byatt hopes the reader will recognise, continues to be used as a formal strategy, as it always had been to a greater or lesser degree since the early writings.

## 3.2 "Morpho Eugenia": order and disorder through contrasting narrative approaches, through inclusion and exclusion and through taxonomies

Through the protagonist William Adamson, a young naturalist styled along the lines of the geologist Charles Smithson of John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* --even their names are similar-- Byatt brings together the opposing concepts of European civilisation and Amazonian primitivism, of God's unique act of Creation and Darwinian theory, of the existence or non-existence of God, of order and chaos, all complicated by the undermining dichotomy of appearances and truth.

The basic narrative strategy seems to be that of contrast, where most concepts and characters are presented in binary opposites. There are oppositions both between and within characters, and there are also reversals as narrative devices. For example, at first Eugenia and William are opposed in that she is rich and aristocratic, while he is poor and from a lower class. This gives her power over him. In the dramatic ironic reversal, he comes to acquire some independent wealth and a moral superiority which places her at his mercy. Her violation of the

incest taboo causes her to fall from the security of her position of respectable Victorian matron. Also at first, Eugenia had appeared to be the innocent virgin opposed to the Amazonian "*Juiza*, the lady of the revels", yet later turned out to be very similar to the diabolic figure. William was the "detached anthropologist" and also the "fairytale prince"; Matty Crompton, the dependent relative, at first a dry, insignificant, sexless figure, metamorphoses into an imaginative writer who asserts the powers of her mind and her sex. In juxtaposition, Eugenia is the beautiful butterfly who lasts one summer then turns into something far from beautiful, and Matty is the brown crysalis that blossoms out --to mix the metaphors from fauna to flora-- into a beautiful creature through her artistic talents. It is her tale "Things Are Not What They Seem", the central tale-within-a-tale, that sets the tone for the whole novella. Underneath the apparent order and harmony lurks disorder and chaos, for under the appearances lies the truth.

To create the layers of meaning in "Morpho Eugenia", Byatt has used overlapping narrators and overlapping discourses and semantic fields. On the narrative level, Matty Crompton's story on pages 119-140, distinguished typographically by bolder type, informs on three planes: the overtly narrative, the symbolic and the formal.

Firstly, Matty says "'My message was linked to my title.'" (p. 141). The message she is referring to is her hint to William that his marriage is not as normal as it appears, his wife

Eugenia is not what she seems, but is cuckolding him incestuously with her own half-brother, Edgar. On the symbolic plane, the story opposes European civilization --supposedly characterised by form and order-- to Amazonian primitivism, with its untamed exhuberance. But the fallaciousness of this is pointed out when we are shown disorder within European civilization , in William's farce of a marriage and the unlawful nature and behaviour of his wife and her half-brother. If, as a parallel, nature is opposed to civilization, and by extension, Darwinism to Divine Creation, there is irony in the fact that within nature there are methods of perpetuation based on an inherent strategy of imposition of order and form: Natural Selection.

On the formal plane, Matty's story turns a secondary character into a story teller and creator of fictions, thereby attracting attention to the other creators of fictions involved in the whole volume *Angels and Insects*. Matty Crompton is not what she seems, and neither are the other narrators involved. The different narrations come in layers, some of which are discrete and some of which overlap. They are essentially hierarchical in overall effect, albeit having been created along the horizontal time line of narrative. In "Morpho Eugenia" there are five, if not six, narrators or creators of fictions involved, and none of them are what they seem.

The first is, of course, the author A. S. Byatt. In what way is she not what she seems? She is, despite the name, a woman; she is no longer young and beautiful, but creates vital and beautiful

fictions; she is apparently not present in this fiction (though she often is, unidentified, in her novels, as has already been pointed out on more than one occasion), yet her hand can be found obtrusively in it. The text of the whole volume is self-conscious, it attracts attention to itself as a fiction of mixed fact-fable-mimetic-fiction mode by containing two almost descrete novellas with an appended "Acknowledgements" (p. 292) and significant illustrations, also acknowledged on the same page. The "Acknowledgements" attract attention to what has gone into the making of the two fictions; the two fictions are bound into one quite formally by the tenuous thread of Captain Papagayo. This fictional character is the captain of the boat on which William and Matty go to South America at the end of their story, and at the same time the lost husband of the protagonist of the second novella, turning up therefore at the end of each. The novellas also have the leitmotiv of the dead fiancé in common: in the first, the fictional nonentity, who committed suicide on discovering his betrothed's incest, exists just to precipitate the unlikely match of Eugenia and William, while in the second he is the factual Arthur Hallam, made semi-fictional by Tennyson in his "In Memoriam". As Richard Todd points out, the name Papagayo, is Spanish for "parrot", and the parrot "combines the variegated beauties of the butterflies and moths in 'Morpho Eugenia' and the bright, otherworldly coloured angels perceived by the medium Sophy Sheekhy in 'The Conjugial Angel'" (Todd 1997, p. 33). Captain Papagayo is one of those apparently insignificant characters who hover on the fringes of a story, yet come to assume significance in a global reading.

Since both novellas are concerned with verbal creativity, Byatt is signalling to the reader that this is important to her. Secondly, the narrator is apparently non-intrusive, a third person omniscient observer. But that the act of narration is coloured by the verbal liberties of a twentieth-century narrator/writer like Byatt becomes apparent in the course of the narrative. The discourse is suitably Victorian up until the discovery scene on page 149. Then there begins description which would not have been found in an authentic Victorian writer. In Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the violation scene is misted over and nothing is specific, and even then, the first version was withdrawn before it reached the bookshops. Here, the twentieth-century writer creating the pseudo-Victorian narrator can say that Eugenia was "largely naked" and that Edgar displayed "a naked prick", and that in the air there was "an unmistakable smell, musky, salty, aphrodisiac, terrible." (p. 149). This is the discourse of a post-war writer, even Lawrence would not have used the word "prick".

This intrusion of twentieth-century literary licence into the apparently Victorian text, violates the discourse restrictions in a manner similar to Fowles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, with his references to Kennedy's assassination or, more similarly, the scene where Charles Smithson takes Sarah Woodruff physically. They are good examples of the "startling, deliberately disjunctive way" in which Malcolm Bradbury (Bradbury and Cooke 1992, p. 208) says writers of "crossover fiction" make their fiction self-conscious.

To continue paring off layers of narration, we come to the protagonist, William Adamson, as writer. He is an anthropologist struggling to give verbal form to his discoveries and thoughts upon them. His Journal and book, both apparently non-fictional, are signalled typographically by being set in from the margin and not having uniform right-hand margins. He is allowed success at the end of the story, especially as he is compared more favourably to another would-be writer, his patron the Reverend Harald Alabaster. (He is as unchanging as a classical alabaster statue, but is there a suggestion of "bastard" there also, since incest seems to be genetically inherent in his family?) This clergyman is suitably wealthy and educated, and as a Victorian collector, has access to all the material he might need to become a respected writer. Yet he fails, and does so on two planes. He tries to reconcile the irreconcilable, the Christian God and Darwinism, and therefore fails conceptually. His attempt at order has no authority or suitable framework, hence he fails formally. His sermons about the love of God the Father are all-embracing: "from families to households, from households to nations, from nations to all men, and indeed, all living beings." (p. 23). He is full of ambitious idealism, but does not know where to start to be creative.

On the other hand, the central story-teller, Matty Crompton, is allowed to be successful at the end, like William, and success as a writer gives her independence. However, she contrasts with him as a writer by surprising him and the reader with her imaginative powers. She seemed "dry", but words flowed out of her

and she was able to channel them and give form and order to her ideas. The whole novella is a story about the beauty of form:

> 'You would be Morpho Eugenia. It means beautiful, you know. Shapely.'
> 'Ah,' said Eugenia. 'The opposite of amorphous.'
> (p. 21)

Even Matty Crompton uses a secondary narrator (and sixth overall) in Miss Mouffet, a form of Little Miss Muffet. All these writers are fictitious, except the first, A. S. Byatt herself. But as overall controller and creator of these fictions, she decided to introduce other fictions which are pre-existent to her story. These fictions, by being "authentic", created by "real" authors, and sold to the public and known to a wide readership, form a distinctive literary woof in the overall web, give authority to the new fictions and by comparison point to their strengths. The principal texts and authors are "The Dancing Princesses" from fairy tale, and the poetry of Milton and Tennyson. In the next section, we shall see how they also belong to a paradigmatic formulation of narrative strategy.

**Order and disorder through taxonomies and lexical fields.**

Creativity and the imposition of order on disorder is foregrounded in two ways in this novella. The first way is through the use of taxonomies to give the idea of profusion, of categories and hierarchies. The second way is through the foregrounding of lexical items to do with creation, order and form.

**Order and inclusion through taxonomies.**

A. S. Byatt has frequently included a list of examples in the course of a story. In *Still Life* we saw how she listed grasses. The narrative objective may be to suggest richness and variety, or it may be to show us that the discourse in a piece of fiction does not always have to be uniform. Taxonomies from a range of apparently random topics are introduced into "Morpho Eugenia". The taxonomy may be made up of superordinate terms and therefore cover a wide area, or, more usually, it may be a list of hyponyms that exhaust a small area.

Examples of limited and selective taxonomies in "Morpho Eugenia" are the following:

1. From the lexical frame of insects (p. 10):

   insects
   beetles
   blowflies
   maggots

2. From the frame "colours" and applied to insects and butterflies (p. 10). This appears to be an indirect reference to the fact that much work has been done on the lexicon of colours in single languages and across languages to attempt to reach some agreement:

   jet-black

striped and spotted crimson

iridescent emerald

sloppy caramel

slime-silver

3. exotic Amazonian creatures (p. 11):

frolicking and joyous coaties

agoutis

sloths

gaudy trogons

motmots

woodpeckers

chiming thrushes

parrots

manakins

huge butterflies

4. a survival paradigm (p. 13):

near-starvation

prolonged isolation

yellow fever

treachery

malice

shipwreck

5. names of butterflies (p. 14):

Heliconeae

Papilonidae

Danaidae

Ithomüdae

6. Four wise things according to *Proverbs* (p. 15):

ants

conies

locusts

spiders

7. English religious architecture (p. 14):

hexagonal

Perpendicular style

Cathedral

Gothic fan vaulting

chapterhouse

rose window

8. hierarchy of servants (p. 22):

butler

housekeeper

scullery maids

boot and bottle boys

9. exotic exhibits (p. 24):

monkey skins
parrot skins
preserved lizards
monstrous snakes
dead beetles
swarthy demons
bears' teeth
rhinoceros horns
skeletons of sharks
clumps of coral

10. beverage frame (p. 26):

tea
lemonade
ratafia
chocolate milk
barley water
herbal infusions

11. cake frame (p. 26):

sweet biscuits
macaroons
butterfly cakes (schema connection!)
little jellies

dariole moulds

12. rural fishing (p. 29):

minnows
sticklebacks
caddis grubs
water snails

12. English meadow "Paradise" (p. 30):

roses
hawthorne
honeysuckle
bryony

14. English flowers (p. 51):

primroses
bluebells
daffodils
crocus
stephanotis
sweet jasmine

15. Amazonian jungle (contrasting with the English paradise) (p. 30):

mass of struggling, climbing, suffocating vegetation
the innocent, unfallen world
virgin forest

16. makers of clothes for men and women (p. 60):

dressmakers
milliners
seamstresses
tailor
(valet)

These taxonomies give the impression of total inclusion, but in fact, in their selection, they are metonymic. Why is the item *celandines* not in the list of English flowers here, when Byatt uses it elsewhere? There is not a single answer to this question, we don't know whether a certain item is not present deliberately, for one reason or another, or unwittingly, either through not remembering, not wanting or not daring, as the narrator suggested at the end of "Sugar". The taxonomies remind us that writing fiction is a question of selection, that is, decisions to include or exclude, some conscious and some unconscious.

Much more metonymic are the references to examples of English literature. Through them, the impression is given that the whole of English literature is embraced. In the first four pages of the novella, overt references are made to types of writing. "Didactic rushes of information were a great shortcoming

in returning travellers." (p. 3) states the narrator. We are reminded that good fiction must make a balance between the didactic or moral, and the narrative, or story-telling. This is done through the reference to the Dancing Princesses (p. 5), and a little later on to the Prince of Araby and the Princess of China (p. 13). The Miss Mouffet of Matty Crompton's story reminds us of the nursery rhyme *Little Miss Muffet*, indeed, she is described as "getting into a poem" (p. 131). Other forms of writing are then mentioned: the journal (p. 8) which William keeps, and a categorising type of writing, Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Plants* (p. 10). Together with these comes a reference to Wordsworth's poetry (p. 10), and this leads into a mini-taxonomy of English poetry:

> He had come to be addicted to the written form of his own language. [...] Writing gave him a taste for poetry [...] Milton [...] the "Elder Poets" [...] Ben Jonson. (p. 12)

This list is added to in the rest of the story by the following references: Milton (pp. 12, 31, 79, 104 etc.); Tennyson (pp. 59, 87, 88, 89 etc.); Browning (p. 78); John Clare (p. 104); Keats (p. 152); Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (p. 80); Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (p. 57). There are references to Greek and Trojan myths (p. 118), to La Fontaine (p. 104), and many to the Bible. If we add this to our taxonomies, we see that it covers literature and myth from the beginnings to the Victorian contemporary scene:

17. Literature and myth paradigm (throughout the work):

The Bible

Greek and Trojan myths

Shakespeare *Coriolanus* (and one feels the presence of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

Ben Jonson

Bunyan *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Milton *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*

The "Elder Poets"

La Fontaine

John Clare (the sonnet on ants)

Keats

Tennyson

Browning

Harriet Beecher Stowe *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Fairy tale: *The Dancing Princesses*

These references give the impression that the characters are very familiar with contemporary poetry: the Laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Browning. Not surprisingly, La Fontaine is included because he is a poet who has written about insects.

The dropping of these names, the multiple metonymy, builds up into one large metaphor, whereby references to English literature speak of literary creativity. This idea is made explicit by Matty Crompton's Mistress Mouffet (a fictional character invented by a fictional character, based upon another

fictional character, covering the genres of novella, animal fable and nursey rhyme). She is talking about the Greek origin of certain names:

> 'Names, you know, are a way of weaving the world together, by relating the creatures to other creatures and a kind of *metamorphosis*, you might say, out of a *metaphor* which is a figure of speech for carrying one idea into another.' (pp. 131-2)

"What it is to give a name to a living creature" is, according to Richard Todd (Todd 1997, p.32), another of the themes that unites the two novellas.

### 3.3 The lexical field of CREATION in "Morpho Eugenia"

The foregrounding of the lexical fields of order and disorder on all levels of narration serves to keep activating the concept in the reader's short-term memory. From the start of the main narrative, the reader notices that the lexical dimensions of creation and order, subdimensions of the fields of DOING, MAKING and POSITION are exploited to an inordinate degree. Subsequently, he or she realises that this forms an accumulation of signs pointing to an identification between ants building by bringing materials and changing their position, butterflies undergoing the processes of change in their very bodies, from ugly to beautiful and vice-versa, and human beings, basically making things with words in different kinds of ways and with more or less success. By the end of the novella, at the very least, readers would be aware that the author has been offering

variations on a theme, and the linguistically sensitive reader will have recognised the fact that the text is dominated by a set of motivated lexical choices, from a lexicon which is structured, and which in itself is a reflection of conceptual structure.

If a reader goes beyond this awareness to a deeper linguistic analysis, to explore the view that a narration is a microcosm constructed by its author out of lexical items which he or she fits together to create the illusion of a reality, or to call attention to itself as an artificial verbal world, he is lead into an exploration of the structures available to the author, and the nature of, and reasoning behind, the critical choices made. Field theory can be applied in literary analysis, and it deepens our awareness of an author's selection processes. In this particular case, the concept of the theory of Natural Selection operating in nature is an unstated metaphor for the creative processes of all the creators involved in the story from A. S. Byatt to God to William Adamson, down to the tiniest ant.

Our analysis begins with an explanation of the model for analysis which we are going to apply. We consider what it can contribute over and above the other approaches and then define the field we are analysing and compare this whole structured model to the uses of items selected from it made by Byatt. We set out in tables the full list of lexical items in alphabetical order (merely for accessing purposes) and attempt to show how these apparently irrelevant items can in fact all be seen to fit

into the idea of MAKING, CREATING and ORDERING. The sheer volume of items should thus be made apparent, and we pick on just a few examples to illustrate the web of interconnections.

## 3.4 Theoretical background and methodology

Linguists have become aware of the importance of lexical structure as a way of exploring how concepts are stored in the mind. Language tells us that we are not passive recipients of information about objective reality, but active experiencers and interpreters of a world upon which we impose a certain order. In this way, we become perceivers of the world and hence the authors of our conscious experience, especially when we find words to express this experience. In the last chapter, we saw how Guy Cook's persuasive theory about schema storage in the mind for later comparison with new instances illuminates our ideas about an author's assumptions concerning the reader. Equally, writer and reader share a structured lexicon, and the writer makes use of this when making his or her selection. However, lexical fields, as E. Coseriu (1964) pointed out, are not taxonomies. They are not scientific classifications of extralinguistic reality. We have just seen how Byatt exploited a pseudo-version of the taxonomy approach to give the impression that she is referring to the whole category. Taxonomies make little distinction between the different items. Exploitation of a field is used, deliberately, but probably unsystematically, by Byatt for similar purposes.

The lexicon mirrors the choices we make of which percepts to translate into images and propositions to store in our memory in the form of event representations. Separable concepts are derived from the differentiation of elements in such representations and integrated into the conceptual system, which can be defined as "the organized base of general knowledge, relatively unconstrained by specific spatial-temporal context" (Nelson 1985, p. 9). The conceptual system is reflected in the lexicon, which is divided into fields or broad areas of meaning, each of which roughly corresponds to a conceptual category. Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976, p. 291) write:

> A lexical field is organized both by shared conditions determining the denotations of words and by a conceptual core, by the meanings of what the words denote. A conceptual core is an organized representation of general knowledge and beliefs about whatever objects or events the words denote -- about what they are and do, what can be done with them, how they are related, what they relate to.

Just as we construct our reality from perceptual data, so the author constructs a fictional world in which the sequence of events, the events themselves, and the focalisation of meaning are the product of conscious choices. Depending on the meaning to be conveyed, the writer highlights certain areas of lexical structure more than others. For that reason, a novel or story can be analysed in terms of meaning structure within the context of its own structure as well as against the background of the entire lexicon. However, to carry out this type of analysis, an inventory of lexical fields must first be elaborated.

Lexical fields have hitherto been associated with the thesaurus model; Bell (1991, p. 97), for example, states that the lexical field is an extension of it. Indeed, in a work like *Roget's Thesaurus* (1st. ed. 1852), we will find most of the lexical items we are concerned with. But it groups lexical items very roughly in terms of ideas expressed. A newer work, like the *Cambridge Word Selector* (1995) is less exhaustive, and presents the ideas in binary opposites as did Roget. But synonymy and antonymy are not the only differentiating factors. Our inventory of lexical fields differs substantially from that found in these works. Words within a field have internal structure which is a function of human memory. Such internal structure is based on meaning postulates of hyponomy, synonymy and antonymy, all of which are essentially perceptual judgements of similarity and difference, but with finer differentiation, a subtler hierarchy can be established within hyponymy, and near synonymy can have greater exactitude written in. The key role that perception plays in our understanding of existence leads to the obvious conclusion that everything is viewed and interpreted in terms of human experience and values. A communicator like a writer exploits the common perceptual and lexical ground in the interests of meaning creation. The gradations of meaning he or she perceives need to be also perceived by the reader for full comprehension of intention. The writer will have a precise or vague idea of this, but lexical analysis after the event of verbal creation can define control.

The model of lexical structure we have used is the

Functional-Lexematic Lexicographic Model (cf. Martin Mingorance 1984, 1987, 1990). Using dictionaries as texts that embody our general shared knowledge about words, we have extracted the meaning components from the definitions of the verbs analysed, and have thus elaborated hierarchies of meaning, which form the basic architecture of our lexical fields.

The definitions we have used contain a consensus of meaning components from the following dictionaries: *Collins Cobuild, Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary,* and *Cambridge International Dictionary of English.* By extracting and comparing these definitions, we have obtained the criteria to assign units to a specific domain, as well as to determine and classify their relevant interrelationships both on a micro- and macro-structural level. Martin Mingorance and his associates, building upon the foundations laid by such as E. Coseriu, found that working upward from definitional structure, verbs (embodying the central core of meaning) fall into the following basic domains: EXISTENCE, POSITION, MOVEMENT, CHANGE, POSSESSION, PERCEPTION (including stimulus verbs such as LIGHT and SOUND), EMOTION, COGNITION, SPEECH and GENERAL ACTION (composed of subgroups such as verbs of *consumption, competition, contact, use,* etc.).

Although the interrelations of words within a field can be of various types, the favoured lexical relation in field structure is that of hyponomy, which is based on the coordination of syntagmatic and paradigmatic structure. Hyponomy is a meaning

postulate that involves total inclusion, and thus is the basis of hierarchical relationships. The privileged status of hierarchies in the lexicon is not surprising given that the same is true in human cognition. The hierarchical structure concerns the paradigmatic axis, but if we examine the svntagmatic axis of a verb model like, for example, within the domain of CHANGE, a verb model such as "Controlled interference, directed towards oneself, the environment and others", we find the following dynamics:

Action model - the phase structure of actions

Wish - Decide - Want something - Plan - How - Try - Begin - *Do* - Become more efficient - Become less efficient - Bring to an end - Evaluate how done - Evaluate what done - Judge satisfaction

Or, for example:

Execution model - the phases of the execution of tasks and plans
Have a task - Prepare - *Execute* - Accomplish Task - Have disposed of Task.

### 3.5 Parameters of creativity in "Morpho Eugenia" using the lexical fields of CAUSATIVE ACTION and POSITION

According to the Gricean Principle of Relevance (Grice

1967/75), the important things are lexicalised, and lexicalised in a more important way. As H. J. Eikmeyer and H. Rieser put it: "In its use human language adapts itself to the needs of its users. The more relevant something is the more overtly it is exposed as a linguistic entity." (Eikmeyer 1981, p. 430) This overt lexicalisation, or foregrounding of a concept or theme, is effected through exploitation of semantic properties and relations, particularly those of intensity, repetitivity, literality, metaphoricity, antonymy, complementarity, etc. Even during a cursory reading of "Morpho Eugenia", the reader becomes aware of the foregrounding of the concept of creation and creativity, with an added connection between creation of the cosmos and literary creation. Using the above-defined model from lexical semantics, we have analysed the lexical domain of CHANGE, to demonstrate exactly how A. S. Byatt has exploited the resources at her command. Using the stepwise lexical decomposition approach of Martin Mingorance (1990), we are able to identify these semantic relations which work together to build up in the story the thematic axes and networks the cohesion and coherence depend upon.

According to Eikmeyer's model system (Eikmeyer 1981, pp. 307-311), the verb models which cover creation are to do with ACTION and POSITION; they are DO, MAKE and PUT. First of all, we set out the lexical fields of ACTION and POSITION, to show the relations of meaning adjacency and presupposition. Then we show how many of these lexemes, that is not only the verb, but also the noun or adjective formed from the verb, have been used by

Byatt in the story.

**THE LEXICAL FIELDS OF CAUSATIVE ACTION AND POSITION**

**ACTION: DO (causative: *to cause sb/sth to do sth*)**

**control** to cause sb/sth to do what you want, having the ability /power to do so.

**manage** to control, being responsible for (esp. a business)

**run** to manage sth, being in charge of it.

**supervise** to manage sb/sth, making sure things are done correctly.

**superintend** to supervise sb/sth, being responsible for them.

**organize** to control sth, bringing it into working order/ so that it will work more efficiently.

**administer** to control sth (esp. the business/affairs of a country/group/person) by managing/organizing/supervising them.

**direct** to control sb/sth, being in charge of it.

**channel** to direct sth (money/resources) in a particular direction.

**funnel** to channel sth through a narrow space.

**guide** to control sb esp. by influencing their actions/ decisions.

**rule** to control the affairs esp. of a people/country, having the power to do so.

**govern** to rule a people/country determining their laws, economy etc.

**reign** to rule a country as a king/queen.

**police** to control sth very firmly, keeping sth peaceful/orderly/clean with/like a police force.

**work** to control sth esp. a machine/piece of equipment.

**conquer** to gain control over sth (esp. sth unfriendly/difficult).

**govern** (metaphorical) to control actions/feelings.

**master** to control sth (esp. difficult) with success.

**manoeuvre** to control sb/sth, moving them into a particular place/position with great care/skill.

**manipulate** to control sb/sth in a clever/unfair way.

**regulate** to control sth, bringing order to it esp. by rules/laws.

**limit** to control by keeping sb/sth at a certain point.

**restrict** to limit sth to reduce its size/prevent it from becoming large.

**curtail** to restrict sth by cutting back/reducing it.

**hamper** to restrict sb/sth by making their progress/development difficult.

**contain** to limit sth by preventing it from spreading.

**check** to control sth by holding back.

**curb** to control sb/sth by keeping them within fixed limits.

**restrain** to control sb/sth by holding them back in order to prevent them from becoming too great/uncontrolled.

**command** to control sth totally because of being powerful.

**dominate** to control sb/sth completely, being the most important element/influence on them.

**subdue** to bring sb/sth under control usu. by force.

**subjugate** to bring sb under complete control usu. after defeating them in a war.

**repress** to control by force.

**ACTION: MAKE** (causative: ***to cause to exist as a distinct thing; become, do or appear)***

**create** to produce or make sth new

**originate** to start or cause sth to happen

**invent** design or create sth that has never been made before

**found** to bring sth into existence

**set up** to establish or arrange

**constitute** to form or make sth

**produce** to make (sth) or bring it into existence

**effect** to achieve sth and cause it to happen

**occasion** to cause

**fabricate** to invent or produce (sth false) (in order to deceive)

**fashion** to make sth using your hands

**frame** to express (an idea) esp after consideration

**represent** to show or describe sth, be a symbol for sth

**be/become** to be or become sth through development

**count (as)** to be involved

**change/convert** to make or become different

to exchange sth for a similar thing

**form** to make or be (a part) of sth

**construct** to build by putting different parts together

**prepare** to make by combining materials or parts

**compose** to form, to produce (music, poetry, formal writing)

**complete** to make whole or perfect

**design** to make or draw plans for sth

to intend

**pattern** to do sth in a recognisable, repeated way

**POSITION: PUT** (***to put sth in a particular place/position***)

**place** to put sth in a specific place or order

**arrange** to put sth in a particular position or order with others

**compose** to arrange sth in a deliberate, usu. attractive way

**lay out** to arrange the parts of sth (into a pattern)

**organise** to arrange sth according to a system

**systematise** to arrange things into a well-organised system

**categorise** to divide things according to a system

**classify** to arrange things into groups having similar characteristics

**order** to arrange things in order so they can be related/understood

**sort** to arrange things, dividing them into groups

alike in some way

**dispose** to arrange things in a certain way (formal, old-fashioned)

**group** to put into groups

**pair** to arrange things forming one or more pairs

**match** to find or make a similarity or connection betw. two or more things

**mix** to cause different things to combine

**The lexical fields of causative action and position in "Morpho Eugenia" with instances and their frequency in alphabetical order**

**DOING**

**Cause (Divine First) 1**

**command 1**

**control 5**

**force 4**

**organize 9**

**rule 1**

**regulate 1**

**MAKING**

**be/become (9 on p. 1)**

**count as 1**

**create 3, Creator 12**

**construct 3**

**design 5, Design 4, designers 1**

**form 12**

**fashion 2**

**found 1**

**invent 1**

**make o.s. 1, Maker 2**

**pattern 5**

**set up 2**

**shape 2**

**structure 1**

**PUTTING**

**arrange 1**

**catalogue 2**

**categorize 2**

**group 1**

**lay out 2**

**match 1**

**mix 1**

**order 9**

**sort 2**

We can conclude from this word count that Byatt uses most of the principal lexical items related to the concepts of making, doing and putting, in her story "Morpho Eugenia". She uses the superordinates like **cause**, **create** and **arrange**, and then foregrounds certain hyponyms. The repeated use of the lexical items **control**, **force**, **organize**, suggests the importance of the maker or creator's role as organizer and controller, and that the task is difficult. Again, the repeated use of hyponyms like **design**, **pattern**, **order**, foregrounds the concept of the imposition of order upon chaos for the purposes of creating recognisable, hence pleasing, artistic patterns.

We see from items like **Creator** and **Design** in the above lists taken from the story, that there is a sub-plot which concerns God's creating of the universe, and Byatt, through her presentation of six story-tellers, imposing form upon a chaos of words with more or less success, is suggesting both that man

functions in the likeness of the Creator, or that we have invented a Creator in our own image, and that the Creation of the universe is an apt metaphor for literary creation. In the story, there are many other words which do not enter our lists as entries representative of the concepts of doing, making and putting, but in which we can see some connection to the concepts. For example, there are synonyms for Creator, and these are words like Care, craftsman, Deity, God (the Father), Heaven, Divine Intelligence, Paradise, Predestination, Divine Parent, Perpetuator, Providence, Watchmaker. Then there is the antonym Satan, and the synonyms for this concept, like Chance, chaos, devils, demons, devil-born, evil, Hazard, Pandemonium, snake. Certain abstract ideas have their binary expression in the course of the story, such as God/Satan, Predestination/Chance as we have seen, also Amazon/civilised, form/turmoil, virtue/vice. The idea of form out of chaos, and hence good versus evil, is given expression through items such as the following:

FORM

accurate, aim, architecture, artificial, artistry, beautiful, beauty, carefully, cathedral, chapterhouse, Church, coherent, Commonwealth, co-ordinate, contriving, dressmakers, elegant, embroidery, evenly, everyone their place, excellence, fan vaulting, festivals, formations, geometry, grooming, habits, harmony, hexagonal, hierarchies, hive, Holy Orders, interconnected, intricate, labels, laws, ledgers, maps/mapped, method, mind/Mind, named, neat, netting, orchestra, ordained order, paradigms, perfect, Perpendicular style, polka, precision,

principle, punctuating, quilt, rational, reason, regular, repeated, rhythm, rigorous order, rose window, scalloped, select, shape, skills, strategy, structure, symmetry, theology, theorist, trained, waltz, weave

FORMLESSNESS

aimless, amorphous, apathetic, blindly, brute, careless, chaos, confusion, delirium, disjointedly, disorderly, disorganised, frantic, fumbling, haphazard, Hazard, higgledy-piggledy, hither and thither, hordes, hurtling, incoherent, jungle, mass, maze, mess, Matter, mindless, plethora, primeval, pullulation, puzzle, rambles, random, riddle, roaming, seething, spontaneous, struggling, swarming, tangled, tumbling, unexplored, unknown, untrodden, waste, whirlpool, wild/wilderness, willy-nilly

GOOD

amelioration, angel, divine, good/good will, happy, harmony, helpers, improvement, industrious, innocent, life, patience/patient, perfect/perfection, virtue

EVIL

accidents, accursed, bad, belligerence, chains, damage, dead, debris, decay, depredations, destroyed/destruction/destructive, devouring, enslave, evil, false, fierceness, fisticuffs, fury, incest, insults, kill, murder/murderous, pillage, plague, plundering, poisonous, predator, rape, vice.

Through the proliferation of terms taken from these semantic

fields, and through their relations to opposing pairs, the idea of the writer creating art through the medium of words is discussed. Byatt stresses the immense variety of vocabulary upon which the writer can draw, and through comparing Art and Nature, considers the concept of form, whether it is form inherent in the natural world or artificial form created by man. The suggestion in this story is that form is good, but that man must struggle in order to achieve it. Creation is a struggle against evil, and it is difficult. But there is also another suggestion, and that is that established religion with its rules about what is good and what is evil, is not reliable. In Victorian society, with its emphasis on respectability, one should not look at appearances to find the truth. Quite often truth is in the natural and innocent, and not in the man-made and artificial. Human art can become degraded if it does not seek a truth. This is illustrated with examples from the sublime to the homely, for example, the references to cathedrals, and Matty Crompton's moral fables. Here, the binary opposites function in a metaphorical way. The following pairs:

**order/ chaos**
**truth/ appearances**
**European civilisation/ Amazonian primitivism,**
**existence of God/ non-existence of God**
**God's act of creativity/ Darwinian theory**
**Eugenia/ the Juiza**
**detached anthropologist/ fairy-tale prince**
**rich and aristocratic/ poor and low class**

are difficult to reconcile, but the first member of the pair is shown to be questionable in its claim to desirability. The first two, order and truth, are the principal themes, and are discussed in the story in all the other metaphorical ways. Harriet Waugh has suggested that the very weight and complexity of the discussion may be its only drawback: "The ideas are so densely presented that they sometimes seem too great a burden for the characters to bear." (Waugh 1992, pp. 32-4) She may be right in this, but it remains a fascinating story, and it has made a beautiful film.

### 3.6 Creativity in "The Conjugial Angel"

In this novella, we have three female protagonists, two of them fictitious, and the third, a fictional elaboration of Emily, the sister of the Victorian Poet Laureate, Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The other characters are Tennyson himself, "seen" through a spiritual medium, and various other fictitious characters in a group around Emily. The narrative is set in the year 1875, when Tennyson and his sister are approaching old age. Emily is now sixty-four, and has been married to a sea-captain, Richard Jesse, for thirty-three years. The reader does not at first realise that the character is a person we could recognise, since she is introduced as Emily Jesse, living in Margate with her husband, so this information is at first withheld from the reader. When they were in their twenties, Alfred had met the bright young Arthur Hallam at Cambridge. They had discussed poetry, art, religion, and Alfred had taken him home to Lincolnshire, to meet

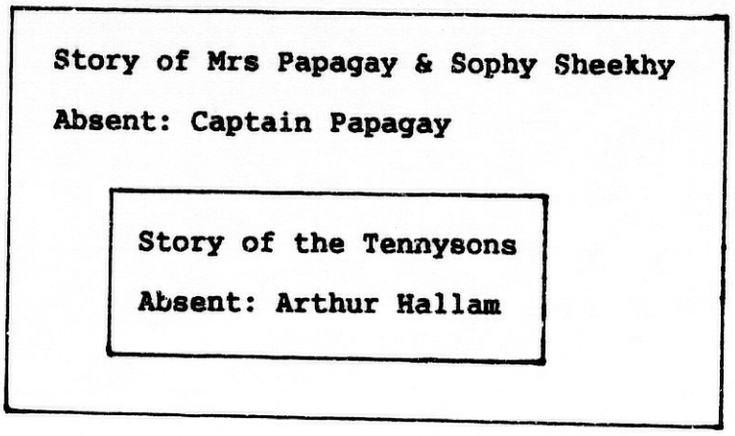
his ten brothers and sisters, and Arthur had chosen Emily to be his bride. All this is remembered by Emily in the novella. We learn, if we did not already know, that Emily, together with her eldest brother Frederick and one sister, Mary, was "a dedicated member of the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Church, and also a convinced spiritualist." (p. 188) Upon Hallam's sudden and premature death in Vienna in 1833, the Tennysons received a very curt and formal letter from his uncle, informing them of the bad news. The text of this fateful letter is contained in the novella (p. 173), in addition to the literary texts. Over the next seventeen years, Tennyson composed his "verses for Arthur", which he published anonymously in 1850.

The drama of the novella involves a parallel crisis. The first is the dilemma of Emily Tennyson Jesse. As a Swedenborgian, she believes marriages are made in heaven by the angels, who are themselves not bound by gender unspecificity, but are male or female and can be married: "conjugial love was so important to the Angels" (p. 175) (1). Emily's dilemma is whether her real husband is Captain Jesse or Arthur Hallam, to whom she was betrothed. Jesus Christ gave an answer to this question which was not very satisfying for earth-dwellers. Emily mourned Arthur for nine years, although she had spent only a few weeks in his company. On the other hand, she had been reasonably happily married to Captain Jesse for thirty-three years. In the novella, the rather bodily ghost of Arthur Hallam is trying to contact her through the medium who comes to her house to conduct séances. The result is that Emily rejects Hallam in favour of her live, fresh,

flesh-and-blood husband, Captain Jesse. The medium, Sophy Sheekhy, is one of the "conjugial angels" of the title, because through her, Emily makes contact with the spirit world and rejects it. Through Sophy, we also "see" Tennyson, for as the ghost of Hallam is lying beside her, she has a vision of the poet trying to fasten the buttons of his night-shirt, and just before he falls into a sort of fit or state of unconsciousness, he has a thought, which though instantaneous for him, is the whole of Chapter 10 for the reader --a meditation on his relationship with Hallam and with art, through his poem. This is the literary culmination of the novella. The other parallel dramatic culmination of the novella, running alongside the dilemma of Emily Tennyson Jesse and her two men, is the story of the other medium, Mrs Papagay, who does the opposite of Emily, she rejects the newcomer, the flesh-and-blood Mr Hawke (the embodiment of "nature, red in tooth and claw"?) who preaches Swedenborg all the time, in favour of her dead husband, another sea-captain, Adamson's and Matty's Captain Papagay. As a reward, the end of the novella brings Captain Papagay virtually back from the dead, back from the sea. So the end of the novella brings rejoicing on earth, but confusion in heaven, as poor Arthur Hallam is rejected. His joy is his fame through Tennyson's verses, with the suggestion that perhaps that is more than he deserved, and also that literature has undermined his reality and turned him into a fictional figure.

As well as the formal links between the two novellas "Morpho Eugenia" and "The Conjugial Angel" already mentioned, there is

a more important link that is both formal and thematic: a continuation of the "form and order out of chaos" and "meaning out of meaninglessness" aspects of creativity. These two concepts of form and meaning crystallise into a "presence out of absence" paradigm. Whereas "Morpho Eugenia" had many interpolated narratives, "The Conjugial Angel" incorporates many intertexts, but basically only one other narrative. The story of the poet Tennyson, his sister Emily and their relationships as friend and fiancée, respectively, with the dead Arthur Hallam, is framed by that of the fictitious characters, Mrs Lilias Papagay and her protegée, Sophy Sheekhy:




Byatt's research on Victorian spiritualism for *Unruly Times* has served her as background for this novella. The parallel absence of Captain Papagay and Arthur Hallam can be seen in the embedding narrative framework as set out above. In the case of the main narrative, we have a movement from absence to presence in the physical sense, in that the husband of Mrs Papagay was not

dead, only lost, presumed dead. He turns up in the dramatic climax to the novella. Throughout the course of the narrative, the reader is held in suspense over whether he is lost to the sea, like Hallam, or not. Upon a second reading, we can explain the mysterious absence. This fictional character was busy working in another fiction: he was taking William Adamson and Matty Crompton to Brazil at the end of "Morpho Eugenia", and got lost coming back. The lost sea-captain theme may have come to Byatt from Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, or even Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. "The Conjugial Angel" is like *Villette* in its parallel fairy-tale endings. There is one happy, united couple, and one less-than-perfect pair. Lucy Snowe is a princess for an evening, but we assume at the end that Paul Emanuel has drowned. Only Paulina ends up securely married to Graham. Emily Jesse is married, but dreams of her lost love, Arthur Hallam, and her mental resignation to her not-so-lost sea-captain husband seems contrived. Mrs Papagay, who had thought herself a widow, is miraculously transformed at the end into a still-married woman.

There is a deliberate irony underlying the various embodiments in the frame and the kernel story. The fact that the living body of Captain Papagay reappears means that Mrs Papagay is no longer a tragic Lucy Snowe figure. She is more of an Anne Elliott figure (though it is Emily Tennyson who compares herself to the heroine of *Persuasion*.) We have the triumph of normality and ordinariness, linking Mrs Papagay with Emily Jesse. The contrast between Captain Papagay and Arthur Hallam is interesting. Both are presences whose absence is felt strongly

by their loved ones, and others, such as the medium, Sophy Sheekhy. Absence can be very full. Captain Papagay comes back to life in the story, whereas Hallam only "visits". For Sophy Sheekhy, there is a strong sense of presence and form about the spirit of Hallam. She also "sees" the poet Tennyson very clearly. Both fade away into nothingness. For Sophy, these appearances are both fairly insignificant. For Tennyson, on the other hand, there is no presence or form, yet thinking about his dead friend is vital and becomes full of meaning. Out of these thoughts and feelings, he created his fine poem and eventually became Poet Laureate. It is difficult to apply the dictum of "no outside-text" to "In Memoriam". In this case, the source of the inspiration is in living memory. This is notoriously what readers enjoy, making connections with the "real world". Here then, we see the creative artist as *conjuror*. Sophy Sheekhy conjures up the spirit of Hallam in the narrative frame. In the inner story, the poet Tennyson does the same and we can refer to the intertext of "In Memoriam".

We have studied the intertextual presences of "The Conjugial Angel" elsewhere (2). Without going into the question further, it is interesting to point out the similarities between the story "Precipice-Encurled" in *Sugar and Other Stories*, dealing with the poet Browning, and "The Conjugial Angel", which does a similar job with Tennyson. If "Precipice-Encurled" reveals to a reader the Browning of Byatt's imagination, in "The Conjugial Angel", she recreates for us an imaginary Tennyson. But he is so real that, as we see him fumble over the buttons of his nightshirt in

Sophy Sheekhy's mind's eye, he becomes a flesh and blood person as well as a poet fumbling with the words and ideas that present themselves to his mind.

From her very first writings, Byatt's fiction has been a self-conscious, clamant display of its own status as a fiction that contains a myriad of other fictions, and this has important implications for the way in which she ponders the mechanics of literary creativity. "In Memoriam" functions as an intertext to prompt a writer figure to cavil inwardly upon a specific matter or piece of text. As the verses unfold in the poet's mind, we, the readers, have access to the workings of his mind and imagination. The text grows from similes like "unformed atoms" (p. 257), through the famous "swallow-flights of song" (p. 268) to the "sense of rightness" about the "craftsman-like" parts (p. 265). Byatt presents a figure struggling with the larger problematic of language's resistance to man's desires:

> He was proud of the good phrase
> 'matter-moulded forms of speech'
> --that said in a nutshell what
> he wanted to say about the
> stubborn body of language. (p. 266)

Language must be harnessed, to equate the physical "body" of language with a strong, untamed body, like that of a wild horse. It must have the power of the mind mould it and force it to say what the mind wants to say. The mind works in terms of fact, but also has a capacity to imagine things that are not fact. The fictitious Mrs Papagay is an instrument of Byatt's

narration, as her "irrepressible imagination" is let loose on the Jesse ménage and the whole Tennyson question. This is a vital bifocal perspective, for, as we have already seen, Byatt's interest is in what people make of things in their imagination. Myth is built up through imagination, and the public myth of the Poet Laureate has been elaborated through the popular imagination. As, in a striking metaphor, Mrs Papagay raps her "rampant imagination severely on the head" (p. 200), we see there is no hegemony of interpretation. Mrs Papagay raises the question of the relationship between "truth" and fiction, and the power of the public version of the truth. What Louise Yelin wrote of *Possession* is also true of this story:

> Byatt's cultural cartography mystifies past and present alike. The distortion of the present enacted in the reconciliation of mutually antagonistic critical positions and practices is echoed in a distortion of the past encoded in secrets that only the omniscient narrator can tell us. Byatt is drawing attention to the historical contingency of such textual conventions as omniscient narration and urging us to be modest about our endeavours and to humble ourselves before history, on the other hand she represents the Victorian period as an essence unavailable to the grasping moderns and postmoderns --us-- who only want to possess it. (Yelin 1992, p. 40)

When in *Babel Tower*, we see into Frederica's mind as she struggles to write creatively, and the narrator tells us "she has somehow *got it right*, has pinned something down. (As the young men had her pinned down ...)" (*Babel Tower* p. 389), the metaphor used, although overtly bringing out a sexual parallel of coupling, also covertly points to control of less powerful

entities for different reasons. One possesses and pins down pieces of paper, or butterflies for aesthetic purposes or for mere collection or senseless accumulation. Pinning down butterflies is a metaphor for controlling words and writing effectively in "Morpho Eugenia". In "The Conjugial Angel", the metaphor is the spirit medium. Here we have a figure that is in contact with another part of ourselves or another dimension of existence, whether we choose to believe in it or not, and that channels information of a spiritual nature to ordinary mortals. Through the juxtaposition of the figures of Sophy Sheekhy and Tennyson in this story, Byatt is suggesting that poets function in a way that is similar to that used by mediums, when they are not fraudulent. If we cannot believe in a spirit world and life after death, we can at least accept mediums in our imagination. The ground of the metaphor: spirit medium = writer, is the ethereal nature of linguistic inspiration. As we saw, "Morpho Eugenia" is a complex web of embedded texts, with at least six narratives intertwined. We have shown elsewhere (Wallhead 1994) that "The Conjugial Angel" is no less complex. In this article, the two appended tables illustrate the complex intertextuality of the novella. The intertexts reaffirm the canon of English literature, through all the references to the kinds of works the Victorians were familiar with and found inspiring. Paradise, whether in the Bible, Milton, Dante or Swedenborg, ties in with "Morpho Eugenia", as, of course, does Darwin. Fairy tales are a constant, whether it be "The Dancing Princesses" of "Morpho Eugenia" or "Rapunzel", referred to in the second novella. "Morpho Eugenia" points westwards to the New World as a form of

exotic natural Paradise to contrast with the European reality. "The Conjugial Angel", with its references to the *Arabian Nights* and to Tennyson's "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" points eastwards. The common Graeco-Judaeo-Christian basis is shown up, however, if we compare the narratives of "Morpho Eugenia" --the Reverend Harold Alabaster's latinate conception of composition and Matty Crompton's moral fables-- with the narratives that either overtly or covertly inform "The Conjugial Angel". In the afore-mentioned article, the other appended table draws up the different texts that are embedded in this story. Tennyson's "In Memoriam" "contains" Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale", Shelley's "Adonais", Milton's "Lycidas", Shakespeare's Sonnets, also Dante and the Bible. As Emily Tennyson Jesse meditates upon the poem, other associations come to her mind, like Poe's *Raven*, Milton's *Comus*, and Austen's *Persuasion*. For the reader, the novella can be a detective story, ferretting out the source texts, the fact and the fiction, and piecing the evidence together. It is no wonder that Emily Tennyson Jesse shares the name of an early twentieth-century lady detective (3). The religious texts that form the ideological basis of the thinking of these Victorian characters, are the Bible, Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and the work of Swedenborg. William Adamson's heaven suddenly becomes a hell and he must break out. Matty Crompton breaks out of her hell through writing. Mrs Papagay's lonely hell of widowhood is transformed into heaven by the reappearance of her husband. Sophy Sheekhy suffers the hell of other-world vision, and the poet, like Tennyson, must go through this in order to reach the heaven of inspired, well-crafted, satisfactory writing.

**NOTES TO CHAPTER 3**

1) Hence the Swedenborgian word of the title of the novella: "conjugial".

2) Celia Wallhead, "Intertextuality in A. S. Byatt's 'The Conjugial Angel'", III Alcalá Seminar on Contemporary British Writing: "Intertextuality in Contemporary British Writing", 14-15 March, 1994, University of Alcalá de Henares, (Alcalá de Henares: University of Alcalá de Henares press, in press).

3) A fact pointed out to us by Valentine Cunningham.

## CHAPTER 4 Painting as Metaphor: visual intertextuality in *The Matisse Stories*

### 4.1 Introduction: a Matisse in a hair salon?

A year after publishing *Angels and Insects*, her work set in a Victorian milieu, Byatt returns in *The Matisse Stories* (1993) to the present day, though with an intertextual presence from the past, that of the painter Matisse. In this work on two time levels, the contemporary setting serving as a palimpsest for the work of the great artist, she continues to deepen her ideas on the relationship between general artistic creativity and everyday life. She is concerned not only with asking what good art is, and how it is made, produced and crafted, but also with how it functions and how it is used. From there, comes the implication of the relationship of the visual with verbal art, and the comparative articulacy of the different media. We read on the dust jacket that "great art illuminates the patterns and meaning of our lives", and indeed, in the three stories that make up this volume, we see how ordinary people go about their daily life, with their mind-numbing routines and with their personal icons. Great art, here in the form of Matisse's paintings, may now be ubiquitous, thanks to the facilitation of reproduction, and it may turn up anywhere, as it does in these stories, so unexpectedly, in a hair salon and in a Chinese restaurant. Once art has been produced and sold, whether it is pictorial or verbal, it becomes the property of the consumer within the limits of the copyright. There are consumers who hold it sacred, and

others who do not begin to understand it, they may take it for granted, and yet others who even oppose it for a particular reason. In these stories, we have examples of all of these. The overt and also covert and subtle power patterns in our society, which involve everybody and everything in their interplay, make no exception where art, as a commodity, is concerned. As we examine the three stories, "Medusa's Ankles", "Art Work" and "The Chinese Lobster", we can see what Byatt is saying under cover of entertaining, often very comical stories, about these three issues: art and our consumer society, visual versus verbal creativity, and changing power patterns.

## 4.2 Art and our consumer society

In two of the stories, the painting of Matisse is sacred to two artists: the husband Robin in "Art Work", and the Professor, Peregrine Diss, in "The Chinese Lobster". Like the Chinese god in the entrance to the restaurant where this story takes place, secred to the proprietor and Chinese customers, and worshipped by them, the colours and forms of Matisse's art are "sacred" (p. 112) to Diss because they give meaning to life:

> 'Pleasure is *life*, Dr Himmelblau, and most of us don't have it, or not much, or mess it up, and when we see it in those blues, those roses, those oranges, that vermilion, we should fall down and worship --for it is *the thing itself*. (p. 124)

Dr Himmelblau, his interlocutor, "Dean of Women Students", is a fellow artist, and is sympathetic to his admiration. It is

no accident on Byatt's part that her name makes reference to the blue of the sky, and that Diss makes reference to the wonder of the "terrible blue" of the sky (p. 123). Robin, in "Art Work", has an equal, if not superior, devotion to colour. In his rather dreary life ("Robin has ritualised his life dangerously", p. 57), he has a number of fetishes which he sets out ritualistically on a sort of "altar" (p. 62). He is immutable in his principles, and gets very angry when Mrs Brown, the cleaning lady, desecrates the fetishes by rearranging them or filling them with the detritus of dusting. We are told that "They are the small icons of a cult of colour", representing "a certain kind of glossy, very brightly coloured solidity" (p. 62). It is infuriating to Robin not to know whether Mrs Brown's iconoclasm is rooted in ignorance or is deliberate through spite or jealousy.

There is iconoclasm, more or less violent, in all three stories, that of "Medusa's Ankles" being the most deliberate, dramatic and violent, when the protagonist runs amock in the hair salon. In "The Chinese Lobster", the anorexic art student, Peggi Nollett, desecrates the posters of Matisse's painting she has in her room by defacing them and daubing them with what looks like excrement. She cannot bear the "silent bliss", the "*Luxe, calme et volupté*" (p. 121) that Matisse paints. While her iconoclasm is apparently gender-based, Professor Diss upholds that it is more truly a lack of understanding: "she amalgamates them all in her mind into one monstrous female corpse bursting with male aggression --she can't *see*, can't you see? And for half an hour's shit-spreading we must give her a degree?" (p. 113)

Professor Diss cannot accept that this desecration is a form of creativity, he maintains that it is not a question of a feminist viewpoint, but a failure to appreciate aesthetic principles: "Because I won't give in to lies and blackmail. And because that woman *isn't an artist*, and *doesn't work*, and *can't see*, and should not have a degree. And because of Matisse." (p. 117) Great art involves talent, "seeing" or vision, and then hard work. Professor Diss, like Henry Severell and Marcus, has paranormal vision:

> 'When I was a young man,' says Perry Diss, [...] I remember telling someone --my wife-- it was all *easy and flat*. What a fool. And then, one day I saw it. I saw how hard it is to see, and how full of power, once seen. Not *consolation*, Dr Himmelblau, *life and power*.' (p. 121)

Even mediocre artists have to have a modicum of these three requirements. But much as the reader tends to side with Byatt's artistic and creative figures, albeit viewing them objectively at the same time, he or she is at the mercy of Byatt's strategy of the multiple viewpoints. If art, whether it is a painting or a novel, has been sold and released to the public, copyright issues apart, that particular copy must become the property of whoever bought it. So Byatt sows the seeds of doubt in our minds, and we wonder if Peggi Nollett might not have a right to express her feelings in the way she wishes. We wonder also if Lucien, the haridresser in "Medusa's Ankles", doesn't have a right to use the Rosy Nude as he likes.

Both are cases of lack of understanding of great art, and exploitation of it for one's own purposes. In this consumer society of ours, with its voracious demands and double-quick turnover, for want of new, original material, we recycle material or models from the past. Byatt's *The Virgin in the Garden* and *Still Life* testify to the recycling in the 1970s and 80s of the cultural artefacts and icons of the 1950s, 60s and early 70s. Lucien recycles Matisse for a period of a few months and then casts him over in favour of punk. Susannah, the classical linguist and university lecturer, the middle-aged Byatt spokeswoman, (as in her sister, Margaret Drabble's, novels, the heroines age with their creator), was attracted to the hair salon merely because of the copy of Matisse's "Rosy Nude" (*Le Nu Rose*, 1935) inside. Lucien had bought it to go with the colour scheme, not because he knew it was a copy of a master. He had, however, intuited the power and beauty of the work, as he comments to Susannah, "she gives the salon a bit of class" (p. 4).

With the Matisse and its colour scheme, the salon is aesthetically pleasing to Susannah. It comforts her and assuages that streak of rebelliousness and resentment that she, as a thinking woman, experiences about anything to do with hairdressing salons and dependence upon one's external image. Byatt juxtaposes description of the Matisse salon with that of childhood memories of the hair salon the protagonist's mother went to in wartime. The latter description is deliberately subversive, with negative elements like these:

chipped dome of the hairdryer;
bristling with metal rollers;
her mother's hair: a mountain of wax fruit [...]
embarrassing [...] false teeth (p. 5)

Two points are made here: one is that change is usually for the better, hair styling is now more natural, more free, more generally pleasing; the second is that, as with all creativity, the final effect is usually very different from the sum of the various ingredients that went into the making of it. Also, with the post-war cult of youth and beauty (slimness and natural hair), the inference is that in some cases, beauty only emerges out of either great effort, or something like ugliness. Another form of subversion comes in the description of the modern techniques in hairdressing for tinting, highlighting, curling and such:

a bank-robber's stocking
a monstrous Dutch cap
snaky sausages of aluminium foil (p. 20)

As Lucien leaves Susannah in the hands of a subordinate, who styles her hair just like her mother's used to be ("hideous", p. 23), Susannah's anger rises like "a Japanese other-world demon" (p. 23): bank-robbers, snakes and demons, to indicate pent-up anger bursting forth. The process of anger, simmering then boiling, was begun in Susannah by the realisation that change can also be a tragedy, and for the individual human being, it very often is. She noticed that hairdressers were no longer mature, experienced women, but "all girls now" (p. 3) and all looking like models. When you are past it, you are cast off, concludes

Susannah. Creativity comes out of ugliness or chaos, and we infer that only the expert can do a good job. Durability is also a function of survivi.. the cycles of the passing fashions and fads and of the possession of certain desirable qualities.

If Lucien has been responsible as a professional for continuing this inhuman trend in his hairdressing salon, he has also done it on the private level, in casting off his wife, just because she was no longer young and he ankles tended to swell (hence "Medusa's Ankles"). Susannah feels this tragedy doubly, because she not only feels for this woman whom she has not met, yet who rises in her imagination as a victim to be defended in this society which has such a rapid turn-over rate, but also because she sees herself as another possible victim, especially if her hair is not done as she wants it for her television appearance (the TV being such a cruel judge). When it is not, ("I want my real hair back", p. 24), she creates a scene of destruction and chaos, and Byatt's description is of a creative effort, and it is the real raison d'être of the story (pp. 25-6). She has been turned, like Lucien's wife, into what she was but did not want to be: "*a middle-aged woman with a hair-do*" (p. 24), ready for the pile of human cast-offs. She contemplates herself savagely: "What had left this greying skin, these flakes, these fragile stretches with no elasticity, was her, was her life, was herself." (p. 19) As her flesh begins to show its mortality, she feels protective about her aging face. Lucien's wife had "let herself go", and her ankles that swelled over her shoes disgusted her husband (p. 21) so that he felt justified in finding another,

younger, woman. A third reason for being angry with Lucien is that he betrays not only his wife, but also Matisse. He casts off Matisse in the same ignorant, uncaring way in which he took him on, thus undermining the very basis for Susannah's going to his salon at all. In his craving for a "new look" (p. 15), Lucien has the salon redecorated, not because it needed it, but just to be fashionable: "the latest colours, battle-ship grey and maroon. Dried blood and instruments of slaughter, Susannah thought." (p. 15) The Rosy Nude of Matisse is replaced with unaesthetic punk, in deliberately depressing colours, which Byatt, through Susannah, discredits with reference to death and destruction.

A tour-de-force of negative description of punk is made by Professor Diss in "The Chinese Lobster" as he describes Peggi Nollett, the art student who has accused him of making advances. The physical repulsion he says she causes in him is his best defence:

> Well then. If you have seen her you will know that I can have made no such --no such *advances* as she describes. Her skin is like a *potato* and her body is like a *decaying potato*, in all that great bundle of smocks and vests and knitwear and penitential hangings. Have you seen her legs and arms, Dr Himmelblau? They are bandaged like mummies, they are all swollen with strappings and strings and then they are contained in nasty black greaves and gauntlets of plastic with buckles. You expect some awful yellow ooze to seep out between the layers, ready to be smeared on *La Joie de vivre*. And her hair, I do not think her hair can have been washed for some years. It is like a carefully preserved old frying-pan, grease undisturbed by water. You *cannot believe* I could have brought myself to touch

her, Dr Himmelblau? (p. 115)

Typically, Byatt gives us the other side of the story, that the student dresses like this as a result of her mental condition caused by, or causing, anorexia. The self-hatred of anorexics is based on rejection of their physical appearance, or rebellion against the healthy images displayed around them as role models or even icons.

If punk is a reaction against something, it is still a wave or style and is therefore likely to come back in again in another cycle of the pattern of recycling our society indulges in. At the same time, Byatt puts in a plea for life, the basic ingredients in all their pristine beauty. Professor Diss discourses on the delights of plain boiled rice, and the discussion of Matisse and punk closes as a plate of orange segments is brought in, glorious in their colour, sweetness and simplicity. At this point, the protagonist, Dr Himmelblau, notices suicide scars on his wrists and realises that he too has gone through the cycle of life-death-life. From the banal to the momentous, in a not-so-extraordinary conversation about work-related problems, two souls come to communicate on life, pain and death. Dr Himmelblau had half-heartedly attempted suicide on more than one occasion after seeing her friend Kay attempt it and eventually die in hospital. While Dr Himmelblau seems not to be heterosexual, Kay, her only life-line was. Kay married, brought up children, only to see the eldest commit suicide. Quite separately, both Dr Himmelblau and Professor Diss had seen in the tank of crustaceans in the

restaurant entrance hall an allegory of their own situation: a live lobster unable to move, hemmed in by two live crabs, alive and suffering. The human being has the consolation of finding relief in art, and ironically for the lobster, in good food.

### 4.3 Visual versus verbal creativity

Susannah, in the hair salon, rails against the injustice of the power of the visual over the power of the word. For her, television comes too late, she missed out in her youth and laments that "Words, mere words, go for nothing." (p. 20) While Susannah says this, Byatt knows it is not true. But there are two vital issues here, the second one interesting her more: firstly, the *power* of the visual in the sense of our need to conform to a socially accepted model, and secondly, the controversiality of the assertion "A picture is worth a thousand words". The visual is more economical than the verbal, but the verbal can be more precise, and can in some cases command more authority through its exactness. Byatt has always been fascinated by the interplay between the visual and the verbal. She is interested in the things that can be achieved in a literary way by intertextual reference to artists and specific paintings.

In *Still Life*, she gave us the added dimension of the visual plus verbal in the verbal by including in the intertext not only references to paintings of Van Gogh, but also references to his writings about art in his letters to his brother. This is an example of Byatt referring in the intertext to real authentic

paintings and texts, but we also have real paintings as source of inspiration for fictitious texts --Alexander Wedderburn's play *The Yellow Chair*. Intertextual reference is profusely used by Byatt to call our attention to the fact that her story is a fiction, an invented verbal world, but one which desires to address issues that are known to have concerned prestigious artists before her. She repeats this strategy at the beginning of *The Matisse Stories*, by having Lucien the hairdresser create a narrative for Susannah, his customer at the salon. His skills are non-existent: "He was a very bad storyteller [...]" (p. 13) Susannah, the co-participant in the process, has to make a great effort as listener to make anything of it: "All these wraith-personae were inventions of Susannah's own." (p. 13) The consciously-connecting and constructing mind of the listener-reader is involved in the process of making fictions. If reality is constructed, we are not passive, but active, participants in its construction. Lucien's wife is an "unknown and ill-presented woman" (p. 22), denied a voice, presented as an aging female body with swollen ankles, thus contrasting with the young female body of the Matisse, she of the swollen thighs and breasts (parts of the female anatomy that are sexually acceptable as swollen) and diminutive ankles.

The role of the listener-reader is paralleled to that of the observer in visual art. What both visual and verbal art have in common is the "vision" in both a literal and a metaphorical sense. In "Art Work", the painter husband Robin is totally dedicated to his work, it is all that is most important in his

life:

> But Debbie saw that it was a serious attempt at a serious and terrible problem, an attempt to answer the question every artist must ask him or herself, at some time, why bother, why make representations of anything at all? (p. 52)

The answer is the privilege of being and seeing, as Professor Diss had asserted. Robin's wife Debbie, the character used by Byatt as a mouthpiece, is verbally articulate in her mind:

> 'They are miraculous, they are like those times when time seems to stop, and you just *look* at something, and *see* it, out of time, and you feel surprised that you can see at all, you are *so surprised*, and the seeing goes on and on, and gets better and better [...]' (p. 53)

Robin, the painter, is not suited to the "self-centred isolation" of the creative artist, but once infected by the "sensuous delight" of painting, remains faithful to that "vision" (p. 55). He is in its clutches: "a vision which has never expanded or diminished or taken its teeth out of him" (p. 55). We assume that a person who creates through the medium of words can be equally enthralled by the demands of the vision. Diss talks of the "inarticulacy of painters" (p. 111), that some can use words and some not, they can only communicate through the forms and colours and physical dispositions of the art work they produce.

When David Lodge spoke of "cross-over fiction" he meant a text that crosses back and forth from contemporary discourse into an older one, such as nineteenth-century. By analogy or extension, we could use it for a text that crosses from one type of discourse to another, for example, one based on a different discipline. In *Still Life* and *The Matisse Stories*, we feel that Byatt is juxtaposing and uniting the verbal and the visual, and is creating a verbal discourse, using Van Gogh's letters and works of art history, which accommodates the visual. Particularly in these texts, which are frames for other texts such as visual "texts", she articulates through words some of the effects which painting achieves. She acknowledges having read on the subject, and belongs to a family where there has always been an interest in the visual. The long introductory part of "Art Work" is Byatt, through the anonymous narrator, presenting and describing Matisse's *Le silence habité des maisons*. She then also uses some characters to comment on these issues. In "Art Work", a device used is that the wife, through whose eyes we "see" the action, articulates for her husband, who is less capable of doing so (or is denied a voice?). Debbie records: "He talked to her agitatedly at night about Matisse, about the paradoxical way in which the pure sensuousness of *Luxe, calme et volupté* could be a religious experience of the nature of things. Not softness, he said to Debbie, *power*, calm power." (p. 56) Another device is that (when allowed to speak), he explains the rudiments of colour, "tones and complementary colours" (p. 50), in simple terms to the cleaning lady, who apparently knows nothing, but surprises everybody.

The point of departure of the story "Art Work" is this direct reference to the 1947 painting *Le silence habité des maisons*, which is significantly and metatextually reproduced on the front cover of *The Matisse Stories*. We are told that it articulates through a pattern of oppositions:

sound / silence
colour / lack of colour
form / chaos
virility / femininity
art / nature

After the introduction, the anonymous narrator records domestic sounds, both human and non-human, like the washing-machine, the television, the typewriter, and significantly for later development, "the Hoover" (p. 39). Then we see the protagonist Debbie, a writer for a design magazine, at work. She is able to describe effects of colour, for being articulate about colour and form is her job: "'a peculiarly luscious new purple, like bilberry juice with a little cream swirled in it.'" (p. 38) She sees how colours work and that we need metaphors from the other senses, like taste in this case, to enable ourselves to convey visual impressions. Descriptions of colour usually involve fruit, especially in *Still Life*, where the breakfast at the Pooles's house was a still life for Alexander. Through fruit, Byatt is able to connect with the outside world of nature, great artists' attempts to convey it, to describe the conveying of it (Van Gogh's letters), and our own struggle with words: perception

and language, or language-perception-language, that undecided issue. Debbie also understands how her husband paints the effects of combinations of colour and light: "slivers of shine on rounded surfaces" (p. 62), or the "*shadow*" and only the shadow of something (p. 62). In a synaesthetic metaphor of sound and colour, Robin explains to the cleaning lady "the blue rim makes the yellow colour sing out because the colours are almost complementary." (p. 63) Byatt asks us readers to stop in our head-long rush of a life and just contemplate colour, sound and form: "a good strong red, that stood in, but could not make itself sing out or be loved." (p. 64) Mrs Brown, the coloured cleaning lady is also fascinated with colour and has her own theories. We wonder if she is called Mrs Brown because brown is the combination of all the colours. She rebels against the old conventional "rules" she has been taught about colour: "'They always told us, didn't they, the teachers and grans, orange and pink they make you blink [...]'" (p. 60), for her preference is for the "rainbow line" and the most shocking of colour combinations. Here, the "old rules", in the form of the old saying, function as a sort of intertext, setting up models for comparison and contrast. Robin explained to her the scientific effects of certain combinations, and he was "entranced" (p. 67) as he did so, for here is a man after Matisse's heart, he can still marvel at just colours.

Upon "reading" art and interpreting it, Byatt brings us back to the reality of our consumer society and reminds us that however wonderful a painting might be, if it does not sell, it

is not interesting. The gallery owner who comes to view Robin's paintings interprets them as allegories of our dreary life. She does not see that they are about creativity itself and the problems an artist faces when putting brush to canvas. Through Debbie's eyes again, the reader learns that Robin's art sets itself different problems to solve, all about "the infinite terror of the brilliance of colour" (p. 72). Debbie, as writer, is more articulate on this than Robin: "he doesn't think those things in words anyway" (p. 72), but Byatt, perhaps remembering Van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo, does try to express these concepts in words, again, through Debbie: "He does not say, because he does not articulate, the sense he has that he is *allowed* his patch of brilliance *because* he has dutifully and accurately and even beautifully painted all these null and neutral tones, the doves, the dusts, the dead leaves." (p. 73) (In the lack of communication between the pair, and the dead leaves, one is reminded of Hardy's poem "Neutral Tones".)

The dramatic climax of both stories, "Medusa's Ankles" and "Art Work" is a highly detailed visual scene, the first of havoc and destruction, the second, of profuse creativity. There is a similarity between them, in that Susannah *creates* the scene of chaos, lovingly described by Byatt's narrator, while Mrs Brown's "art work", the fairytale Aladdin's cave of variegated patch-works is a sort of controlled chaos. The exhibition, at the "Callisto Gallery" is called "work in various materials 1975-1990", revealing that Mrs Brown's secret creative life has been going on for at least fifteen years. She has been collecting

things, like Robin with his fetishes, but the irony lies in the glorious profusion of them, and the immense productivity, the creativity, the forging of form out of formlessness, the making of visually attractive things out of cast offs and useless items discarded by others (particularly Debbie's family). Byatt creates a verbal tour-de-force in this anthropomorphic description of forms and colours, materials and textures, going on for five pages (pp. 77-81).

The centrepiece of Mrs Brown's exhibition is a scene of confrontation between a dragon and a Hoover. Sheba Brown's "apparently inexhaustible and profligate energy of colourful invention" (p. 82) is directed, possibly under the influence of the gallery owner, into a feminist statement, a modern world version of a myth. Mrs Brown was a battered wife, who had to struggle to get physical space in which to do her art work, and financed it by hoovering other peoples' houses and begging materials. Curiously, as a result of the shock of Mrs Brown's show, Debbie exerts her demand for more creativity in her work, and Robin's work takes a new turn.

Debbie works for a magazine with the questioning title *A Woman's Place* (which crops up later in *Babel Tower*), and ironically, unknown to her, an interview with Mrs Brown is to be printed. In it, Sheba Brown discusses her creativity, the why and the how. She confesses to a delight in "'putting things together [...] showing your excitement'" (p. 85). She also has an "instinct" about colour (p. 84). The question of nature and

instinct as source, and the application of rules to create form is as applicable to verbal art as it is to visual. So when Mrs Brown talks of her "instinct for new shocking effects and juxtapositions" and of "broadening her ideas of what a work of art might be" (p. 84), we feel that Byatt is also making suggestions about literary form. Stories are made out of verbal bits and pieces, echoes and quotations, rather like patchwork. As Byatt points out: "Sewing is one of the persisting metaphors for female creativity." (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 140) The total effect and success or lack of success of the work of art depends upon the authority of the creator, his or her power to transmit their vision, and their luck in creating something meaningful to the particular society which is asked to appreciate it. Mrs Brown struck lucky in having an audience receptive to statements about the male/ female dichotomy. The power stuctures underlying our society are gender based and affect art and the "reading" of it.

## 4.4 Paintings as metaphors: the intertextuality of Matisse's painting

Although they are separate stories, they also make a collective statement about life and art. The reader becomes aware that Byatt has managed to transmit through the volume an overall message. One of the principal strategies in doing so has been the use of visuals, either paintings or drawings by Matisse. The paintings on the front and back covers, plus a significant drawing at the head of each story, visually reinforce the verbal

use of Matisse, hence the intertext is of the order of both the message and the code.

The intertextual visuals also make a statement about the relationships between men and women, which we have discussed elsewhere (Wallhead 1995).

It was Roland Barthes who made explicit the fact that intertextuality need not always operate within the same code or medium. In *S/Z* he says:

> [A] text can make contact with any other system: the inter-text is subject to no law but its infinite reworking. (Barthes 1975, pp. 211-2)

He is talking here about the Author, that somewhat decrepit deity of the old criticism, saying that a writer can become a text, and by extension, if the person of a writer can become a text, so can the figure of a painter and his paintings. In this last section, we are going to examine the functioning of the intertextuality of Matisse and his theories and paintings in *The Matisse Stories*. First of all, it is important to point out that Byatt's intertextual references are normally to literature, first to English, and then to French literature, through which she places herself within a Continental tradition:

> While authors rewrite the work of predecessors, many post-Renaissance writers *consciously* imitate, quote and/or plagiarise extensively (as somewhat arbitrary examples we would

> propose Hazlitt, Lautréamont, Joyce, the French Surrealists, T. S. Eliot, Borges, D. M. Thomas, Michel Tournier, A. S. Byatt.) In various ways these writers are thereby inscribing themselves in *Tradition* and making public a loving gratitude to ancestors -- but their works are equally witnesses to an agonistic impulse to demarcate and proclaim their own creative space. (Worton & Still 1990, pp. 12-13)

The authors of this statement, Michael Worton and Judith Still, in fact, point out at the beginning of their "Introduction" that intertextuality does not begin with the post-Renaissance writers, but has existed from Greco-Roman times, going back at least to Plato and the Socratic dialogues, the use of Homer as a model and the theory of imitation in Aristotle's *Poetics*. So although "intertextuality" is a term coined in the Sixties by Kristeva (1), the concept has a long history. When Byatt refers to Shakespeare, as she frequently does in her fiction, she is drawing upon an author who is already a complex motif for having drawn in his turn upon the tradition he inherited. The hermeneutical complexity unleashed by the intertextual approach is suggested by Worton and Still:

> The textual past is explicitly or implicitly present(ed) through quotations or allusions, but in the work of such writers as Bacon, Shakespeare, Erasmus, Montaigne, Ronsard, Du Bellay every reference to a primary (or primal) text is informed by an awareness of the infinity of interpretation which both promises and defers an appropriate return to the/an origin. (Worton & Still 1990, pp. 7-8)

Michael Riffaterre defines the literary phenomenon as:

> *not only the text, but also its reader and all of the reader's possible reactions to the text.* (2)

He agrees with Kristeva that reading is "aggressive participation" (3). That this can be so is seen in Byatt's character, Peggi Nollett, who literally participates with aggression in her "reading" of Matisse. The reader, in his or her turn, strives to incorporate the reference, be it a quotation or a reference to an example of visual art, as in this case, into the unified textuality which makes of the text a semiotic unit. We, as readers, react to the reference to Matisse and also to the reaction to him of another reader --the fictional character Peggi Nollett. We thus seek to read the borrowing not only for its semantic content, as Nollett does, but also for its tropological or metaphoric function and significance.

Barthes is notorious for making no distinction between his theory of textuality and intertextuality and his practice as a creative writer. He constantly blurs generic boundaries, mixing theory and practice, criticism and creation, autobiography and fiction. We have seen Byatt doing this in fictional works such as "Sugar" and acknowledging it in *Passions of the Mind*:

> Novelists sometimes claim that their fiction is a quite separate thing from their other written work. Iris Murdoch likes to separate her philosophy

> from her novels; David Lodge says that his critical and narrative selves are a schizoid pair. I have never felt such a separation, nor wanted to make such claims. (4)

In *The Matisse Stories* she mixes fiction with Matisse's theories on art, which function metaphorically within the text, as had the references to Van Gogh in *Still Life*. That an intertextual reference functions in much the same way as a metaphor is suggested by Worton and Still, who bring in Ricoeur to testify on their behalf:

> A tropological reading of a quotation 'sees it as' something other than it is/was in its original context, sees it as a metaphor. This act of reading is analogous to what Ricoeur describes as the iconic moment in metaphor (*The Rule of Metaphor*, pp. 187-91): the reader passively receives the vehicle and actively tries to understand not only the tenor but also the Gestalt, the figure in which similarity or analogy coheres. (Worton & Still 1990, p. 11)

## 4.5 Gérard Genette's five-point paradigm of intertextuality

To test the metaphoric functioning of the Matisse references in Byatt's collection of three short stories, we have taken as a model the theory on intertextuality of Gérard Genette. In his 1962 work, *Palimpsestes: le littérature au second degré* (5), he explains his theory of five types of what he calls "transtextuality". Both Genette's *transtextuality* and Kristeva's *intertextuality* refer to a relation of co-presence between two or more texts, that is, the effective presence of one text in

another, in the form of quotations, with or without acknowledgements, allusions or even plagiarism. Genette's term appears more dynamic and to describe movements which involve the reader going outside the text and across sites, rather than to be limited to the "betweenness" of Kristeva's understanding of the concept. We find Genette's "outside" dimension, the aspect of textuality that touches on genres and disciplines, particularly apt to describe Byatt's demands on the reader in terms of comparing verbal art with visual. This interdisciplinary or generic dimension is "architextuality", the last of Genette's five types of textuality, which we set out here:

1. *Intertextuality.* A general case of a text being the site for the embedding of another or other texts for whatever purpose. This is Kristeva's intertextuality, or the sort of use of reference to make a new statement in relation to the old. For Harold Bloom, (Bloom 1973 & Bloom 1982), this use can be Oedipal, as the ephebe engages in an agonic struggle with the precursor in a sort of refusal of mortality.

2. *Paratextuality.* This concerns the pragmatic dimension of the work, the relation of the text to its *paratext*: the title, subtitle, preface, prologue, epilogue, notes, illustrations, cover, etc.

3. *Metatextuality.* In a more abstract way, this involves the critical relation between two texts, the implicit commentary that

unites a text with another.

4. *Hypertextuality*. For Genette, the anterior text, text A, is the *hypotext*, and the new, latecome text, text B, is the *hypertext*. A study of the *hypertextuality* of text B reveals how this can be a derivation which is not a direct commentary on the *hypotext*, text A. This occurs where the new text is a loose imitation or a transformation of the precursor.

5. *Architextuality*. As pointed out before, and as the term suggests in the prefix "archi-", this is a larger relation, involving genre. It is usually the most abstract and implicit, often a voiceless relation which suggests a paratextual mention through titles like "*Stories*" or any title that might suggest a novel, a poem, an essay, a letter, or even a picture. It is of purely taxonomic relation, and it particularly involves pastiche, for whereas parody is more a figure of speech than a genre, pastiche, which Byatt constantly uses in her fiction, is a stylistic imitation with a critical end. For Genette, pastiche and parody show up literature as a palimpsest revealed the manuscript underneath. The new text is valued for itself, but it is also a sort of window through which to view any of its precursors the writer wishes to use. The precursor does not have to have been created within the same genre; Byatt, in fact, makes a window through which we are invited to look at pictures. This aspect of the intertextuality of a work is not without importance, as generic perception conditions the reader's expectations and therefore the response to the work.

We are going to examine each of the five types in turn to see how exactly meaning is created through intertextuality in *The Matisse Stories*.

## 4.6 Application of Genette's model to *The Matisse Stories*

### 1. Intertextuality

The incorporation of Matisse and his works into *The Matisse Stories* at the outset is at once overt and covert: visually overt and verbally covert. Visually overt because of the title and the front cover. Then the dust jacket says that the book "contains three stories, each haunted in a different way by the spirit of Matisse". Also, at the head of the first story, "Medusa's Ankles", is a reproduction of the pen drawing "La Chevelure, 1931-32". The locks of hair lie spread out like Medusa's snakes. The use of Matisse is at first verbally covert, because the narrative begins: "She had walked in one day because she had seen the Rosy Nude through the plate glass." (p. 3) We are not told that the Rosy Nude is a painting by Matisse until, a page later, the so far anonymous female protagonist informs us and its ignorant owner, the proprietor of the hair salon she has just entered. A reproduction of the Rosy Nude is on the back cover, if the reader had already looked there. For the reader unacquainted with Matisse's paintings, there is linguistic suspense and surprise. Thereafter, the painting becomes an autonomous female, "she", doing this and that, until "she" becomes an outmoded commodity and is taken down.

In the second story, "Art Work", the presence of Matisse is

stronger, and is overt not only visually, with the reproduction of the drawing "L'artiste et le modèle reflétés dans le miroir, 1937" at the head, but verbally, with the opening discussion of the painting represented on the front cover *Le silence habité des maisons*. The anonymous narrator discusses the picture and makes reference to a text, Sir Lawrence Gowing's *Matisse*, in whose pages he or she is looking at the picture (*The Matisse Stories* p. 31). This is the critical text Susannah had suggested to the unlikely Lucien in the previous story (p. 9). There is no authorial intrusion, and all we know about the narrator is that he or she looks at art books and talks of "we" as he or she includes the reader in a contemplation of the picture. We feel tempted to see the narrator as female because of Byatt's closeness to the narrator of "Sugar", and to the female protagonists of the three stories: Susannah, the middle-aged "heroine" of the television hairdo, Debbie, here, the youngish magazine journalist, and oldish Dr Himmelblau, the art lecturer, or at least Dean of Women Students. The narrator actually quotes Gowing on a significant issue: "'At last Matisse is wholly at ease with the fierce impulse.'" (*The Matisse Stories* p. 32) Matisse reappears when we learn that the devotee, Robin, "talked to her agitatedly at night about Matisse ...." (p. 56) Robin had tried to copy Matisse and Van Gogh and had made impossible pale imitations. Only in his fetishes and his feelings towards them does he approximate to Matisse's comments on colour.

The third story, "The Chinese Lobster", does not privilege one particular painting of Matisse as the other two stories do.

The first reference is in a text, a letter from a woman student who is writing a dissertation on "The Female Body and Matisse". The main protagonist, Dr Gerda Himmelblau, as Dean of Women Students, has to answer the complaint contained in this letter against "the Distinguished Visiting Professor", Professor Diss. He stands accused of opposing the student's "ahistorical" project, which refuses to take into account "the so-called development of Matisse's so-called style or approach" (p. 101). The student, Peggi Nollett, appears to subscribe to the view that "Matisse was hostile and full of hatred towards women". Her art-work consists of defaced posters of the following paintings: *La Rêve. Le Nu rose. Le Nu bleu. Grande Robe bleue. La Musique. L'Artiste et son modèle. Zorba sur la terrasse.* One theory Himmelblau and Diss come up with is that this poor anorexic cannot bear what in the view of feminist critics and artists is "the way in which he expands male eroticism into whole placid panoramas of well-being." (p. 122) Diss compares Nollett's crude attempts to shock with Matisse's clever and subtle ones:

> Matisse was cunning and complex and violent and controlled and *he knew he had to know exactly what he was doing.* He knew the most shocking thing he could tell people about the purpose of art was that it was designed *to please and to be comfortable.* (p. 122)

Just as in "Precipice-Encurled" and "The Conjugial Angel", Byatt has a fictional character meet or almost meet the real historical figures of Browning and Tennyson respectively, here she has Professor Diss meet Matisse. He speaks of a Bloomian

agonistic relationship: "'I was full of hope in those days, I loved him and was enraged by him and meant to outdo him, some time soon [...]'" (p. 131) Having just pointed out that Matisse was "the first to understand orange" (p. 130), he plunges into a description of the encounter, when the master was old and ill and living in darkness because he was probably going blind. We are treated to some actual words of Matisse: "'and anyway, you know, black is the colour of light.'" Byatt excels in creating a text which plunges through the space and time of other texts to reach a dramatic configuration. This apparent first-hand representation of the painter is tossed out in an almost flippant way by the ultimate creator, Byatt, and yet when we stop to think, it is quite momentous. Again, a reference which appears off-hand connects to the outer narrative in other ways, as we shall see later. This reference is to the painting *La Porte noire*, which is described verbally (p. 131), and reproduced visually on the back cover of the book. Diss's point is that "'Almost no one could paint the colour black as he could. Almost no one.'" (p. 132) Gerda Himmelblau finds extra significance in the painting.

Finally, Diss also stands accused of the sexual harrassment of Peggi Nollett. Apparently, Diss had told her "Matisse was full of love and desire towards women (!!!!!)" (p. 102), and we see her reaction in the multiple exclamation marks. As we saw, no one work of Matisse dominates the story, but the drawing "Nymphe et faune, 1931-2" (drawn at a time when Professor Diss was a handsome womaniser) stands at the head to suggest to the reader

that sex or lust is going to figure somewhere. The mysterious *La Porte noire* ends the story, the work of an old man, who has been the idol of a now old has-been second-rate painter. The interplay of light and dark, white and black and the death of the lobster bring the story and the volume to a close.

**2. Paratextuality**

Having set out the overt references to Matisse, in this section we can just add a few ideas on how they function at the pragmatic level. To start with the title and the front cover, the first thing to note is Byatt's decision that the cover background should be bright blue. More neutral tones of buff or gold had been used for *Still Life* and *Possession*, and *Angels and Insects* (like *Imagining Characters* and *Babel Tower* later) had been a distinctive red. We know Byatt likes to be involved in the art-work for the covers and text illustration, so we assume the choice or decision belongs to the writer of the text. On the blue background, the author's name and particularly the name Matisse stand out in bright yellow, the latter in what appears to be Matisse's signature. The blue and yellow pick up the only other colours apart from black and white (green being blue + yellow) the cover picture *Le Silence habité des maisons*. The iconic motif "Matisse" on the front cover makes the reader wonder how far Matisse is going to figure in the work and for what purpose.

The dedication page reads:

For Peter

Who taught me to look at things slowly.

*Still Life* used *looking* as a metaphor. *Shadow* had a writer for whom visual perception was vital, even marvellous. A writer must look and see as much as a painter. The "With love" is surely ambiguous: love to Peter, her husband, but also that he taught her to look at things slowly *and with love*. Love can, and does, mean many things: love of life, love of artistic creation, sexual love.

The *Contents* page is deliberately intriguing. There is no reference to Matisse, and only the title of the second story, "Art Work", seems to bear any relation to the subject of Matisse contained in the general title. But then we see how the interior illustrations are uniform: one ink drawing at the head of each story, suggesting a subject. The first drawing "La Chevelure, 1931-32", at the head of "Medusa's Ankles", no doubt inspired a story about hair, but also a story about revenge. The locks of hair point figuratively to Medusa's snake hair and prepare us for a story of violence, in which the protagonist violently avenges the woman with the swollen ankles, the hairdresser's rejected wife. The title and the illustration together call up the classical myth.

At the head of "Art Work", the story of three people whose work or hobby involves art, we have an artist and his model, "L'artiste et le modèle reflétés dans le miroir, 1937". As we pointed out elsewhere:

> Interestingly, we see at once and together, the artist, the source of inspiration and the final art work sketched on the wall behind. This visual text informs Byatt's verbal text which in its self-consciousness about its nature as a verbal artefact, is similarly transparent. (Wallhead 1995)

The use of multiple planes and mirrors in this work in turn reminds one of Velazquez's *Las Meninas*, in which the painter included himself in the act of creation. This shows, of course, that the metafictional use of mirrors is not a new phenomenon.

The overt sexual nature of the "Nymphe et faune" drawing at the head of the last story has already been related to the subject in our discussion above. Riffaterre spoke of the "interface of vision and sexuality" (6). These stories and their illustrations are the sites where Byatt works out verbally, in all three stories, a feminist sub-text and an important implicit commentary about male and female creativity, emphasised and crystallised by the three drawings. The visual and the verbal come together in a discussion of creativity and the roles of vision, gender and power that this entails. The *Acknowledgements* at the end tell us, if we did not already know, that two of the drawings, "La Chevelure" and "Nymphe et faune" were, or are, illustrations to *Les Poésies de Stephane Mallarmé*.

**3. Metatextuality.**

Byatt's text directly and immediately invokes the work of the painter Matisse. The operative word is *work*, not paintings, as this includes not only the artworks themselves and what they might "say" to us, but the rationale behind the way of working,

the drive and the technique. "'*Why Matisse?*'" asks Professor Diss passionately (p. 119), meaning why should Peggi Nollett choose Matisse of all people, whose paintings he holds sacred, to desecrate. But the reader might ask why, through all this process of verbal and visual text fabrication, Byatt chooses Matisse, not to desecrate, but to venerate. The critical commentaries invoked and implied come from fictional artists --Robin and Diss-- who are, or could be, really quite good, and therefore to be respected, in spite of their fictionality. They know about and can explain his approach and technique, and they also know that beneath the craft there is vision and power. Byatt attempts to convey in her writing a sense of vision and power, and we see it in dramatic pieces of writing that unfold, albeit linearly, into a sort of picture for the reader, like the destruction of the hair salon or Mrs Brown's Aladdin's Cave. We can visualise Peggi Nollett in her punk gear and her shit-streaked room. Byatt does not say that Matisse has that effect on her, but his work, in its own iconoclasm, violence and exploitation of the possibilities opened up by the juxtaposition of colours seems to silently inform her visions.

On discussing "Dreams and Fictions" in *Imagining Characters*, Byatt gives us an insight into the way her work is influenced by visual tableaux she appears to receive in dreams. She states: "Dreams construct many kinds of narrative [...]" (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 230), and enumerates five types of dreams. Of the last type, she says:

> The other thing I want to describe is a kind of dream which I have which is most deeply to do with myself as a writer-- a dream which is experienced more like a poem-- where all the images fuse into a kind of intense symbolic knot or painting. In such dreams you can see everything you were worried about laid out in beautiful objects, solid metaphors you can see and touch, and the relationships between the things for which the dream objects are symbols are much more complex than they could ever be if you described them in a linear narrative. All these kinds of dreams, it seems to me, find their way out into novels. (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 232)

The close relation of dream vision to poetry is interesting, as we saw how Matisse worked with Mallarmé to produce an artwork which, like Blake and his engravings, is at once verbal and visual. The verbal, being poetry, also functions on a symbolic, and musical, rather than a prosaic level. Byatt's word pictures also owe much to colour and sound. The smashed-up hair salon in "Medusa's Ankles", with the images of warfare, has colour, texture and both visual and auditory images. When Diss talks of the power of vision, he quotes Mallarmé's *Luxe, calme et volupté.* (p. 121)

Byatt shows how verbal commentaries can elucidate visual art. The suggestion is that normally, verbal and visual capacities do not coincide in a person. In Debbie they do, and in Diss: "He said art students often had dificulty expresing themselves verbally although he himself found language 'as sensuous as paint.'" (p. 103) This is written by Peggi Nollett, with her horrific spelling, reminding us of Byatt herself

teaching English literature to art students, and Frederica in *Babel Tower* finding her Sixties art students would not read any literature from the past.

As we indicated before, Byatt's intertextual use of Matisse is both of the order of the message, discussing art and life, and of the order of the code, using visuals to discuss the different media. Our final images after reading the collection of stories are visual. They create in us a nostalgia for an art which is whole and complete, as Blake envisaged it, a sort of Gestalt with tenor and vehicle, which at once unites all domains of art: sight, symbol, sound and the phonic and semantic aspects of verbal language.

**4. Hypertextuality**

As John Frow points out in his ten theses on the range and force of the concept of intertextuality (7), texts are not structures of presence but traces and tracings of otherness. They are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures. These absent textual structures at once constrain the text and are represented by and within it; they are at once preconditions and moments of the text.

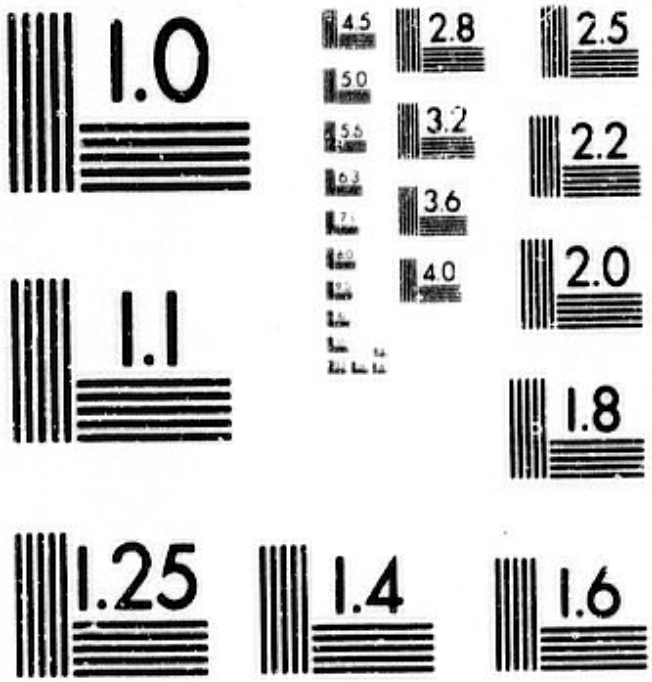
When Byatt reproduces a Matisse drawing, she is repeating, but transforming, by placing it in a new context with a new circuit of meanings. She ultimately asks the reader to see the difference between the Mallarmé-Matisse poetry collections and the Byatt-Matisse short story collection. She makes her own creative space by setting up a frame-work of the excellence of

Matisse, then adding something different to the French painters/ Symbolist poets paradigm. As Worton and Still put it (and for "quotation" we can read here "reference" as it applies equally to a verbal and a visual work):

> In each encounter with a quotation, the reader perceives that, while there is an obvious conflict between sameness or identity and difference, there is also a covert fusion of differences *within* the single textual utterance. We would therefore suggest that every quotation is a metaphor which speaks of that which is absent and which engages the reader in a speculative activity. (Worton & Still 1990, p. 12)

Byatt reproduces Matisses and then redirects them. The stress is on interpretation rather than establishment of facts. If we wanted Matisse alone, we could read Gowing's book as the narrator apparently did. But the narrator went on to fabricate a *new* and interesting story. Rejection of a unilinear causality involves rejecting the mere concept or "given" of influence in favour of an account of the work performed upon the intertextual material and its functional integration in the later text.

To illustrate the "difference" of Byatt's work, the way she has transformed Matisse and why, we take an example from each of the stories, supplied in the main narrative by the narrator, and finally one in a deeper (and more fictional) intertext, from two of them, the work of Sheba Brown and that of the art student Peggi Nollett. In "Medusa's Ankles", the Rosy Nude is taken down and replaced by a new version of stylised womanhood: girls with grey faces and "bonfires of incandescent puce hair" (p. 16). The




MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

Matisse, then adding something different to the French painters/ Symbolist poets paradigm. As Worton and Still put it (and for "quotation" we can read here "reference" as it applies equally to a verbal and a visual work):

> In each encounter with a quotation, the reader perceives that, while there is an obvious conflict between sameness or identity and difference, there is also a covert fusion of differences *within* the single textual utterance. We would therefore suggest that every quotation is a metaphor which speaks of that which is absent and which engages the reader in a speculative activity. (Worton & Still 1990, p. 12)

Byatt reproduces Matisses and then redirects them. The stress is on interpretation rather than establishment of facts. If we wanted Matisse alone, we could read Gowing's book as the narrator apparently did. But the narrator went on to fabricate a *new* and interesting story. Rejection of a unilinear causality involves rejecting the mere concept or "given" of influence in favour of an account of the work performed upon the intertextual material and its functional integration in the later text.

To illustrate the "difference" of Byatt's work, the way she has transformed Matisse and why, we take an example from each of the stories, supplied in the main narrative by the narrator, and finally one in a deeper (and more fictional) intertext, from two of them, the work of Sheba Brown and that of the art student Peggi Nollett. In "Medusa's Ankles", the Rosy Nude is taken down and replaced by a new version of stylised womanhood: girls with grey faces and "bonfires of incandescent puce hair" (p. 16). The

protagonist, Susannah, is shocked at the loss of the Rosy Nude, which, strangely, but as Matisse intended, had made her feel comfortable. In modern art, one generation reacts against the previous one in an iconoclastic way, and few individuals appreciate great art enough to allow it the permanence it deserves without a struggle, such as going through a cycle of disrepute then coming back into favour again. "Art Work" starts with the narrator looking at *Le silence habité des maisons* in a small black and white version in the Gowing book. In the long first paragraph "she" transforms it verbally into a large coloured version as on the front cover. The narrator uses her imagination, taking the reader along with her:

> It is a pity there are no colours but
> it is possible, tempting to imagine
> them, sumptuous [...] We may imagine
> it flaming, in carmine or vermilion,
> or swaying in indigo darkness, or
> perhaps --outdoors-- gold and green.
> We may imagine it. (p. 32)

The second paragraph begins: "There is an inhabited silence in 49 Alma Road, [....]" (p. 32) The words *inhabited* and *silence* transport the reader from Matisse's room to the house of the Dennison family, Debbie, Robin and their children, that she is going to describe. Or Matisse's room and faceless family are seen underneath the contemporary one, as under a palimpsest. The "empty beatific intelligence of some of Matisse's supine women" (p. 34) is seen in Debbie's daughter's face, and modern textile design or description (Debbie's work) would have been very different "without Matisse" (p. 34).

In the intertext provided by the art-work of their cleaning lady, Sheba Brown's, exhibition, the centrepiece is a version of St George and the dragon. The female figure, the Princess Saba, is not brown like her namesake Sheba Brown, but "flesh-coloured", like the Rosy Nude. She is vaguely Cubist but even more contorted, and her chains are twisted brassières, making a feminist statement "on the trivia of our daily life" (p. 83). Not surprisingly, Mrs Brown is made less eloquent than her creator Byatt, or Gowing, or Professor Diss on the mechanics of creation. She says "it all just comes to me in a kind of coloured rush, I just like putting things together [...]" (p. 85)

In spite of her feminist statement, Mrs Brown says that she does not feel resentment, but Peggi Nollett does. She feels anger at Matisse and transforms his work to say so visually:

> I tried to explain my project of revising or reviewing or rearranging Matisse. I have a three-dimensional piece in wire and plaster-of-paris and plasticine called The Resistance of Madame Matisse which shows her and her daughter being tortured as they were by the Gestapo in the War whilst he sits like a Buddha cutting up pretty paper with scissors. [...] The torturers have got identical scissors. (pp. 103-4)

Nollett produces a new angle on Matisse, the painter who overtly believed art should please and be comfortable. Dr Himmelblau sees a new angle to *La Porte noire*. As Professor Diss describes to her the young woman in an armchair in a striped peignoir over a white dress with touches of cardinal red (p. 131

verbally, and reproduced on the back cover visually), the reader remembers the description of Dr Himmelblau's dying friend Kay sitting in a hospital armchair with a white gown "stained with scarlet spots of fresh blood" (p. 127). Matisse revelled in life and portrayed it in glowing colour, but the dying Matisse, his interplay of black and white, where curiously, black represents all the colours, while white is the colour of the desire for absence, suicide, remind us of our mortality. Byatt's hypotexts, stories of contemporary life, trivia, frustration and boredom, so different from the work of the early twentieth-century painter, reveal the hypertext underneath, where Matisse stands for life, passion, virility, power, energy and creativity, and ultimately, death.

**5. Architextuality**

John Frow, in his ten theses on intertextuality, affirms that "what is relevant to textual interpretation is not so much the identification of a particular intertextual source, but the more general discursive structure (genre, discursive formation, ideology) to which it belongs" (Worton & Still 1990, pp. 45-55). The point is that reference to a text implicitly evokes reference to the set of potential meanings stored in the codes of a genre. As Byatt refers to an artform --visual art-- and to a specific medium --paint or ink--she evokes all the possible meanings of scale, channel of communication, structure, texture, invoked with these media, as if they were genres or sub-genres. The oil paintings, for instance, tend to take on large subjects, with a significant interplay of colour, so Byatt has used them on the covers, while the drawings are more individual and less weighty,

and adapt themselves inside to each story. Because a painting is static, it demands that the reader gaze at it steadily, however dynamic the subject portrayed may be. Byatt's use of Matisse's work allows her to create verbal scenes that have to be gazed at calmly and taken in, for example, the havoc-torn hair salon demonstrating frustration and anger with everyday life, instead of the calm of gently contemplating the Rosy Nude for an hour or two as you have your hair done. Mrs Brown's exhibition needs time to take it all in, especially as it is a treasure-house, an Aladdin's Cave. The sad contemplation by Dr Himmelblau of her dying friend, has the slow pace of a hospital where death comes inexorably. These scenes of bleakness and exhuberance seem to reflect the two sides of Matisse's emotional expression.

The references to Gowing's book and the descriptions of the pictures in the text operate, like Van Gogh's letters to his brother in *Still Life*, to give a verbal dimension to the visual, to explain it more specifically, and to show that verbal versions can be attempted, as Byatt does. Michael Worton's work "Courbet, Corot, Char ..." (Worton 1985, pp. 15-30), is very interesting in this respect, as he analyses the intertextuality of René Char's poems on the Courbet and Corot pictures. In the poems, the paintings are absent, so the reader or listener's view of them, if they do not know them, is totally dependent on the poet's inclusion or exclusion of detail. If the reader of the poems is familiar with the pictures, then the interplay of the verbal-visual stimulates in him or her a consideration of the differences between the hypo- and the hyper-texts.

In conclusion, Genette ends his study of palimpsestic texts by affirming that "hypertextuality has the specific merit of projecting pre-texts into new and different circuits of meaning and meaningfulness." (8) By placing a Matisse in a hair salon, and a discussion of his merits in a Chinese restaurant, Byatt creates an unusual site for a discussion of creativity and the purpose of art in a whole new circuit of meaning. When critical thinking is also encouraged in a work of art, the reader or watcher is involved in the critical process, as Worton and Still point out:

> critical thinking is --happily--
> increasingly attending to the
> performative functioning of imitation
> and quotation which, while superficially
> signalling an obligatory intertext,
> mobilise aleatory and metacritical
> responses from the reader [...]
> (Worton & Still 1990, p. 15)

Matisse shocked by comparing art to a comfortable armchair. The Marxists, according to Diss (p. 123) hated him for catering to the businessman, the archpriest of capitalism and the middle-classes. What *is* the place and the purpose of art? asks Byatt again, and what is its place and function today? Matisse, with his restored status, and the traditions, old and new, that he represents, stand for excellence in art in a purely aesthetic sense. Words like vision, power, craft, knowledge, vitality and daring, are applied to him. Byatt implies that the same gifts and qualities are required by the writer. A high standard is set, impossibly high. The question is asked whether we should always

attempt to maintain this high standard or accommodate ourselves to life. Professor Diss and Dr Himmelblau find themselves facing a disturbing dilemma over whether to give in to the demands of Peggi Nollett or stand up for principle and loyalty to Matisse: "One or the other must be betrayed." (p. 133) As in "Art Work" where Robin Dennison found his integrity as an artist unrewarded and his dedication and gifts betrayed, the moral question is again put: Does principle matter? Diss gives us an ambiguous answer: "*It matters very much and not at all.*" (p. 133) Looking at the lobster and crabs in the tank, he says: "I find that absolutely appalling, you know [...] And at the same time, exactly at the same time, I don't give a damn? D'you know?" (p. 134) Diss insists that we must opt for life, we can feel for the victim, the lobster, the anorexic student, subordinate woman, but we must carry on and do our best to contribute to an improvement in life's conditions.

Art today is for the businessman and the gallery-owner, for the producer makes little out of it. But Byatt does not agree with the armchair view. Her view of art is more akin to that of George Eliot: "a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow men beyond the bounds of our personal lot." (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. xi) Also to that of Iris Murdoch, who says that the greatest art is "a form of knowledge", a pursuit, even, of goodness, and, quoting George Eliot too, "that excellence is achieved by continually pushing the boundary out" (*ibid.*, pp. 113-4) as Matisse did and Byatt tries to do.

At the end of "Art Work", her fictitious artists, the couple Debbie and Robin Dennison, decide not to betray their principles of excellence and return to their vision. Debbie returns to wood-engraving and illustrates *A Book of Bad Fairies* and *A Book of Good Fairies*, while Robin begins a new kind of painting, no doubt inspired by the Oriental exoticism (though she is part Guyanese, part Irish) of Sheba Brown: "Kali the Destroyer" (p. 89). The new circuits these artists move into are similar to those of Byatt's next work, the fairy stories and Oriental tales of *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*.

**NOTES TO CHAPTER 4**

1. In her seminal work: Julia Kristeva, "Word, dialogue and novel" in Leon S. Roudiez (ed.), *Desire in Language: a Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art,* (trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine & Leon S. Roudiez), (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) or "Problèmes de la structuration du texte", first published in *Théorie d'ensemble,* (1967).

2. Michael Riffaterre, *Text Production*, p. 3, quoted in Worton & Still 1990, p. 24.

3. *Séméiotiké*, p. 120, quoted by Riffaterre in Worton & Still 1990, p. 24.

4. The opening statement, p. 1, of *Passions of the Mind.*

5. Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré,* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962). We have used the following Spanish translation: *Palimpsestos: La literatura en segundo grado,* (trans. Celia Fernández Prieto), (Madrid: Taurus, 1989).

6. In "Compulsory reader response: the intertextual drive" in Worton & Still 1990, p. 66.

7. John Frow, "Intertextuality and ontology" in Worton & Still 1990, pp. 45-55.

8. Quoted in Worton & Still 1990, p. 23.

## CHAPTER 5 Make-believe as Metaphor: Fairy tale and Dream in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*

### 5.1 Introduction to the five stories: "The Glass Coffin", "Gode's Story", "The Story of the Eldest Princess", "Dragon's Breath" and "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye"

The blurb on the dust-jacket of *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* calls fairy tale "one of the best-loved features" of Byatt's fiction. A. S. Byatt is not normally looked upon as a children's writer or even a writer of adult fairy tales. Richard Todd calls them "Wonder Tales" (Todd 1997, p. 39), a term taken from Marina Warner's 1994 book *Wonder Tales*. But Byatt has been writing stories of fantasy worlds, princes and princesses at least since her second novel, *The Game*. After confining herself to the everyday world in the next two novels, *Virgin* and *Still Life*, in *Possession*, with its multigeneric interpolations, she was able to give free rein to her powers of description of timeless fairy worlds. Both "The Glass Coffin" and "Gode's Story", the first two stories in the collection, are taken from *Possession*, whose frame story endows them with added meaning.

**1. "The Glass Coffin"**

In this story, Byatt produces pastiche Victorian story-telling for children. In the outer narrative of *Possession*, it is read by Roland at Maud's house in Lincoln (Chapter 4) after he has read parts of Blanche Glover's Journal of "Home-Life" with the poetess Christabel, whom she calls "the Princess". "The Glass

Coffin" is supposedly written by Christabel as part of *Tales for Innocents*: "frightening tales derived from Grimm and Tieck" (*Possession* p. 52). The leitmotif of *glass* and colour (p. 12) goes back through "Sugar" to the early fiction. The protagonist is a tailor, "a fine craftsman" (p. 15), in line with Byatt's creative protagonists. Familiar leitmotifs are a glass key, a castle locked in glass, and the princess confined in the glass coffin, as in the reproduction of the century-old engraving at the head of the story, *The Crystal Coffin*, H. J. Ford, 1892. The relation of this story to the outside narrative of the twentieth-century protagonists is that the tailor is Roland and the princess, she of the "most beautiful face" (*Possession* p. 63), is Maud. The coffin is like a "green ice egg" (*ibid.* p. 63), and the princess, like Maud, has "no desire for marriage" (*ibid.* p. 64). The motifs of white and bright colours occur both in the story and in Maud's delightful room. Roland is suitably spell-bound, but with the isolation of ignorance within the fiction, he does not realise he is reading his own story, which has already been written.

To return to the story within the story, it ends with a marriage, the stock fairy-tale ending, in which the tailor and the lady live happily ever after. It therefore parallels the ending of the outer narrative as Roland wins the lady too, and will probably marry Maud. The reader just wonders a little, however, about the domestic situation of the tailor, as it is also a stock situation, that of the triangle. The lady goes off hunting with her brother, while her husband, the tailor, stays

at home working voluntarily. But perhaps we have suspicious minds, and should merely note that art triumphs, and the truly dedicated person revels in the production of it:

> Only one thing was missing. A craftsman is nothing without the exercise of his craft. So he ordered to be brought to him the finest silk cloth and brilliant threads, and made for pleasure what he had once needed to make for harsh necessity. (*The Djinn* p. 24)

The tailor's work, with silk and coloured thread, good quality materials, can be read metaphorically as a view of the writer's craft. The dedicated artist cannot *not* work. As Byatt said to Sodré in *Imagining Characters*: "I don't feel wholly myself unless I am *working on something*." (Byatt & Sodré 1995, pp. 112-3) The story is arresting because tailors are not usually made of heroic material. The fact that he is doing women's work and that the lady's brother is more of a husband figure than he is (as in "Morpho Eugenia"), are rather worrying, and question the status quo. As Byatt said in her conversations with Ignês Sodré:

> One of the things I enjoy in feminist criticism is the amount of work that's been done on how important works of embroidery and needlework are in women's images of making things. (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 72)

In her tailor hero, (for everything is possible in Romance and fairy tale), Byatt subverts the archetypal prince hero, and by privileging the hero's needlework over the lady and her

brother's hunting, adds a subtle feminist sub-text to the story.

**2. "Gode's Story"**

This story is embedded deep in the narrative layers of *Possession*. We find it in Chapter 19, within the journal of Sabine de Kercoz. Hence the narrator tells us in the outer frame of the twentieth-century protagonists' journey to France; they in turn tell us, albeit indirectly, about the nineteenth-century protagonists' activities; Sabine's journal tells us of her and others' story-telling between All Saints and Christmas, and in this case gives us a report of a story told by the old peasant woman. This places it at a fifth layer or remove from the outer narrative frame. One could add a layer too, in that Sabine is consciously imitating Georges Sand in her journal writing. This particular story, told on the eve of All Souls, is suitably about dying and the dead. A clash of wills between a sailor and a proud miller's daughter conjures up a curse under which, first the girl, then the man, waste away, as they have their peace of mind destroyed by a diabolic "dancing thing". The obsession wears them out, or sucks out their soul. What it is exactly that causes the wasting is left shrouded in religious and fairy-tale mystery: "the Holy Spirit makes, crooked or straight, and naught to be done about it.", says the narrator (p. 28). Byatt's truism in *Imagining Characters* points in the direction that life, and especially creative life, is a function of energy, and that is a limited commodity, distributed unequally by the Powers that Be:

> It is true that it is life that kills you --Life wears you out and kills you; there's a profound truth in that.
> (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 123)

## 3. The Story of the Eldest Princess

This is Antonia Byatt's own fairy tale. It was commissioned by Christine Park and Caroline Heaton for the Vintage collection of adult fairy stories *Caught in a Story*. In her conversations with Ignês Sodré, she said, as we saw before:

> You can understand a lot about yourself
> by working out which fairytale you use
> to present your world to yourself in.
> (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 74)

Here, she acknowledges her belief that we all create fictional worlds to inhabit in our minds, where free rein can be given to fantasy. As a professional writer, she can write up her versions of these waking dreams or mind fictions. She chooses not to identify with any of the famous archetypal figures of fairy tale, like Cinderella, the Little Mermaid, the Sleeping Beauty, or even the youngest of three princesses. As in real life she is the eldest of three sisters, she has invented her story as such.

Typically, she breaks the mould, she is a reading-wise princess: "She began to think. She was by nature a reading, not a travelling princess." (p. 47). Her personal story is that she is sent out first, being the eldest, and because there are no males, on a Quest to find the "single silver bird in her nest of ash-branches" (p. 50), which they hope will restore the blue colour to the sky. Byatt's agonic situation as a female writer is conveyed in the fairy story by having one or more inaccessible old women on the road ahead of her (p. 46). When she finally reaches her destination, an old woman tells her: "'There is

always an old woman ahead of you on a journey, and there is always an old woman behind you too, and they are not always the same [...]'" (pp. 71-2) When discussing her dreams with Ignês Sodré, Byatt said:

> As a novelist I am interested in the dreamer's capacity to stand back and analyse a dream while it is happening. You say to yourself, 'Now I *know* this is a story'; sometimes I even think you can push or control the events. You say to yourself, 'You ought to be able to see the so-and-so if you really try' and then you find you can see it. That is not so different from inventing rooms or landscapes in fictions. (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 231)

We have that feeling about the Eldest Princess when the narrator says:

> She thought, I am in a pattern I know, I suspect I have no power to break it, and I am going to meet a test and fail it, and spend seven years as a stone. [...] 'I *could* just walk out of this inconvenient story and go my own way.' (pp. 48-52)

Stories involve new alternatives and chances; "stories change themselves" (p. 68), says the old woman, whose house she eventually reaches:

> 'You are a born storyteller,' said the old lady. 'You had the sense to see you were caught in a story, and the sense to see that you could change it to another one. And the special wisdom to recognise that you are under a curse --which is also a blessing-- which makes

> the story more interesting to you than
> the things that make it up.' (p. 66)

The curse is the addiction to reading and writing or telling stories. The Eldest Princess is exceptionally good at inventing stories: "And the Princess, telling the story, felt pure pleasure in getting it right, making it just so, finding the right word [...]" (p. 65). Stories are therapeutic: the old woman heals the creatures the Eldest Princess has picked up along the way by having them "tell the story of their hurts" (pp. 64-5), like a psychiatrist. The creatures are insects, typical of Byatt, but not the usual ones that humans find pleasant, like butterflies, although they are also present. Byatt reminds us to look carefully and with love, and not to take ugly things at immediate face value:

> The Princess looked at the Scorpion.
> Under the dust it was a glistening
> blue-black, with long arms, fine
> legs and complex segments like a jet
> necklace. [...] 'I think you are very
> handsome.' 'Of course I am. I am quick
> and elegant and versatile and delight-
> fully intricate. I am surprised, however,
> that you can see it.' (p. 52)

"Old women are free" says the old woman (p. 66). Byatt says she is now exploring the post-sexual stage of women. Obligations to husband and children are reduced, and a writer gets the freedom he or she needs. Byatt herself is at once the Princess and the old woman, and the old women on the road, ahead of other princesses or writers coming along. The Eldest Princess decides not to go back home, as writers do not solve the world's

problems. The Second Princess has already done that, and the Third Princess is going mad with having nothing to do. So the Eldest Princess remains in the old woman's house of stories and creatures, which she feels is "home" and where she feels "free" (p. 67).

The moral is to avoid men. The Fowler, the Hunter and the Woodcutter all entice her, but they have almost killed the Scorpion, the Cockroach and the Toad. The Woodcutter is a Bluebeard, and his song is a cruel parody of Christopher Marlowe's poem "The Passionate Sheepheard to his Love". The opening line, "Come live with me and be my love" is the only one the two songs have in common, as instead of the shepherd offering gifts to his lady, the Woodcutter says her married life will be arduous:

> 'And you may scour and sweep and scrub
> With bleeding hands and arms like lead,' (p. 59)

He is an axe-wielding monster, like Nigel Reiver, Frederica's husband, "the Axeman" in *Babel Tower*. Woman are more pacific, they make things on looms, for example, like the old woman, recycling feathers and leaves, so they are also more ecological. Men make war, as we see in the next story.

**4. Dragons' Breath**

This story was commissioned by Ineke Holzhaus and Ilonka Verdurment of the Sheherezade 2001 Foundation, and was read aloud in a shortened version during their project for Sarajevo. In some parts of the world, like the former Yugoslavia, survival itself

is a miracle, and simple life wonderful. We have already seen this affirmation made by Professor Diss in "The Chinese Lobster" in *The Matisse Stories*, and even in the Eldest Princess, who opts for simple life and industry. This is an allegorical tale about the capacity to wonder at the world and not fall under the curse of familiarity and boredom. It is set in a village where everyone is so bored they dream of a different life. The protagonists are the three children of a peasant woman, two young men and a girl called Eva, who is a weaver and a rug-maker. She is industrious in her tapestry, but not satisfied: "She dreamed of unknown colours." (p. 78) She stands for the writer yearning for the perfect words to express the ideal meaning. Harry the swineherd dreams of travel, his boredom unrelieved by the exploits of his incredible pet pig, Boris. Jack the farmer dreams of paradisal gardens and wild music and dance.

The villagers have to leave their village when two dragons go slowly past. Harry is inexorably sucked in as he heroically tries to save Boris. As the tale is not set in Sarajevo, the dragon procession represents war anywhere. After the devastation, their house is miraculously intact, and everything goes back to normal, except for the loss of their brother.

Like Professor Diss and his revelation of sight, Eva is as if reborn, and sees the colours in a new light, like the ones she had dreamed of. The wonder of reality was there all the time:

> She saw the colours --red, blue, yellow, black-- as though she had never seen colour before, and yet with disturbed pleasure at their familiarity. (p. 90)

Motivation, energy, effort and industry are all needed for survival. "The old women said that old tales told that dragons' breath paralysed the will" (p. 85), and that does seem to have happened to the villagers. When the effect has worn off, they stop taking things for granted, stop being blasé about the privilege of life, and snap out of their boredom:

> Eva felt such amazement now, about her own work, the stubborn persistence of wood and wool and bone shuttle [...] Such wonder, such amazement, are the opposite, the exact opposite of boredom, and many people only know them after fear and loss. Once known, I believe, they cannot be completely forgotten; they cast flashes and floods of paradisal light in odd places at odd times. (p. 91)

The tour-de-force of the tale is the description of the passing of the dragons with their six heads. It reminds the reader of the carefully built-up detailed descriptions in *The Matisse Stories*: the smashing up of the hair salon, with its war motifs, grenades, etc., and of Peggi Nollett's repulsive punk gear. The revolting aspect and stench are expressed in the superlatives of fairy tale:

> slavering with some sulpherous glue and stinking of despair and endless decay that would never be clean again in the whole life of the world. (pp. 82-3)

The more positive description resembles that of Sheba Brown's Aladdin's Cave:

> Great fat, nodding bald heads, with knobs and spouts and whelks and whorls on them, and nasty hot wet eyes in great caverns in their muddy flesh, that glint blood-red, twelve eyes [...] swallowed a layer of the earth and whatever was on it --bushes, fences, haystacks, fruit trees, a couple of goats, a black and white cow, a duckpond and the life in it. (p. 81)

Byatt's delight in words --*whelks* and *whorls*-- and in lists of things is a child-like delight. Even horrors and cataclysms are turned into tales which are "charms against boredom for their children and grandchildren, riddling hints of the true relations between peace and beauty and terror." (p. 92)

**5. The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye**

We will not evoke Genette to analyse this story since he has to play a role in it himself. Byatt tells the marvellous tale of a middle-aged narratologist who, among other things, is granted her wish to give the keynote address at a conference at Toronto University, and Genette and Todorov are in the audience. Though these figures are not present for their own interest, like Browning and Tennyson, the mere presence of real-life writers like these gives an authenticity to the realist parts of the story so that the fantasy parts come into relief.

This is eminently a fiction about the interplay in our lives of reality, dream, imagination and fiction. It is also about power --the powers that cause whole civilisations to rise and fall, religious power, also political power of monarchs and ordinary mortals, and the power play between genders. It is about

how we see ourselves, especially women. Not only Celia Quest, the lecturer of "Loss of Face", but Frederica and Stephanie, Cassandra and Julia, Susannah, Debbie and Peggi Nollett, even Marjorie Sugden of "In the Air" and Joanna Hope of "The Next Room" are forerunners of Gillian Perholt, the protagonist of this tale.

Because Gillian is a professional studier of stories, she tells stories within this story, and has friends and acquaintances, both "real" and magical, who tell stories. There are over ten stories within the frame, as follows:

OUTER FRAME

1991 The story of Gillian Perholt of Primrose Hill who goes to a conference in Ankara entitled "Stories of Women's Lives", later to a conference in Toronto, and later to New York.

INNER STORIES

1. The story of Patient Griselda, Chaucer, told by Gillian. Also *A Winter's Tale*.
2. Camaralzaman and Princess Budoor (*Arabian Nights*) (contains the third djinn).
3. "Ancient Mariner's" tale, the guide in the Museum of Anatolian Civilisation in Ankara (like the 3rd. djinn).
   The history of civilisation from 9000 BC.
   The story of Gilgamesh in stone.
   Shadow puppets.
4. Party in Izmir (Smyrna), Gillian, Orhan & friends tell each other stories.
5. Ephesus: Leyla Serin: the foolish wish of the peasant

and the three wishes.

6. Ephesus: Gillian thinks of the story of St Paul and the death of the Virgin Mary, so-called "real" stories.
7. Gillian's own story told to the genie in installments: part i.
8. The genie's story about his incarcerations:
   i) by his half-cousin, the Queen of Sheba
   ii) by the Princess Mihrimah
   iii) by the clever Zefir.

9. Gillian's story part ii, her secret book and her learning the nasty truths about life.
10. The story of the Ethiopian woman: told by Gillian as seen on TV, four generations of Ethiopian women.
11. The tale of the Fisherman and the Two Apes, told by Gillian at the Toronto Conference, put into her head by the genie.

A story within a story provides not only a different perspective on the matter, but also psychological depth to a character and symbolic reverberations. In her conversations with Ignês Sodré, Byatt showed how much she admired an instance of this use in Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* :

> Willa Cather wrote about her excitement about realising what you could do, by putting a short story or a novella into a novel, by telling a story within a story in a different form, in a different light. She used a metaphor which moves me greatly, of a window in the back of a Dutch painting of an interior, making a house which opens on the sea and the open air. So that in the innermost depths of the

> picture you've got this window on to the outer world, which perspectively is the most inner thing of all. And metaphorically the outer world is the inmost thing, because the inner life is the outer life, the sea or the forest, which you see through the window. (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 147)

All the interpolated stories in "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye" are directly connected to the outer frame of narration, by being told by Gillian herself or the genie or the people she comes into contact with during the conferences and cultural visits she makes. The stories, each in turn, inform the discussion of story-telling, its art, its purpose. Sub-themes such as discovery of identity, gender roles, power, marriage, fate, wishes, wish-fulfilment and destiny, life and art, are all fleshed out by the stories and motifs.

## 5.2 Jack Zipes and the role of fairy tale

As we look at these in turn, because of the predominance in them of the theme of woman, we will view them in the light of the findings of Jack Zipes and recent researchers in the field of fairy tale and feminism. Zipes called for "a socio-psychological theory based on the recent findings of feminist investigatcns and critical reinterpretations of Freud that will help us grasp how fairy tales function historically in a mediatory role in the American and British socialisation processes". (1)

Zipes points out that while the feminist fairy tale dates from the early 1970s, the phenomenon really has a longer history,

and Byatt was no doubt not unaware of Victorian precedents:

> Aside from a long tradition of matriarchal tales that were printed and continue to be printed in folklore collections of various lands, there were feminist precedents set in the literary fairy-tale tradition by the end of the nineteenth century. Such Victorian writers as Mary De Morgan, Mrs Molesworth, and Evelyn Scharp (who incidentally played a major role in the British suffragette movement) conceived tales with strong heroines who rebel against convention-ridden societies. (Zipes 1986, p. 13)

Byatt and Sodré began their work together through a conference on *Middlemarch* at the Cheltenham Festival of Literature in October 1992. One of the chief themes was psychoanalysis and literature. Byatt said at the time that while she did not favour psychoanalytic criticism "because it tended to analyse the writer rather than the writing and be generally reductive", she found Sodré's work "illuminating, passionate and generous" (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 147). In their subsequent book, they chose novels to discuss that had the common theme of a house or location: *Mansfield Park, Villette, The Professor's House* especially, but also *An Unofficial Rose* and *Beloved*. But also, the novels mostly concern heroines, rather than heroes. Byatt and Sodré discuss the outstanding women characters, their personal problems and their larger problems with the society into which they have been born. The stories are united also by the common theme of an archetypal structure informed by the power of the old fairy tale. Covering a span from Jane Austen to Toni Morrison, the results emerging from the discussions also trace a development in the novel as an art form:

> [A]lso look at the interesting relationship between the books, and think about what that has to say about the development of the novel up to the present day. As a result of this, despite obvious and tremendous differences, it became clear that really successful novels have elements in common, such as underlying archetypal structure, which echo the fairy stories with which we are all familiar. (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. xii)

## 5.3 Zipes and the feminist fairy tale

In the Preface to his 1986 work *Don't Bet on the Prince*, which is part anthology and part theory, Jack Zipes recoils from defining the feminist fairy tale, partly because some of these stories are written by people --A. S. Byatt would be one of them -- who do not see themselves necessarily as feminists. Zipes prefers to talk about a "vision of the world". The tales that project a feminist vision have something new to say through fairy tale both in content and in form. The writers challenge conventional views of gender, socialisation and sex roles, as does all feminist literature, "but they also map out an alternative aesthetic terrain for the fairy tale as genre to open up new horizons for readers and writers alike." (Zipes 1986, p. xi)

For the last quarter of a century, particularly in Britain and America, where the Women's Liberation Movement has been felt most forcefully, there has been a growing tendency to express a non-sexist view of the world through fairy tales or through criticism about fairy tales. As she is not a feminist, Byatt does

not propose a non-sexist world, but, all her work has a Utopian aspect, and in the tale of the Djinn, she speaks up for women's rights, and, one could almost add, through the enslaved genie and the four generations of Ethiopian women, for the rights of marginalised ethnic minorities and the Third World. Most of her aspirations do coincide with the rationale of the feminist tale as set out by Zipes:

> Created out of dissatisfaction with the dominant male discourse of traditional fairy tales and with those social values and institutions which have provided the framework for sexist prescriptions, the feminist fairy tale conceives a different view of the world and speaks in a voice that has been customarily silenced. It draws attention to the illusions of the traditional fairy tales by demonstrating that they have been structured according to the subordination of women, and in speaking out for women the feminist fairy tale also speaks out for other oppressed groups and for an *other* world, which may have appeared Utopian at one time but which is now already within the grasp of those people seeking to bring about more equality in social and work relations. Thus the aesthetics of the feminist fairy tale demands an open-ended discourse which calls for the readers to complete the liberating expectations of the narrative in terms of their own experience and their social context. (Zipes 1986, p. xi)

This narrative is a symbolical representation, through the desires and wish-fulfilment of the protagonist, of the author's critique of the patriarchal status quo, and by extension, of her desire to change the current socialisation process to such an extent that all women --and all people-- may attain the privileges the protagonist has come to enjoy and to expect. We

add "all people", as the writers of feminist fairy tales address the whole of society and question recurrent patterns of values and the accepted expectations about roles and relations --those aspects of socialisation that have always interested Byatt. As a key agent in socialisation, the fairy tale enables the child to discover his or her place in the world and to test hypotheses about the world. Story characters become part of a child's "real world" and form part of their cultural heritage.

In her second novel, *The Game*, Byatt invented a character, a grown-up woman, who still inhabited a fairy-tale world, having prolonged throughout adolescence, as part of her sibling rivalry, a make-believe world similar to that created by the Brontë children. This world seemed more "real" to her, Cassandra, than her real life. This was partly to do with the fact that, as a lecturer in medieval English, her professional life, like that of Gillian Perholt, involved working with story worlds. In the case of Cassandra, we see how dire consequences await the person who does not successfully make the transition out of the fantasy world of childhood, while at the same time, we appreciate the creative vitality as well as the innocence of this. The power of fairy tale is attested to, as Zipes says:

> [T]he social essence of the fairy tale in particular as well as the manner in which we continually return to it and reformulate it to conceive new worlds, or to reinforce our belief in the present one, indicates that we attribute great moral and ideological power to it in the process of socialising and educating our children. (Zipes 1986, p. xiv)

Zipes has shown, both in other work of his own, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, (Zipes 1983), and in reference to that of Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, (Gilligan 1982), that forms of gender behaviour, especially articulations and representations of a male point of view, if not male priority and domination, have been produced culturally through social interaction, and nowhere find more powerful expression than in the classical literary tale.

In his "Introduction" to *Don't Bet on the Prince*, Zipes reminds us that the pros and cons of reading fairy tales to children have been debated, not for decades, but for centuries. In recent centuries, the debate has polarised into the moral attack against the possible effects of their violence, and the rational defence based on the errors or uselessness of repression. But in Zipes's view, both these attitudes conceal a form of repression of what is actually happening in society. Until fairly recently, and still, in much of the Second and Third World, a woman's life was defined by a home-based routine of menial tasks, with or without a job in the work force where her rewards were unequal to those of men, and fundamental rights and needs not contemplated. A woman's life is not that depicted in a fairy tale, and only new feminist fairy tales try to depict either a new world where things are different, or, in the interim, and by definition, we hope, generically short-lived, the struggles women undergo to define their lives in opposition to the daily lives they experience.

So the problem with fairy tales is not their aptness for children, but their deliberate falsifying of the world. For Zipes, the real problem lies *beyond* and *around* fairy tales:

> To talk about fairy tales today,
> especially feminist fairy tales,
> one must, in my opinion, talk
> about power, violence, alienation,
> social conditions, child-rearing
> and sex roles. (Zipes 1986, p. 2)

In all her writing, Byatt has been concerned with these problems, and, apart from child-rearing, brings them all together in "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye". Her most recent work, *Babel Tower*, has concerned itself with child-rearing, and especially in a single-sex setting, as Frederica attempts to bring up her son away from her husband. Because this novel turns back chronologically to define the decade of the 1960s, it fits in with the thrust of the first decade of Second Wave Feminism. As Hester Eisenstein has demonstrated (Eisenstein 1983), during the early 1970s, socially constructed differences between the sexes were judged to be the chief source of female oppression, and it was argued that social control of women could be reduced by diminishing gender polarisation and moving toward some form of androgyny. From the mid-1970s to the beginning of the 1980s, androgyny was largely rejected in favour of a woman-centred perspective. Women were encouraged to seek social change through finding and exploiting potential female sources of strength and power, thus maintaining the gender polarisation. Since 1980, the woman-centred perspective has led some writers to argue for the

intrinsic superiority of women for physiological reasons, and to pursue new forms of power no longer based on rationality and violence.

Byatt has consistently written through all these phases, and her 1990s heroine, Dr Gillian Perholt, like Frederica before her, is superior to men like their husbands or the Pakistani paterfamilias of "The Djinn", and an equal to sensitive thinkers and readers like Gillian's Turkish colleague Orhan. By remaining on the fringes of feminist thought, Byatt's work has not suffered the recent problems like the divorce of feminism from Marxism, the unwillingness to privilege economic problems over psychological ones, or the false universalism that plumps all women together, regardless of differentiated problems of race, class and culture. Through her stories within stories, Byatt is able to accommodate all these viewpoints. She is particularly interested, as novelists usually are, with the psychological possibilities of gender growth shown through fairy tale.

In her conversations with Sodré, she refers to Bruno Bettelheim's pseudo-Freudian interpretations of fairy tales (2). But Zipes warns us to beware of simplistic acceptations that fairy tales help children to work through psychic disturbances and emerge successfully from the Oedipal ties into an independent identity. Zipes urges us to challenge the premiss of the Oedipal paradigm. Socially conditioned roles as defined in the Oedipal arrangement prepare females to revere negative qualities and become passive, self-denying, obedient and self-sacrificial, as

well as accepting the usual positive qualities of caring and nurturing. A traditional household where the underprivileged woman assumes the responsibility of home and children with no material reward reinforces the capitalist socio-economic system where men compete, often violently, in the market place for rewards. Social relations in such situations are reified and instrumentalised, but are so accepted that the truth of the matter, individual alienation, is barely recognised when it exists.

Zipes stresses the Utopian function of fairy tales and admires the positive notion of change in feminist fairy-tale criticism. He says we can raise our awareness of how traditional fairy tales function to maintain the present arrangements, and how they might be rearranged or reutilised to counter the destructive tendencies of male-dominant values.

In "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye", Byatt creates a female protagonist, in many ways like herself, especially in age, tastes and professional experience. Through Gillian Perholt, she explores women's problems of identity, gender, power, desire, and finally, creativity. We will look at all of these in the light of Zipes's views, to see how fairy tale both informs and takes on new life.

## 5.4 Fairy tale and identity in "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye".

The genie Gillian Perholt has called up by washing a glass bottle she bought in the market asks her to tell him her story: "it is always wise to understand the history of those who hold power over you" he says (*The Djinn* p. 205). She goes into a panic, thinking "she had no story" (p. 231) and fears she will be to him an English stereotype "thick red people who cannot bend or smile" (p. 205). But she pieces her story together from memories of her Yorkshire childhood. She is fortunate to be defined by her work. She is not "merely" a housewife, but neither has she been overly ambitious in a man's world: "she was merely a narratologist, a being of secondary order" (p. 96), "a woman who was largely irrelevant, and therefore happy" (p. 95). The hierarchichal "secondary order" places her in relation to men, but also in relation to creative writers; it also subtly prepares us for the hierarchy of magical beings such as angels and genies. Since this is a fairy story, everyone is exactly defined (happy *or* unhappy, nothing in between) and has his or her place. Gillian's peculiar powers of vision and understanding enable her to perceive and feel the power of words in great works of literature. In the aeroplane, Milton's words about the serpent in Paradise "floating redundant" (p. 98) come to her. In her mind's eye, she sees herself at age sixteen reading this for the first time, imagining herself "a golden-haired white virgin with vague blue eyes", another Eve (p. 99). In retrospect, she has constructed a myth for herself of her own past. The power of archetypal imagery is overtly brought out as the narrator

intervenes to identify with his or her protagonist:

> And for an instant Gillian Perholt had *seen*, brilliant and swaying, not the snake Eve had seen in the garden, nor yet the snake that had risen in the dark cave inside the skull of blind John Milton, but a snake, the snake, the same snake, in some sense, made of words and visible to the eye. So, as a child, from time to time, she had *seen* wolves, bears and small grey men, standing between her and the safety of the door, or her father's sleeping Sunday form in an armchair. But I digress, or am about to digress. I called up the snake (I saw him too, in my time) to explain Dr Perholt's summing-up of her own state. (p. 100)

In her conversations with Sodré, Byatt speaks of the need to be alone to think in order to concentrate on one's own individuality, and to create. The freedom from the responsibilities of child-bearing afford this, as she asserts with reference to Willa Cather and the writing of *The Professor's House*:

> There's a great deal of paradisal imagery connected with childhood in this book, imagery which comes back later in life, but under threat of death. All my own writing recently has been about the connection between the pre-sexual self and the post-sexual self. Willa Cather, when she wrote this book, was over fifty. I find that after fifty there is a great shift in one's attitude to that part of life which comes from child-bearing and immediate responsibility for living people. In the thirties and forties there is a network of human relations, very strong, very intense. And suddenly when you get to be over fifty they desert you,

> and you desert them. And if you don't feel that you're dying (and St Peter does feel that he's dying as well as all the other things he feels) you do feel almost a kind of jubilant glee at rediscovering the solitude my kind of person so desperately desired when young. I spent all my childhood wanting both to be part of the human community *and* to find a solitary place in which I could think. (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 122)

Dr Perholt suddenly finds herself in a new position of total freedom: "she was a woman in her fifties, past child-bearing" (p. 101), and not only have her children left home and are absorbed by children of their own, but her husband has suddenly gone off with a younger woman. Byatt picks up again the theme of the rejected wife, like the wife of Lucien, the hairdresser in "Medusa's Ankles". She feels "redundant as a woman, being neither wife, mother nor mistress" (p. 103). But in the days of unemployment, she is not redundant in her job, and this gives her identity, material rewards and power. She knows that as a 1990s woman, she is an "unprecedented being" (p. 105), having flown closer to the sun than any ancestress (p. 98), and having achieved the benefits of the privileges technology brought to men and then women:

> [A] woman with porcelain-crowned teeth, laser-corrected vision, her own store of money, her own life and field of power. (p. 105)

She is grateful for the fact that she has lived so long. Not many women in the past would have survived the physical handicaps and hardships for fifty years. At the end of the twentieth

century, some Western women have come to be privileged beings, as if women's power were coming full circle. The irony of tone, based on that of the fairy-tale setting, barely masks the Utopian intent:

> For this was a time when women were privileged, when female narratologists had skills greatly revered, when there were pythonesses, abbesses and sybils in the world of narratology, who revealed mysteries and kept watch at the boundaries of correctness. (p. 103)

One wonders if this is not a sly dig at the Kristevas of this world, and that Byatt herself is straying beyond the boundary of correctness in not slavishly following the work of the French theorists. Just as Byatt invented for herself the fairy tale of the Eldest Princess, she has her protagonist identify with a specific tale. Gillian Perholt does not invent, she seeks her image and identity in stories of the past. She fixes upon the story of "Patient Griselda", the Clerk's Tale from *The Canterbury Tales.* This, she says, is what came to mind when she thought of the title of the Ankara Conference "Stories of Women's Lives".

The version Gillian tells at the Conference is another reworking of the story of "Griseldis, or Griselde, or Grisildis or Grisel or Griselda" (p. 108), all different, yet the same. Unlike in Cinderella, which brings marriage as a reward, marriage is not desired by the husband Walter, and it becomes a nightmarish series of trials and tribulations for Griselda.

Marriage entails promises and prohibition, and as Gillian says in her talk, "in almost all stories of promises and prohibitions, the promises and prohibitions carry with them the inevitability of failure, of their own breaking." (p. 111) As Gillian says:" The story gallops. A woman's life runs from wedding to childbirth to nothing in a twinkling of an eye." (p. 114) She must have been thinking of herself.

Byatt's character, Perholt, introduces into her lecture references to the heroines Byatt discussed with Sodré in *Imagining Characters*:

> For the stories of women's lives in fiction are the stories of stopped energies --the stories of Fanny Price, Lucy Snowe, even Gwendolen Harleth, are the stories of Griselda, and all come to that moment of strangling, willed oblivion. (p. 121)

Dr Perholt points out that the commentator rejects a Cinderella-like acceptance of humility and patience: "the moral is *not* that wives should follow Griseldis in humility" (p. 121), but that the moral is that of Job, that "human beings must patiently bear what comes to them." (p. 121) Characters in fiction do have to bear what has been mapped out for them by their authors, they have this in common with women, and with human beings in general if you happen to believe in a fixed destiny. Because of her age, Dr Perholt begins to think of death. Young men tend not to think of death (p. 145), but women do from time to time --when they have babies and when they go up in

aeroplanes, like Gillian Perholt. She says this to her Turkish friend, reminding one of Yeats's Irish airman:

> I feel more alive now than ever before.
> But lately I've had a sense of my fate --
> my death, that is-- waiting for me,
> manifesting itself from time to time,
> to remind me it's there. (p. 167)

Just as the genie picks up the tennis player Boris Becker from the television screen and "freezes" him three times, Gillian Perholt is frozen in her tracks three times as she is confronted by a vision of death. Her fear of redundancy as a woman, of old age, death and nothingness is crystallised into a vision of a horrible grey, empty, female form (p. 118).

It is not surprising, therefore, that when the genie appears and gives her three wishes, she should make a characteristically intelligent and prudent version of the wish for eternal youth. She asks for, and is granted, her own body at thirty-five, the version of her body she most identifies with now she is on the verge of old age. But her first wish, the one she made between the two Leylas in front of the goddess Artemis at Ephesus, was a manly wish, she asked for (and later got) professional recognition. For Gillian, work provides identity and independence, and with a sense of satisfaction in this sphere, and in the physical sphere with her own youngish body, as she tells the genie, she has not much left to wish for (p. 206).

## 5.5 Gender roles, marriage and power

Byatt uses the device of the world knowledge of the immortal genie and of the expert knowledge of the "Ancient Mariner", the guide in the museum in Ankara, to comment on the history of prototypes and stereotypes of women and their changing power patterns. The fat fertility goddess dating from 9,000 BC shows a very different type of woman from that cherished and encouraged by men and women at other points of time in history. In the early days, when fertility and survival were the only important factors, woman was fat and powerful, attributes which men do not desire for women today. The guide traces the history of the descendents of the goddess, through the goddess Ishtar, goddess of Love and War, the same as Cybele and Astarte, then the Roman version, Diana. At Ephesus, Gillian sees the statues of Artemis, the "Magna Mater" (p. 155), and she is informed that it is believed that the Virgin Mary came to Ephesus to die. Gillian meditates on the myth of the dying god --Tammuz, Attis, Adonis, and feels that as Christ and the Virgin Mary fuse into this long line of fertility deities, the concept of the power of female fertility is much more real than she is herself, one mortal example of it:

> She [...] understood that real-unreal
> was not the point, that the goddess
> was still, and always had been, and in
> the foreseeable future would be more
> alive, more energetic, infinitely more
> powerful than she herself, Gillian
> Perholt [...] (p. 166)

There is no preventing her annihilation, even the genie cannot stop the fate of death. But in the new world of her wish-

fulfilment, she rejects the typical female wishes, for a husband, stability and protection, and asks to be loved. When the genie loves her, she gets perfect sex, but also demands a place for herself in the (male) genie's affections, having become a rival of no less than the Queen of Sheba and a centuries-dead woman she felt intellectual and creative jealousy for, the genie's previous mistress, Zefir.

Gillian enjoys being free of the slavery of marriage; Byatt expresses this metonymically with grim humour:

> No more grumbling and jousting,
> no more exhausted anticipation of
> alien feelings, no more snoring,
> no more farts, no more trace of
> stubble in the washbasin. (p. 104)

But it takes a brave woman to assume total independence and all the stress that this implies. As Karen Rowe writes in "Feminism and Fairy Tales":

> Romantic tales thus transmit to young
> women an alarming prophecy that marriage
> is an *enchantment* which will shield her
> against harsh realities outside the
> domestic realm and guarantee everlasting
> happiness. (3)

Rowe underlines the notion of conformity associated with marriage:

> But marriage stands for more than a

> single individual's triumph over psychic tribulations. Festive nuptials signify the heroine's conformity to the socially dictated roles of wife and mother and signal her assimilation into the community. (Zipes 1986, p. 220)

Aversion to marriage is a motif seen in the whole volume of stories. In "The Glass Coffin", the princess did not wish to marry. The Miller's daughter in "Gode's Story" was too proud to say yes, and she suffered a terrible fate. The Eldest Princess decides she is happy living with the old woman, and even the animal-groom motif is refuted in this tale:

> 'I will come gladly,' said the Toad. 'But she must not suppose I shall turn into a handsome Prince, or any such nonsense. I am a handsome Toad, or would be, if I had not been hacked at. A handsome Toad is what I shall remain. (*The Djinn,* p. 55)

Eva of "Dragons' Breath" is left a working girl at the end of her tale, and the final scene is of her and her brother embracing Boris the pig, who is a pig and only a pig, albeit a very clever one.

Magical transformations of beasts into lovers, as in "Beauty and the Beast" or "The Frog-Prince", are traced by such as Bettelheim to Oedipal problems (Bettelheim 1976, pp. 277-310). Although Zipes disapproves of seeing them uniquely in these terms, Bettelheim is not without supporters. As Karen Rowe puts it:

> Many tales implicitly acknowledge the potent attraction between females and the father; but as purveyors of cultural norms, they often mask latent incest as filial love and displace blatant sexual desires onto a substitute, such as a beast [...] (Zipes 1986, p. 215)

The adolescent girl must relinquish filial duties, confront male sexuality and transmute the initial aversion into romantic commitment. Reluctant maidens ultimately succumb. Thus romantic tales transmit clear warnings to rebellious females that the cultural imperative of marriage compels them to submit to it, or the threat to the social fabric will have dire consequences for them. The consequences will be similar to those for other outcasts such as evil fairies and wicked stepmothers, whose cleverness, power and manipulation are eventually their own ruin.

To return to the motif of the animal-groom, magical transformation of Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*, for example, into a dazzling prince, avoids the grotesqueness that consummation of the love affair would have implied. In "The Djinn", the grotesque nature of the union between the protagonist and the genie is maintained. It remains grotesque, although there apparently exist "legal structures governing the marriage and sexual relations of humans and djinns" in Islamic Law (p. 131). The real nature of the genie is to be not only immortal, but immense, and although he comes down to one and a half times Gillian's size, which is more manageable, only like making love with a basket-ball player, for instance, at one point he stretches to his full size. Just as he had held Boris Becker

between his fingers, he cups Gillian Perholt in the palm of his hand, bringing to mind (though the text does not say so), the scene in the film King Kong, another modern fairy tale, in which Kong holds Fay Wray in his hand, with covert and impossible intentions. The genie is more blatantly sexual than the outsize gorilla, as in his reducing of himself, he leaves his genitals until last, disappearing behind them.

Another motif related to the theme of the aversion to marriage is that symbol of female wisdom and power, the Queen of Sheba. The genie, who claims to be her half-cousin, is telling the protagonist his story. They discuss political power and institutions, and just as Gillian tells the genie that they have no slavery, everyone is free, she regrets it, thinking how little freedom married women still have. One thinks of that other Sheba, Sheba Brown of "Art Work", who eventually achieved power, freedom from her wife-bashing husband, fulfilled creativity and recognition in a man's world, which Robin did not. The Queen of Sheba had power, unlike the Queen of England, so she balks at submitting to "the prison house of marriage", as "her freedom was her true good" (p. 209). To stall the wedding, the Queen of Sheba sets Solomon tasks. One of these is to "tell her what women most desire" (p. 211). If there is such a thing, a secret but common consensus among women, it remains an enigma at the end, though Solomon, in his wisdom, appears to have known it. It is not the Freudian desire to have a penis, but it is related. If Byatt has any say in the matter, we suspect it will have something to do with female creativity being equal to, or superior to, male

creativity.

## 5.6 Creativity in "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye"

Byatt's interests in the interplay of male and female power centre upon creativity. Gillian Perholt's second wish, that the genie love her, is prompted by her jealousy of a woman like herself, Zefir, "ardent for knowledge, and mortally bored" (p. 222). The energetic impulse towards creativity in the female is described by the genie:

> She was a great artist, Zefir, but no one saw her art. And she was angry because she knew she was capable of many things she couldn't even define to herself, so they seemed like bad dreams --that is what she told me. She told me she was eaten up with unused power and thought she might be a witch --except, she said, if she were a man, these things she thought about would be ordinarily acceptable. (p. 224)

This reminds us of what Byatt said about Charlotte Brontë. In her last novel, *Villette*, Lucy Snowe's female energy is translated into violent images, involving fairy-tale language of hags, witches and stepmothers. Female power is seen in symbols like Cleopatra and Vashti. Other references which Byatt may have had in mind when writing "The Djinn" are to Othello and Desdemona, and the genie from the *Arabian Nights*, "always representing space and power and possibility which isn't actually ever there." (Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 65)

Byatt points out that Lucy Snowe and Gwendolen Harcourt have the same problem: "--the one we find in all these novels by women-- of marriage being the only fate for a woman, and also the only career for a woman." (Byatt & Sodré 1995, pp. 93-4)

When marriage does not work out, or the woman is not fulfilled, creative energy can be channelled into the invention of false fairy-tale worlds in the imagination, as a form of consolation:

> Sodré: There is something important in relation to creative writing, as opposed to daydream, wish-fulfilling writing, which I think Charlotte Brontë refers to at various points, which comes through in the narrative. She illustrates this through her use of fairytale: she examines the question of imagination being used to create gratifying false worlds. This is what George Eliot calls 'mists of feeling instead of substantial realities'. In *Villette*, in her use of fairytale, Angria-like characters, Brontë is truthfully exploring the mind's capacity to create lies --exploring, ultimately, the infantile need to invent fictions that console, rather than fictions that struggle with the working through of painful conflicts. (Byatt & Sodré, p. 74)

As Orhan tells the tale of Camaralzaman and Budoor, the third genie appears to step out of the dream and into the story, as he will later step into Gillian's story:

> It is as though our dreams were watching us and directing our lives with external vigour whilst we simply enact their pleasures passively, in a swoon. (*The Djinn*, pp. 134-5)

What Byatt and Sodré discuss in *Imagining Characters* concerning the formative process of dream as an intermediary between real life, the life of the imagination and fiction, is incorporated into "The Djinn" through the theoretical discussions of the narratologists. It is also incorporated in another way, which is the interpretation of the genie as a function of the protagonist's imagination. As the psychoanalyst Inês Sodré puts it:

> Sodré: The most striking proof, from the point of view of the psychoanalyst, that the human mind needs 'fictions', is the existence of dreaming, the unconscious capacity to create narratives which represent aspects of the internal world in symbolic form. Freud thought that dreams were needed for fulfilling wishes that couldn't be fulfilled by ordinary external reality, but a dream is never only the fulfilment of a particular desire; it is a form of unconscious communication, with oneself. When we dream, we use 'fictional' representations of events that take place in psychic reality to help us to work through conflicts and anxieties. A dream is very different from a work of art --it emerges spontaneously, its meaning is intensely personal, it tends to disappear almost instantly; and yet, at the most basic level, it must come from the same 'place' in the mind. (Byatt & Sodré, p. 230)

Dr Gillian Perholt's version is as follows:

> She was accustomed also to say in lectures, that it was possible that the human need to tell tales about things that were unreal originated in dreams, and that memory had certain things also in common with dreams; it re-arranged, it made clear, simple narratives, certainly it invented as well as recalling. (*The Djinn*, pp. 206-7)

Gillian Perholt, in her memory, as prompted by the genie, has used the linearity of time to give a linear narrative to her own story. It is fragmented, as Byatt, through the narrator, has chosen to break it up with narration of current events to make both more interesting. Linearity is inexorable, but perhaps anticlimactic. That memory invents is suggested in her way of seeing herself as a golden-haired blue-eyed virgin of sixteen, and her way of summing up her marriage as uniquely a series of repulsive physical torments.

Recall is selective and reinvention is biassed, and these two factors form part of the creative process. Intertextual reference adds to the richness of the verbal fabric. Orhan talks "technically about the narrative imagination and its construction of reality in tales within tales within tales." (p. 135) Byatt stands by her preference for the basically realist background, with her "stolid" (p. 97) main character, who has a rational attitude and, magic and all, a predictable future. Genette and Todorov are at the Toronto Conference, for specificity helps in the sharing between reader and writer, and specificity of time, location and a given such as a "real" character, anchors the story firmly. Orhan "tried to define some boundary of credulity between fictive persons in the fictions of fictive persons in the fiction of real persons, in the reader and the writer." (p. 136) Byatt believes there must be a boundary of credulity around at least the main characters, in this case, Gillian, Orhan and friends, so that, again in this case, the symbolic nature of

Patient Griselda, Perdita, Persephone, Yeats's Byzantium, Dorian Gray, Sheherazade and the Ancient Mariner and even Tristram Shandy (and his mother's unhappy marriage) can emerge. The carrying of desires and wishes to their fulfilment must ask the reader to pass the boundaries of credulity, but fairy tale helps in the process.

The whole of "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye" is a modern fairy tale, but the discourse and narrative genre are not fairy tale throughout. The story is realist until the moment in the narrative when the glass bottle begins to throb in the protagonist's hands, yet as long as we do not believe that it is all in this imaginative woman's mind --and we are asked not to-- it suddenly becomes fairy tale and remains in this genre right to the end. The ending is a subtle subversion of the "happily ever after" closure. Both partners --Gillian and her genie-- are free (in the third wish, she was magnanimous and gave him his freedom, being interested only in love freely given) and are happy to go their separate ways. The boundaries of credulity also exist between the life of the characters, as told by the narrator, and the stories that the characters tell. Hence Patient Griselda and Prince Camaralzaman are not as real as they or Genette and Todorov are. Our world knowledge tells us that the Virgin Mary and St Paul are ambivalent figures, and Gillian Perholt concludes that mythical persistance is in overall terms more significant than an individual's existence. The narrator ends the tale:

> There are things in the earth, things made with hands and beings not made with hands that live a life different from ours, that live longer than we do, and cross our lives in stories, in dreams, at certain times when we are floating redundant. (p. 277)

These things are not so much genies, as art forms. Dr Gillian Perholt will be reduced to "scattered atomies" (p. 166), but her line of female storytellers will go on. At the beginning of the tale, the narrator tells us she is not a Sheherezade, nor a "naquibolmalek", nor an "ashik" like the lover-minstrel on the front cover, nor a dervish or a "meddah", but really she is professionally related to them.

Perhaps the story was but a dream, prompted by her colleague's talk of the previous day: "'Powers and powerlessness: djinns and women in *The Arabian Nights*'" (p. 106), which stirred up memories of seeing the film *The Thief of Baghdad* as a small child. Imagination is needed to sustain fiction. Byatt has her protagonist explain to the genie why and how her creativity dried up, and made her leave writing fiction for writing about fiction:

> My imagination failed. I got all enmeshed in what was realism and what was reality and what was true --my need not to be in that place-- and my imagination failed. (p. 233)

Byatt turns to the genre of fairy tale as it enables her to do at least three things. First, to provide wonderful stories in

their own right, which is the *raison d'être* of fairy tale in any case; secondly, the drawing upon archetypal structures and symbolic figures gives meaning, richness and resonance to the new story; thirdly, the imaginative element in fairy tale draws close to dream, which, as we have seen, is a fruitful source of fictions.

In "The Djinn", the stories are incorporated one by one, and each complete. The main narrative comes to a halt and the new story takes over. But this is only partially true, as the character in the outside narrative assumes the role of storyteller, and thus enters the new story. At one point, the jealous Gillian wants to enter Zefir's story (p. 226). Having undergone this metamorphosis, this shape-shifting, the storyteller proceeds to give a new version of the old story, thus propelling it into a new circuit, giving it new life. In "The Djinn", the interpolated stories coming individually are like beads on a thread, indeed, there is an Oriental collection of tales which follows this approach called *The Dove's Neck-ring.* Each story is a bead and the thread is the narrator. This is acceptable within the genre of the popular tale, whereas in a novel, the incorporated stories would have to be chopped up and intricately woven into the plot. Narrative power is gained by the accumulation of similarities in plot and theme, and the accumulation here of story upon story, all in some way related to the main themes of storytelling, role models, power and desire, contribute to a strong and satisfying closure to the narrative within the terms set up by the narrative itself.

By drawing upon age-old figures like the female given three wishes, or helped by three animals, even the misogyny that gave rise to Sheherezade, Byatt can make a new comment on ancient concerns like what a woman wants in life compared to what she has got. The Eldest Princess, a version of Byatt herself, chooses a peaceful, artistic, productive life, assuming the roles of caring, but rejecting those that imply subordination. Through Dr Gillian Perholt, Byatt is able to say that the life of the Western woman at the end of the twentieth century is not too arduous, as long as she chooses wisely amongst her opportunities. Emancipated women like the Turks enjoy similar privileges, but less enlightened ideologies continue to subordinate women. The three Pakistani women seem happy enough, but do not have the choices which in the West are basic rights. Going down the scale of privilege, we come to the four generations of Ethiopian women seen on television, crammed into their hut like the genie into the hotel room. The old woman relates her helplessness to her condition of being a woman, and in her confinement, we cannot help but think of Virginia Woolf and her cry for space for female creativity in "A Room of One's Own":

> It is because I am a woman, I cannot get out of here, I must sit here and wait for my fate, if only I were not a woman I could go out and do something. (*The Djinn,* p. 248)

She is so enclosed that she cannot see that enclosure is not her only problem. Ironically, by fateful bad luck, Western aid proves useless. Yet there is a suggestion that if women organised

things they would turn out better. There is also a cry here for solidarity with Third World sisters, as Gillian Perholt is not totally at ease. One wonders also if Byatt is not suggesting something which is also troubling, that is, that if Western women get all they dream of, they may cease to be creative. Part of the creative impulse, especially in women's writing, has been born of the need to complain and demand consideration in a man's world.

It seems appropriate to end this discussion with the subject of closure, both in life and in art. The fate Gillian speaks of is death, and even the "false stasis" (p. 267) provided by plastic surgery and such, cannot hold it at bay for ever, not even a genie can do that. Death is an ending we tend not to go beyond, like marriage in fairy tales. Certain brave writers like Dante have ventured into that unknown terrain. Destiny, fate and death provide appropriate closures for stories, though the modern story tends to leave things hanging, as Perholt explains to the genie. (We have an unusual contradiction in *Possession*, where the nineteenth-century characters have a modern, ragged ending, and the twentieth-century characters a traditional, properly closed one.) The device of the narratologist character is also a felicitous choice by Byatt, as it enables her to do two things. Firstly, again, to tell good stories, secondly, to theorise on the art of fiction. The stories themselves, even those merely referred to, like *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the human being and the work of art change places, all comment on the ideas Byatt is discussing.

The first idea is that stories are necessary to us. Some people are wonderful raconteurs, like the guide, the "Ancient Mariner" in the museum in Ankara. Like Keats, he of the *nightingale*, he "made a whole wedding from a two-spouted wine-jar" (p. 141). The fact that Byatt has Gillian name him "the Ancient Mariner" suggests the compulsion of creativity. This character needs to find a "victim" to tell his tale to, a reworking of old stories. Perholt is like the avid reader, she is a willing victim. Fictions can be oral, like the guide's stories, they can be written, they can be carved in stone like the story of Gilgamesh, or sewn in silk like Zefir's pictures.

Secondly, Byatt says that a narrator has power. The Eldest Princess tells the story to suit herself and is praised. Through Gillian Perholt, Byatt discusses the double source of power of Walter, the husband of Patient Griselda. He holds his wife in his power through economic strategies and by exacting a promise, but he also *makes* their story, introducing new trials as a writer of fictions introduces twists to the intrigue or sub-plots. His dénoument is to be "splendid and satisfactory" (p. 115), he has a fine sense of an ending. Byatt has Perholt criticise Chaucer:

> The story is terrible because Walter has assumed too many positions in tne narration; he is hero, villain, destiny, God and narrator [...] (p. 120)

This power, usually male, can lead to the illusion of escaping from fate, that "their own fates too were in their own hands--" (p. 171). Gillian speaks of the "successful evasion of

fate" (p. 108) every time an aeroplane lands safely, and the satisfactory acceptance of a sense of closure about the conclusion of a tennis match. She theorises about fate in fairy tale:

> 'Characters in fairy-tales,' said Gillian, 'are subject to Fate and enact their fates. Characteristically they attempt to change this fate by magical intervention in its workings, and characteristically too, such magical intervention only reinforces the control of the Fate which waited for them, which is perhaps simply the fact that they are mortal and return to dust [...] (p. 258)

Thirdly, Byatt shows that stories usually concern the individual, who suffers vicissitudes on the journey of life towards death, but that life goes on. In all the stories in this volume, the ending is like a picture of daily life without all these dramatic adventures: the tailor sewing, Jeanne marrying an ordinary person and bearing children, the Eldest Princess writing songs and making tapestries, Eva making her rugs, and Gillian Perholt continuing to read, teach and write papers for conferences:

> 'In fairy-tales,' said Gillian, 'those wishes that are granted and are not malign, or twisted towards destruction, tend to lead to a condition of beautiful stasis, more like a work of art than the drama of Fate.' (p. 266)

The happy ending of fairy tale is similar to the desire expressed in our dream-life according to Freud. In our dreams we

give ourselves the fulfilment of our wishes and happy endings. The real desire is to return to a pre-birth state, a desire for annihilation, says Freud, and this too is present in our dreams. The impulse towards survival can emerge in opposition to this, and they form another pair of binary opposites in fairy tale, along with man/woman, powerful/powerless, human/non-human, good/bad, fortunate/unfortunate, etc.

Finally, stories are shape-shifters, like love-making (p. 251): infinitely various, they appear in an altered form to tell us the same thing but different, the old with the new. We are asked to look again at something, to see it with new eyes, to see similarities we did not notice before. Stories are presented metaphorically so that these connections, with a little effort on the reader's part, can become visible. Stories entertain and teach, as George Eliot and Iris Murdoch maintained. Hallmarks of Byatt's art, such multi-determined symbols as the motifs of sun, stone, blood, glass, snake, all recur, with the old and new significances. At the end of "The Djinn", the glass bottle that contained the genie metamorphoses into a heap of blue marbles, and the protagonist asks us to think simultaneously about content, form and example, summed up in a glass paperweight:

> [...] it is only a solid metaphor, it is a medium for seeing a thing and a thing seen at once. It is what art is [...] (p. 275)

**NOTES TO CHAPTER 5**

1. Jack Zipes, *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England.* (Aldershot: Scholar Press & New York: Methuen, 1986) "Introduction", p. 2. Richard Todd says: "Both Byatt and Warner have acknowledged their indebtedness to the work of the American folklore scholar Jack Zipes" (Todd 1997, p. 41).

2. Byatt & Sodré 1995, p. 184: Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales,* (New York: Knopf, 1976)

3. In Zipes 1986, pp. 209-226, at p. 220.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study began with certain premises which we have tried to confirm through a comparative analysis of Byatt's fiction. The major one concerns A. S. Byatt's interests and her approach to novel writing. Her thirty-year trajectory as a writer traces a path which had problematic beginnings. While every novel was admired by a small number of critics, her work saw recognition by a larger public, and the success that would permit her to concentrate solely on writing, coming rather late. When universal acclaim of her work did finally come, it was not through changing tack or attempting other strategies, but through remaining constant to the early beliefs and attachments. After much patience and perseverance along the same lines, spectacular success came with *Possession*, and her small band of followers grew into a large fan club, if not to say, a cult following. Our studies confirm that while Byatt's writing develops in certain ways, it does not abandon its early concerns and theoretical allegiances, but digs deeper in the same fertile terrain.

The second premise would be that since Byatt acknowledged as influences and models for inspiration, thinkers and writers who propounded a moral element in literature --George Eliot, F. R. Leavis and Iris Murdoch-- her own writing would also reflect a moral responsibility, even if a purely aesthetic one. We saw how the problems of the writer starting out can become the material for the literary work itself. This is especially true if the writer is a woman, and beginning at a point in time when

there seems to have been a break in the social and literary tradition, in this case, the Second World War. Our study of Byatt's early fiction reveals all the signs of a writer who, as David Lodge explained in his Crossroads article, writes the very problematic into the text. Byatt has taken upon her shoulders the weight of responsibility, not only for moral attitudes of an aesthetic nature in the novel, but also, like George Eliot, for conveying knowledge through art. Her position is like that of the modern writer described by Malcolm Bradbury in *The Social Context of Modern English Literature*:

> The democratic artist or intellectual is an all-defined creature. He has lost his caste-like status, and the wisdoms and practices of a secure and stable culture. He lives in a climate of continuous scepticism. He is less than ever before a conserver of knowledge or experience. His task is to explore rather than explain. The climate of knowledge itself, by analogy with science, became innovative; it must be heterodox, multiple and allied with all potential future states of affairs. No one position in the culture seems, in a world that is constantly creating new contexts for knowledge, a sufficient standpoint from which to acquire an overview. In art and philosophy as in science it becomes necessary to maintain a sense of eclecticism, an openness to change. Art, in such a situation, tends to lose many of its powers to assert a coherent wisdom, sustain a coherent myth or assert the veracity of its own perception. The artist, like the thinker, tends therefore to dramatise his own self-scepticism. His work tends to become self-critical, ironic or game-like in disposition. [...] and yet at the same time [they have] the feeling that the onus of historical evolution, the emergence of new modes of thought and the elimination of old and false ones, lies upon them.
> (Bradbury, 1971, pp. 16-17)

Bradbury's diagnosis seems to contain the major problematic points of Byatt's early writing, namely the insecurity of the

post-war writer, the new accent on exploring rather than explaining, and the idea of knowledge as innovative, and point of view as necessarily multiple. Byatt's early work certainly dramatised the conflict between the isolation of the writer and his or her duty to stand in the mainstream and hold to a responsible position regarding moral and aesthetic norms. Self-critical and game-like are also adjectives that can be applied to her fiction. All these signs, which are symptomatic of the metafictional writer, remain constant through the whole of Byatt's writing, however, with the only difference that in the early writing they appear new and hesitant, and in the late writing they are characteristics now accepted as normal in late twentieth-century fiction. This may be because the general formula of writing the problem explicitly into the text in a metatextual way has proved successful for contemporary serious novelists. Thus David Lodge finds the novel writer "still at the crossroads" twenty years later.

Yet there is an inherent contradiction regarding this problematic in Byatt's writing, and that is the fact of her apparent intellectual security and even superiority. Her narrators, who are often, but not always, her mouthpieces, seem self-assured, and while they are in fact exploring, give the impression that they are the source of veracious information. An example of this would be the narrator of *Still Life*, who explores the interface of language and reality, overtly appearing to be hesitant on the question of literal language being adequate and sufficient to the task of describing and communicating, and yet

all the time covertly insinuating that he or she is in control and in charge through the closeness to the creator of the fiction. These general premises, then, appear to have been confirmed in the study, with the proviso just mentioned. Byatt creates a familiar Byattian scenario through repetition of themes and motifs like the problem of language, that of the artist and his heritage, and the individual in a changing society. Then she incorporates new information and new approaches, all bound together by the structuring and embellishing powers of metaphor.

This study began when Byatt was the author of just four novels of medium length and one collection of short stories. In the course of our work, she has brought out two new novels of great length and complexity and three more volumes of shorter fiction. At the outset, she was already considered a serious and challenging writer, whose four novels were considered small masterpieces by the critics. They fulfill the requirements Barbara Hardy suggests in *The Appropriate Form* (1964), as being the three purposes of fiction: to present a narrative curve of tension in order to create and hold attention in the reader through the story; thematic organisation, to supply aesthetic satisfaction; and finally, the form of truth, through which the novel informs us by its moral argument, and moves us by its individual presences and moments. Michael Riffaterre defines realism, the master mode of nineteenth and twentieth-century fiction, in terms of its basic paradox: it is true because fictional, realistic because removed from life. He argues that truth is "primarily a matter of linguistic perception, a triumph

of semiosis over mimesis, that the truth of fiction lies in its rhetorical power, not its likeness to reality." (Riffaterre, 1990, p. vi). It is in this rhetorical sense that Byatt achieves a sense of truth in her fiction.

When Byatt won the Booker Prize with *Possession* in 1990, she joined the ranks of the Ecos and Rushdies of this world, who had helped to give birth to the "literary best-seller" of the 1980s. The advantage of this type of novel, be it *Possession*, *The Name of the Rose* or *Midnight's Children*, and which helps it to sell, is that it can be read on two levels. It can be read and enjoyed merely for the story, or it can be appreciated in all its complexity of aesthetic delights and of literary and historico-political sub-plots.

The complexity of *Possession* calls for a linguistic tool to aid us in the exploration and elucidation of the thematic and verbal connections upon which it is based. George Lakoff's work on existential and experiential metaphors proved most useful in our study of this and all Byatt's fictions. The application of Lakoff's theories revealed that Byatt has basically only one tenor or target domain in mind when she writes metaphorically, and that is *creativity*, the act of creating art, whether it is verbal or visual. Study of Lakoff's metaphors showed us that it is the vehicle or source domain that varies in every novel, and that these metaphors are not the innovative part of her fiction, on the contrary, they form part of the old and familiar. In every case, the novel is structured by a well-known, easily

recognisable metaphor.

Byatt's originality lies in the elaboration of these familiar metaphors, in the way she exploits their underlying system. The title of each book contains or points to the central image around which the whole work revolves. In *The Shadow of the Sun*, the underlying metaphors are IDEAS ARE LIGHT-SOURCES, UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING and DISCOURSE IS A LIGHT-MEDIUM. In *The Game*, more simply, the main metaphor is LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME. But there are supporting metaphors like GOOD IS UP/ BAD IS DOWN. *The Virgin in the Garden* is based on LIFE IS A PLAY, but also on iconic and metonymic metaphors like "Face stands for the person" and "Place for the event", and ontological metaphors seeing abstract concepts like virginity or creativity as an entity with boundaries. *Still Life* uses the motif of a "still life" painting, especially certain Van Goghs, as icons to emphasise the interface of the visual and the verbal. *Babel Tower*, not surprisingly, uses the image-metaphor of the Biblical Tower of Babel. In *Possession*, the image-schema is based on the metaphor LOVE IS AN ENTITY, with the support of the additional metaphors LOVE IS MAGIC, LOVE IS WAR, LOVE IS MADNESS, LOVE IS A PATIENT. These also tie in with the idea of knowledge being an entity that can be possessed. The mapping of these metaphors on to the narrative and the working out through all the ramifications of detail are what give a Byatt novel such a sense of cohesion and coherence.

After Cambridge, Byatt was toying with the idea of writing a Ph. D. on creation myths in literature. Instead, she developed

her ideas on this subject in her fiction. We see how closely related myth is to metaphor, in that the great creation myths of the different religions are metaphors for conveying their particular ideas on how and why the universe came into being, and man's place in it. CREATION IS BIRTH is an important metaphor in the mythical development of cosmogonic ideas, and Byatt is particularly fascinated by solar mythology and its relation to creativity and to male/female roles. Complex metaphors like The Great Chain of Being concept are central to *The Virgin in the Garden*, and indeed, to the whole of the tetralogy and to *Angels and Insects*. Creation myths refer to Edens and other Utopias, which inform the text as aspirations for life and literary creativity. Byatt uses myth for the three purposes John Vickery suggested: for structural purposes, for rhetorical purposes -- myth as symbol around which all other minor symbols agglutinate-- and thirdly, for the purpose of introducing an attitudinal adaption of the myth, which can then function as explanation or mirror. *Possession*, for example, is structured by the "Quest" myths, like the Holy Grail.

Lakoff's explanations enable us to see more clearly the true relationships between items or entities belonging to different domains. They help in the elucidation of the second of Vickery's uses of myth, the rhetorical usage. Lakoff's explanations of unorthodox forms of structuring, like radial structure, help us again, to see connections and to understand Byatt's questioning of orthodox ideas like the fixity of identity, the linearity of time and the precedence of male over

female. Things are not constant, but metamorphosis itself is a concept which is common to all creation-apocalypse stories, and discussion of it is one of Byatt's constants. Metaphorically, the importance of metamorphosis to literary creativity is that basic entities may have different forms, there may be no single viewpoint, and material must be transformed to produce art.

The world-view or commonly-held ideas contained in the great mythological cosmogonies are associated with ritualistic practices. A mythology needs ritual in order to perpetuate it and to protect it as it passes down traditionally through the generations. Ritual imposes order on chaos, and Byatt sees this as a metaphor for literary creativity. Cultures become characterised by their ritualistic practices, and the conceptual systems of cultures depend partly on the physical environments in which they have developed. Byatt explores in all her fiction those cultural and personal rituals which make up the metaphorical explaining and ordering of our lives. In this, she writes herself into the tradition of national writings, the sub-genre, the "Condition of England Novel".

Patricia Waugh has also shown us in her explanation of metafiction, that reality has increasingly come to be seen as a construct. Habit and routine, contained in specific discourses, have come to create our sense of reality. Byatt not only contributes to the construction of a cultural reality through her fiction, but also, in it, analyses how the "English reality" has come to be constructed through dominant discourses. This analysis

is most evident in her latest fiction, *Babel Tower*, where the sub-plot is a study of how different, often subversive, discourses, contributed to the creation of what we now call the decade of the "swinging sixties". The way in which Byatt has done this is through focussing upon a convention, for example, a birth, a wedding or, in this case, a court case, and by making it particular and personal, she takes it out of its conventional mode, and returns it to our consciousness. This allows her to question and to invite the reader to share in her questioning.

In order to return conventions to the level of awareness or consciousness in the reader, Byatt adopts a different, even opposite, approach. Instead of employing familiar metaphors that are well-established in the language, she invents striking, one-off metaphors, which take the reader by surprise. This is effected by the placing of the target domain in a source domain which is totally unlike, even contradictory. A good example of this is the description of the brides' department in the store being made as if it were of a rugby scrum. Byatt can hereby make a comment upon weddings and marriage, and at the same time, pursue her constant, if subtle, feminist sub-plot.

Byatt also explores the way in which social judgements are expressed through the cultural objects which are articulated in the different cultural codes. She harnesses the power of the codes and the special significances of their entities through defamiliarisation using metaphor and metonymy. Byatt is a great comic writer, her polyvalent viewpoint allows her to see the

ridiculous aspects of life, and the comic power of her writing often emerges through "playing metaphorically with metonymic detail", as David Lodge put it. Byatt is able to discuss through metonymic detail and culture-bound references, the fluidity in British life since the War. Ferment and class mobility, insecurity and anger, all come out through details in the codes. The different decades have brought us different fashions, and this is true of literature and criticism as well as clothes and general taste. Byatt, in her complete fictional works, offers us myriads of examples of interactions of individuals which build up into a global view of English society, focusing on the four decades, 1950-1990. As in the "Condition of England" sub-genre, Byatt's view shows England as an organism whose health is suspect, though this is seen as a fairly normal state of affairs. The crisis in morals and ethics in the 1960s, expressed vividly in *Babel Tower*, has its counterpart in the parallel crisis a hundred years earlier, seen in *Possession* and *Angels and Insects*.

Even in her short fiction, Antonia Byatt uses metaphors to give structure to the narrative and to illuminate the theme of creativity. The story "Sugar" uses the process of candy-making to discuss all the elements that go into writing a story. Our application of Guy Cook's particular adaptation of schema theory allows us to see how complex the structuring of the metaphor is. The ramifications of the metaphor of the grandfather's humbug making, passing through patriarchal paradigms, provide the text with cohesion. Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 4-10) discuss cohesion from the point of view of the receiver or reader, who

uses signs to discover and interpret the coherence of the discourse emanating from the text or sub-text. They define cohesion in terms of relations of presuppositions which confer semantic unity, or the interpretability of one element as a function of another, leading to textual formation beyond the phrase.

Our analysis of the different schemata in "Sugar" reveals how the elements from the different paradigms can be read as functions of the main paradigm of fabrication. The semantic unity provided by the cohesion produces an aesthetic unity in the story, and confers upon it the power to make a statement, not only about identity in the narrator, but also about art in general.

By using the findings of "Stepwise Lexical Decomposition", and applying them to the story "Morpho Eugenia", we are able to come to a better understanding of the formal structuring of the text. The image-schema of the angel and the butterfly seen in the title *Angels and Insects*, refers us to God's creation and to the GREAT CHAIN METAPHOR, where man is right in the middle on the hierarchical scale between the angels and the insects. The reader is thus asked to consider man's position in the universe, in relation to God, and the double crisis of faith, that of the late nineteenth century and that of the end of the century in which we live. Just as we can understand the structuring of certain large-scale metaphors or image-schemata, such as CREATION IS BIRTH or the concept of the RAINBOW, or those with a dynamic

dimension such as the SUNFLOWER, we can see the structuring of domains in the lexicon. When all the details in a complex structure hold together and inform each other, we have coherence. Coherence is an interpretative phenomenon of cognitive understanding, but by taking the point of view of the producer, or writer, Beaugrande and Dressler discuss it as the type of textual continuity through which the producer structures his or her textual meaning: "the ways the configuration of concepts and relations are mutually accessible and relevant" (Beaugrande & Dressler 1981, p. 4). In "Morpho Eugenia", we have a many-layered text in terms of narrators and types of discourse, but these narrators all discuss the same concept, that of order. The lexical field of order is well-covered and exploited, and through her characters, Byatt discusses creativity, the creation of form out of formlessness, from God's Creation down to the humble neophyte writer producing his or her first fictions. Through the mutual accessibility created by the channels opened up through the exploitation of a lexical field, such apparently unconnected and irrelevant things as Pandemonium and a cathedral are seen to bear a relationship, albeit an antonymous one, in this case, to each other.

A hallmark of metafictional writing is the heavy and elaborate use of intertextuality. In the second story of *Angels and Insects*, "The Conjugial Angel", the intertextual presence of the poet Tennyson opens a way for Byatt to continue to discuss creativity. In this way, Tennyson functions as a metaphor for literary creativity. The figure of Matisse functions in much the

same way in *The Matisse Stories*. The added interest here is that Byatt is able to explore the interface between the visual and the verbal, as she had begun to do in *Still Life* through the figure of Vincent Van Gogh. Use of Genette's structuring of the different aspects of the concept of intertextuality enables us to demonstrate Byatt's large-scale thinking in conceiving her works. A strong, striking and complex intertextual presence like that of the painter Matisse, permits Byatt to give unity to diverse facets of the creative process, from aspects like tradition, class, economic power, male predominance or political orthodoxy, down to the specific choices of the artist from among an array of possible discourses or media, and ultimately, to the aspects of vision, sensibility and hard work. Matisse is a metaphor in that he is a model standing for various things, notably, artistic vision, innovation, daring and excellence. He is discussed by various people from different standpoints, all giving their views on art and life.

The feminist sub-text of *The Matisse Stories* comes to the fore in Byatt's latest volume of short stories, *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*. Byatt has never been a militant feminist, indeed, we began this discussion by citing her declaration about being a non-belonger of schools. But she has always written about women and their problems. Her mentors --George Eliot and Iris Murdoch, upon whom she has written in detail and at length-- are women writers who refuse to privilege male characters and problems over and above female. Byatt's work abounds in metaphors of female creativity such as embroidery and knitting, but she

also uses neutral or even male metaphors for describing female creativity. In *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, she confronts the myths of female desire. Recent explanations of fairy tale as metaphor or euphemism for female problems, throw light on Byatt's intentions in writing new fairy tales, or incorporating new versions of old ones into her fictions.

Through fairy tale, Byatt reaches to the archetypal stories which, as myths, can be structuring devices that inform and give added meaning and depth to a new story. Her recent non-fictional writing confirms a continuing attention to female interests, and to psychoanalytic approaches rather than any other. Her latest fiction confirms this in that we find overt discussion of female creativity and female roles in a changing society, and attention to the importance of the imagination, both in the individual and in the popular imagination constructed through different discourses.

In her latest fictional works, we still find the old, the new and the metaphor. The old is still the individual in society, the writer as new creator in a literary tradition, using language as a medium. The new is whatever is new to Byatt at the time, whether it is Breton box-beds or Turkish djinns and the rules governing their marriage with humans. The new is also the formal innovations of the metafictional writer. The metaphor is paramount and inescapable. All her fiction combines to prove her narrator of *Still Life* wrong when "she" told us she thought she could write a novel that was purely literal, with no recourse to

metaphor. All these fictional writings have been variations on a theme: different metaphors to express the inexhaustible source of ideas on a common theme, that of the life and activities of the creative artist.

# REFERENCES OF WORKS CITED

## PRIMARY SOUCES

1. A. S. Byatt's fiction in chronological order, with editions used
2. A. S. Byatt's major non-fictional works
3. A selection of A. S. Byatt's articles, reviews and editorial works

## SECONDARY SOURCES

1. A bibliography of writings about A. S. Byatt
2. Linguistic and other theoretical and methodological works used in the analysis
3. Other references and background reading

# PRIMARY SOURCES

## 1. A. S. BYATT'S FICTION IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER WITH EDITIONS USED

*Shadow of a Sun*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1964)
(ed. used, *The Shadow of the Sun* London: Vintage, 1991, 1st. reprint)

*The Game*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967. New York: Scribner, 1968)
(ed. used, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987, 3rd. reprint)

*The Virgin in the Garden*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1978. New York: Knopf, 1979)
(ed. used, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987, 4th. reprint)

*Still Life*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985)
(ed. used, London: Chatto, Sept. 1985, 2nd. impression)

*Sugar and Other Stories*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987)
(ed. used, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988)

*Possession: a Romance*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990)
(ed. used, London: Chatto, 1990, 2nd. impression)
(Winner: Booker Prize 1990; Irish Times/Aer Lingus International Fiction Prize 1990; Eurasion section of Best Book in Commonwealth Prize 1991)

*Angels and Insects*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992)
(ed. used, London: Chatto, 1992, 1st. ed.)

*The Matisse Stories*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993)
(ed. used, London: Chatto, 1993, 1st. ed.)

*The Djinn in the Nightingales's Eye: Five Fairy Stories*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994)
(ed. used, London: Chatto, 1994, 1st. ed.)

*Babel Tower*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996)
(ed. used, London: Chatto, 1996, 1st. impression)

**FILM**

*Angels and Insects* (Samuel Goldwyn Co., 1995), based on "Morpho Eugenia", from *Angels and Insects*

## 2. A. S. BYATT'S MAJOR NON-FICTIONAL WORKS

*Degrees of Freedom: the Novels of Iris Murdoch*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965. New York: Barnes & Noble. *Degrees of Freedom: the Early Novels of Iris Murdoch*, London: Vintage, 1994, revised ed.)

*Wordsworth and Coleridge in Their Time*, (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1970. New York: Crane Russak, 1973. *Unruly Times: Wordsworth and Coleridge in Their Time*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1989)

*Iris Murdoch*, (London: Longman for the British Council, 1976. Writers and Their Work, No. 257)

*Passions of the Mind: Selected Writings*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1991)

[With Ignês Sodré] *Imagining Characters: Six Conversations about Women Writers*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1995)

## 3. A SELECTION OF A. S. BYATT'S ARTICLES, REVIEWS AND EDITORIAL WORKS

"The Obsession With Amorphous Mankind", *Encounter*, (Sept. 1966) pp. 63-9

"Introduction", Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976)

"Wallace Stevens: Criticism, Repetition and Creativity", *Journal of American Studies*, 12 (1978) pp. 369-75.

"Wordly Wise" (review of *The Realists* by C. P. Snow), *New Statesman*, (3 Nov. 1978) pp. 586-7

"Give Me the Moonlight, Give Me the Girl", *The New Review*, II (1978) p. 67

"People in Paper Houses ...", *The Contemporary English Novel*, ed. M. Bradbury & D Palmer, (London: Edward Arnold: 1979), Chapter 1, pp. 19-43

"Introduction", Grace Paley, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute*, (London: Virago, 1979)

(ed.), George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979)

"Introduction", Willa Cather, *A Lost Lady*, (London: Virago, 1980)

"Introduction", Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, (London: Virago, 1980)

"Impressions in Their Rendering", *Times Literary Supplement*, (13 Feb. 1981) pp. 171-2

"Introduction", Willa Cather, *My Mortal Enemy*, (London: Virago, 1982)

"Introduction", Willa Cather, *Shadows on the Rock*, (London: Virago, 1984)

"Marginal Lives" (review of *An Academic Question* by Barbara Pym), *Times Literary Supplement*, (8 Aug. 1986) p. 862

"Insights Ad Nauseam", *Times Literary Supplement*, (14 Nov. 1986) p. 1274

"Obscenity and the Arts", *Times Literary Supplement*, (12-18 Feb. 1988) p. 159

"Beginning in Craft and Ending in Mystery", *Times Literary Supplement*, (13 May 1988) p. 527

"Writing and Feeling", *Times Literary Supplement*, (18-24 Nov. 1988) p. 1278

"Introduction", Grace Paley, *The Little Disturbances of Man*, (London: Virago, 1989)

"Introduction", Grace Paley, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, (London: Virago, 1989)

"Introduction", Willa Cather, *The Song of the Lark*, (London: Virago, 1989)

"The Trouble with the Interesting Reader" (review of *Romanticism, Writing and Sexual Difference: Essays on "The Prelude"* by Mary Jacobus), *Times Literary Supplement*, (23-9 March 1990) p. 310

"After the Myth, the Real" (on writings on Van Gogh), *Times Literary Supplement*, (29 June - 5 July 1990) pp. 683-4

"Amatory Acts" (on the Chatto and Collins Books of Love Poetry), *Times Literary Supplement*, (31 Aug. - 6 Sept. 1990) p. 913

(ed.) *George Eliot: Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990)

"Dickens and His Demons" (review of *Dickens* by Peter Ackroyd), *The Washington Post Book World*, (10 Feb. 1991) pp. 1-2

"The Hue and Cry of Love", *The New York Times*, (11 Feb. 1991) p. A19

"Reading, Writing, Studying: Some Questions about Changing

Conditions for Writers and Readers", *Critical Quarterly*, 35: 4 (Winter 1993) pp. 3-7

"The Great Green Worm", translation of Marie-Catherine D'Aulnoy's "Le Serpentin vert" (1698), in Marina Warner (ed. & introd.), *Wonder Tales: Six Stories of Enchantment*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), pp. 189-229

[With Alan Hollinghurst] (eds.) *New Writing: an anthology, 4* (London: Minerva in association with the British Council, 1995), also "A New Body of Writing: Darwin and Recent British Fiction", pp. 439-48

"A Lamia in the Cervennes", in Christopher Hope & Peter Porter (eds.), *New Writing 5*, (London: Vintage in association with the British Council, 1996), pp. 1-17

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### 1. A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WRITINGS ABOUT A. S. BYATT


Alexander, Flora, *Contemporary Women Novelists*, (London: Arnold, 1989), (pp. 34-40 on *Still Life*)

----------, "A. S. Byatt", in Theo D'haen *et al.* (eds.), *Post-war Literatures In English: A Lexicon of Contemporary Authors*, 16 (June 1992), 1-10, A1-2, B1 (up to and inc. *Possession*)

Ashworth, Anne, "Fairy Tales in A. S. Byatt's *Possession*", *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, 15/1-2 (March 1994), pp. 93-4

Bernikow, Louise, "The Illusion of Allusions" (*The Virgin in the Garden*), *Ms*, (June 1979) pp. 36-8

Bradbury, Malcolm, "On From Murdoch" (*The Game*), *Encounter*, (July 1968) pp. 72-4

Brookner, Anita, "Eminent Victorians and Others" (*Possession: a Romance*), *The Spectator*, (3 March 1990) p. 35

----------, "*The Matisse Stories* by A. S. Byatt", *The Spectator*, (15 Jan. 1994) pp. 28-9

Campbell, Jane, "The Hunger of the Imagination in A. S. Byatt's *The Game*", *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction*, 29, (Spring

1988) pp. 147-62

----------, "'The Somehow may be Thishow': Fact, Fiction, and Intertextuality in Antonia Byatt's 'Precipice-Encurled'", *Studies in Short Fiction*, 28, (1991) pp. 115-123

Chevalier, Jean-Louis, "Conclusion in *Possession* by [A. S.] Byatt", in Lucien le Bouille (ed.), *Fins de romans: Aspects de la conclusion dans la littérature anglaise*, (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 1993) pp. 109-31

Clutterbuck, Charlotte, "A Shared Depository of Wisdom: Connection and Redemption in *Tiger in the Tiger Pit* and *Possession*", *Southerly: A Review of Australian Literature* 53: 2 (June 1993) pp. 121-9

Cosslett, Tess, "Childbirth from the Woman's Point of View in British Women's Fiction: Enid Bagnold's *The Squire* and A. S. Byatt's *Still Life*", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 8: 2 (Fall 1989) pp. 263-86

Creighton, Joanne V., "Sisterly Symbiosis: Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall* and A. S. Byatt's *The Game*", *Mosaic*, 20:1 (Winter, 1987) pp. 15-29

Cunningham, Valentine, "The Greedy Reader" (*Passions of the Mind: Selected Writings*), *Times Literary Supplement*, (16 Aug. 1991) p. 6

Cushman, Keith, "*Sugar and Other Stories*", *Studies in Short Fiction*, 25: 1 (Winter 1988) pp. 80-1

Díaz Bild, Mª Aida, "La destrucción del pasado absoluto en *Possession*", *Actas del XVII Congreso de AEDEAN*, (Cordoba: University of Cordoba Press, in press)

Dinnage, Rosemary, "England in the 50s" (*The Virgin in the Garden*), *The New York Times Book Review*, (1 April 1979) p. 20

Duchene, Anne, "Ravening Time" (*Sugar and Other Stories*), *Times Literary Supplement*, (10 April 1987) p. 395

Durant, Sabine, "Shavings and Splinters" (*Sugar and Other Stories*), *New Statesman*, (15 May 1987) p. 30

Dusinberre, Juliet, "Forms of Reality in A. S. Byatt's *The Virgin in the Garden*", *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction*, 24: 1 (Fall 1982) pp. 55-62

----------, interview with A. S. Byatt, see Todd, Janet

Feinstein, Elaine, "Eloquent Victorians" (*Possession: a Romance*), *New Statesman* (16 March 1990) p. 38

Fountain, J. Stephen, "Ashes to Ashes: Kristeva's *Jouissance*, Altizer's *Apocalypse*, Byatt's *Possession* and 'The Dream of the Rood'", *Literature and Theology: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Theory and Criticism*, 8: 2 (June 1994) pp. 193-209

Franken, Christien, "Multiple Mythologies: A. S. Byatt and the British Artist-Novel", Ph. D. diss., University of Utrecht, forthcoming

Gerrard, Nicci, *Into the Mainstream: How Feminism has Changed Women's Writing*, (London: Pandora, 1989)

Giobbi, Giuliana, "Sisters Beware of Sisters: Sisterhood as a Literary Motif in Jane Austen, A. S. Byatt and I. Bossi Fedrigotti", *Journal of European Studies* 22: 3 (Sept. 1992) pp. 241-58

Gray, Paul, "Winner: *Possession: a Romance*", *Time* (5 Nov. 1990) p. 59

----------, "The Division of Tongues" (*Babel Tower*), *Time* (3 June 1996), p. 54

Hargreaves, T., "Review: *Sugar and Other Stories* by A. S. Byatt", *Hermanthena* 142 (1987) pp. 77-8

Hope, Christopher, and A. S. Byatt, *A. S. Byatt*, (pamphlet in the Contemporary Writers Series), (London: the British Council & Book Trust, 1990)

Hosmer, Robert E. Jr., (ed.) *Contemporary British Women Writers: Texts and Strategies*, (London: Macmillan, 1993. New York: St Martin's, 1993) (Contains a bibliography of writings about A. S. Byatt, and Chapter 3 is Ann Hulbert, "The Great Ventriloquist: A. S. Byatt's *Possession: a Romance*", pp. 55-66)

Hotho-Jackson, Sabine, "Literary History in Literature: An Aspect of the Contemporary Novel", *Moderna-Sprak*, 86: 2 (1992) pp. 113-9

Hulbert, Ann, See Hosmer, Robert E. Jr.

Irwin, Michael, "Growing Up in 1953" (*The Virgin in the Garden*), (3 Nov. 1978) p. 1277

Jenkyns, Richard, "Disinterring Buried Lives" (*Possession*), *Times Literary Supplement* (2 March 1990) p. 213

Karlin, Danny, "Prolonging Her Absence" (*Possession*), *London Review of Books* (8 March 1990) pp. 17-18

Kellaway, Kate, "Self-portrait of a Victorian Polymath" (interview of Byatt on *Possession*), *The Observer* (16 Sept. 1990) p. 45

Kenyon, Olga, *Women Novelists Today: A Survey of English Writing in the 70s and 80s*, (London: The Harvester Press, 1988) (Chapter 2 "A. S. Byatt", pp. 51-85)

King, Francis, "Grand Scale" (*The Virgin in the Garden*), *The Spectator*, (2 Dec. 1979) pp. 26-7

Levenson, Michael, "Essay: The Religion of Fiction", *New Republic*, (2 August 1993), (review of *Angels and Insects*, and reprinted in *Degrees of Freedom*, pp. 335-44)

Lewis, Peter, "The Truth and Nothing Like the Truth: History and Fiction", *Strand Magazine* 27: 2 (Spring 1986) pp. 38-44

Lewis, Roger, "Larger Than Life" (*Still Life*), *New Statesman* (28 June 1985) p. 29

MacCarthy, Fiona, "The Drabble Sisters", *The Guardian* (13 April 1967) p. 8

Mars-Jones, Adam, "Doubts about the Monument" (*Still Life*), *Times Literary Supplement* (28 June 1985) p. 720

Merkin, Daphne, "Writers and Writing: The Art of Living" (*The Virgin in the Garden*), *The New Leader* (23 April 1979) p. 16

Monterrey Rodríguez, Tomás, "Voz narrativa y ficcionalidad en *Possession* de A. S. Byatt", *Actas del XVII Congreso de AEDEAN*, (Cordoba, University of Cordoba Press, in press)

Murdoch, Iris, "Force Fields" (*The Virgin in the Garden*), *New Statesman* (3 Nov. 1978) p. 586

Musil, Caryn McTighe, "A. S. Byatt", *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 14 (1983) pp. 194-205)

Paulin, Tom, "When the Ghost Begins to Quicken" (*The Virgin in the Garden*), *Encounter* (May 1979) pp. 72-7

Rifkind, Donna, "Victorians' Secrets" (*Possession*), *The New Criterion* (Feb. 1991) pp. 77-80

Rothstein, Mervyn, "Best Seller Breaks Rules on Crossing the Atlantic" (*Possession*), *The New York Times* (31 Jan. 1991) pp. C17 & C22

Schwartz, Lynne Sharon, "At Home with the Supernatural" (*Sugar and Other Stories*), *The New York Times Book Review* (19 July 1987) p. 5

Showalter, Elaine, "Slick Chick" (*Passions of the Mind, Still Life*), *London Review of Books* (11 July 1991) p. 6

Smith, Anne, "Sifting the Ash" (*Possession*), *The Listener* (1 March 1990) p. 29

Spufford, Francis, "The Mantle of Jehovah" (*Sugar and Other Stories*), *London Review of Books* (25 June 1987) pp. 22-3

Taylor, D. J., *After the War: The Novel and England since 1945* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993) (discusses *The Game*, *Virgin*, and *Still Life*)

Todd, Janet, (ed.), *Women Writers Talking*, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), (Juliet Dusinberre's interview with Byatt, pp. 181-95)

Todd, Richard, "The Retrieval of Unheard Voices in British Postmodernist Fiction: A. S. Byatt and Marina Warner", in Theo D'haen and Hans Bertens (eds.), *Liminal Postmodernisms*, (Amsterdam & Atlanta, Ga., 1994) (pp. 99-114 on *Possession*)

----------, *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1996)

----------, *A. S. Byatt*, (Writers and Their Work Series), (Plymouth: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 1997)

West, Paul, "Sensations of Being Alive" (*Still Life*), *The New York Times Book Review* (24 Nov. 1985) p. 15

Wallhead, Celia, "A. S. Byatt as Social Historian", *Actas del XVII Congreso de AEDEAN*, (Cordoba, University of Cordoba Press, in press)

----------, "Intertextuality in A. S. Byatt's 'The Conjugial Angel'", *Proceedings of the III Alcalá Seminar on Contemporary British Writing: Intertextuality in Contemporary British Writing, 14-5 March 1994* (Alcalá de Henares: University of Alcalá de Henares Press, in press)

----------, "Visual Intertextuality and Gender in A. S. Byatt's *The Matisse Stories*", *Proceedings of the XIXth International Conference of AEDEAN*, (Vigo: University of Vigo Press, 1996) pp. 585-591

----------, "Review of A. S. Byatt's *Angels and Insects* and its Spanish Translation and *The Matisse Stories*", *Atlantis* (1995, in press)

----------, "The Un-Utopian Babelic Fallenness of *Langage*: A. S. Byatt's *Babel Tower*", in Martínez López, M. & A. Gomis van Heteren (eds.), *Dreams and Realities: Visions of Utopia in English Fiction from Swift to Byatt*, (Almería: University of Almería Press, 1997, in press)

Waugh, Harriet, "With healing in their wings" (*Angels and Insects*), *The Spectator* (24 Oct. 1992) pp. 32-4

Westlake, Michael, "The Hard Idea of Truth", *PN Review* 15 (1989)

pp. 33-37

Yelin, Louise, "Cultural Cartography: A. S. Byatt's *Possession* and the Politics of Victorian Studies", *Victorian Newsletter* 81 (Spring 1992) pp. 38-41

## 2. LINGUISTIC AND OTHER THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL WORKS USED IN THE ANALYSIS

*Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Chapman, R. L., (ed.), *The Original Roget's International Thesaurus*, (revised & updated 5th. ed.), (New York: Harper Collins, 1992)

*Collins English Dictionary*, (London: Collins, 1982)

*Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, (London: Collins, 1987, 1988)

Cook, Guy, *Discourse and Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)

----------, "Top-down Misunderstanding", see Fernández-Barrientos, J. & C. Wallhead (eds.)

Genette, Gérard, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962)

----------, *Palimpsestos: La literatura en segundo grado*, (trans. Celia Fernández Prieto), (Madrid: Taurus, 1989)

Lakoff, George, & Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980)

Lakoff, George, & Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989)

*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1978)

*Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English*, (Harlow: Longman, 1981)

Martín Mingorance, Leocadio, "Lexical Fields and Stepwise Lexical Decomposition in a Contrastive English-Spanish Verb Valency Dictionary", see Hartmann, *op. cit.*, 1984, pp. 226-36

----------, "Functional Grammar and Lexematics", see Tomaszczyk,

J. & Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, *op. cit.*, 1990, pp. 227-53

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

Vickery, John, *Myths and Texts: Strategies of Incorporation and Displacement*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983)

Zipes, Jack, *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*, (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Co., 1986 & Scolar Press, 1993; New York: Methuen, 1986)

## 3. OTHER REFERENCES AND BACKGROUND READING

Adams, H. & L. Searle, (eds.), *Critical Theory Since 1965*, (Tallahasse: Florida State University Press, 1986)

Aitchison, J., *Words in the Mind: An Introduction to the Mental Lexicon*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987)

Albinksi, Nan Bowman, *Women's Utopias in British and American Fiction*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1988)

Allen, Walter, *Six Great Novelists*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955)

----------, *Reading a Novel*, (London: Phoenix House, 1963)

----------, *The Short Story in English*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981)

Alter, Robert, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-conscious Genre* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1975)

Anderson Imbert, Enrique, *Teoría y Técnica del Cuento*, (Barcelona: Ariel, 1977 & 1992)

Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, (Princeton, 1953)

Bakhtin, Mikhail, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays.* (Ed. M. Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson & M. Holquist) (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981)

Barthes, Roland, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1953)

----------, *S/Z*, (trans. Richard Miller) (London & New York, 1975)

Bates, H. E., *The Modern Short Story: A Critical Survey*, (London, 1972)

Beachcroft, T. O., *The Modest Art: A Survey of the Short Story in English*, (London, 1968)

Beaugrande, R. & W. U. Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics*, (London & New York: Longman, 1981)

Belsey, Catherine, *Critical Practice*, (London: Methuen, 1980)

Beltrán Almería, Luis, *Palabras Transparentes: la configuración del discurso del personaje en la novela*, (Madrid: Cátedra, 1992)

Benedikz, B. S., (ed.), *On the Novel: a present for Walter Allen on his 60th birthday from his friends and colleagues*, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1971)

Bennet, J. R., "Holistic Criticism", *Style* 8: 2 (1974) pp. 287-9

Bergonzi, Bernard, *The Situation of the Novel*, (London: Macmillan, 1970)

Berger, Peter L. & Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971)

Bertens, Hans, see D'Haen

Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976)

Biles, J., *British Novelists Since 1900*, (New York: Ams Press, 1987)

Birch, David, *Language, Literature and Critical Practice. Ways of Analysing Text*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1989)

Birch, David. & M. O'Toole, (eds.), *Functions of Style*, (London: Pinter, 1988)

Bloom, Harold, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

----------, *A Map of Misreading*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)

----------, *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982)

----------, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995; London: Macmillan, 1995)

Bloomfield, Morton W., (ed.), *The Interpretation of Narrative: Theory and Practice*, (Cambridge, Mass.: University of Massechussets Press, 1970)

Boccia, Michael, *Form as Content and Rhetoric in the Modern Novel*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1989)

Booth, Wayne, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961)

Boumella, Penny, "Realism and the Ends of Feminism", see Sheridan, Susan, (ed.)

Bradbrook, M. C., *Women and Literature 1779-1982: The Collected Papers of Muriel Bradbrook*, 2 vols. (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982)

Bradbury, Malcolm, *The Social Context of Modern English Literature*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971)

----------, *Possibilities. Essays on the State of the Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

----------, *The History Man*, (London: Arrow Books, 1975)

----------, *The Novel Today: Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*, (London: Fontana, 1977, revised ed. 1990)

----------, *No, Not Bloomsbury*, (London: André Deutsch, 1987)

Bradbury, Malcolm, & J Cooke, (eds.), *New Writing: An Anthology I*, (London: Minerva in association with the British Council, 1992), (includes Byatt's "Art Work", pp. 263-291)

Bradbury, Malcolm, & Andrew Motion, (eds.), *New Writing: An Anthology II*, (London: Minerva in association with the British Council, 1993)

Bradbury, Malcolm, & D. Palmer, (eds.), *The Contemporary English Novel*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), (Chapter 1 is Byatt's "People in Paper Houses...", pp. 19-43)

Breen, Jennifer, *In Her Own Write: Twentieth-century Women's Fiction*, (London: Macmillan, 1990)

Burgess, Anthony, *The Novel Now: A Student's Guide to Contemporary Fiction*, (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1967, 1971, 1972)

Carter, Ronald, "A Question of Interpretation: An Overview of Some recent Developments in Stylistics", see D'Haen, T. (ed.), pp. 7-26

----------, *Vocabulary: Applied Linguistic Perspectives*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987)

Cassirer, Ernst, *Language and Myth*, (trans. Susanne K. Langer), (New York: Dover Publications, 1947)

Caws, Mary Ann, *Reading Frames in Modern Fiction*, (Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 1985)

Clarey, see Lohafer

Clements, Robert J., & Joseph Gibaldi, *Anatomy of the Novella: The European Tale Collection from Boccaccio & Chaucer to Cervantes*, (New York: New York University Press, 1977)

Cohan, Steven, & Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1988)

Comfort, Alex, *The Novel and Our Time*, (London: Phoenix House, 1948)

Coolidge, Archibald C. Jr., *A Theory of Story*, (Iowa: The Maecenas Press, 1988)

Cooper-Clark, Diana, *Interviews with Contemporary Novelists*, (London: Macmillan, 1986)

Coseriu, E., "Pour une sémantique diachronique structurale", *Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature*, 2, 1 (1964) pp. 139-187

Cruse, D. A., *Lexical Semantics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

Culler, Jonathan, *Structuralist Poetics. Structu ism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*, (London: Routledge, 1975)

----------, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, (London: Routledge, 1981)

----------, *On Deconstruction. Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, (London: Routledge, 1983)

Cunningham, Valentine, *In the Reading Gaol: Postmodernity, Texts, and History*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)

Current-García, Eugene, & Walton R. Patrick, (eds.), Henry James, *What is the Short Story?*, (Chicado: Scott, Foresman, 1975)

Daiches, David, *The Novel and the Modern World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960)

Davidson, Donald, "What Metaphors Mean", *Critical Enquiry*, 5: 1 (Autumn 1978)

Davis, R. C., *Contemporary Literary Criticism, Modernism Through Post-structuralism*, (New York & London: Longman, 1986)

Derrida, Jacques, "The *Retrait* of Metaphor", *Enclitic*, 2: 2 (Fall, 1978), p. 7

D'Haen, Theo, (ed.), *Linguistics and the Study of Literature*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1986)

----------, & Hans Bertens, (eds.), *Liminal Postmodernisms*, (Amsterdam & Atlanta Ga., 1994)

Dik, Simon C., *Stepwise Lexical Decomposition*, (Lisse: The Peter de Ridder Press, 1978)

Docherty, T. (ed.), *Postmodernism: A Reader*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1992)

Drabble, Margaret, *A Writer's Britain: Landscape in Literature*, (New York, 1979)

Eagleton, Terry, *Literary Theory. An Introduction*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, 1990)

Eco, Umberto, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, (London: Hutchinson, 1981)

----------, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984)

Edelman, G., *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire: On the Matter of the Mind*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992)

Eikmeyer, H. J., & H. Rieser, (eds.), *Words, Worlds and Contexts: New Approaches in Word Semantics*, (Berlin & New York: W. de Gruyter, 1981)

Eisenstein, Hester, *Contemporary Feminist Thought*, (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983)

Ellmann, S, *Thinking About Women*, (London: Virago, 1979)

Empson, William, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, (New York, 1955)

Faber, Pamela, "Meaning Focalisation and Lexical Field Membership", *Actas de las I Jornadas Internacionales de Lingüística Aplicada*, (Granada: University of Granada Press, 1993) vol. 2, pp. 158-65

----------, "The Relational Structure of the Lexicon", *Actas del XV Congreso de AEDEAN (1991)*, (Logroño: University of Logroño Press, 1993) pp. 351-361

----------, "The Semantic Architecture of the Lexicon", *Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium on Lexicography*, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1994)

Faber, Pamela & C. Wallhead, "The Lexical Field of Visual Perception in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles", *Language and Literature*, 4: 2 (June 1995), pp. 127-144

Falck, Colin, *Myth, Truth and Literature: Towards a True Post-Modernism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

Fedor Kittay, see Kittay

Felperin, Howard, *Beyond Deconstruction: The Uses and Abuses of Literary Theory*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1985)

Fernández-Barrientos Martín, Jorge, & C. Wallhead, (eds.), *Temas de Lingüística Aplicada*, (Granada: University of Granada Press, 1995)

Forkner, Ben & Philippe Sejourné, "An Interview with V. S. Pritchett", *Journal of the Short Story in English*, 6 (1986), p. 23

Foucault, Michel, *The Use of Pleasure*, (trans. Robert Hurley) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986)

Fowler, Roger, *Linguistics and the Novel*, (London: Methuen, 1977)

----------, *Linguistic Criticism*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986)

Fowles, John, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969)

Frazer, (Sir) James, *The Golden Bough*, (London: Macmillan, 1890 & 1926)

Freund, Elizabeth, *The Return of the Reader: Reader-response Criticism*, (London, 1987)

Friedman, A. W., (ed.), *Forms of Modern British Fiction*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975)

Frow, John, "Intertextuality and Ontology" in Worton & Still (eds.), *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, pp. 45-55

Fuentes, Carlos, *Geografía de la Novela*, (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993)

Gasiorek, Andrzej, *Post-war British Fiction: Realism and After*, (London & New York: Edward Arnold, 1995)

Geckeler, Horst, *Semántica estructural y teoría del campo léxico*, (Madrid: Gredos, 1976)

Gee, Maggie, "Fifty Years of Virginia Woolf", *Literature Matters: British Council Newsletter*, (1991), p. 5

Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, (trans. J. E. Lewin), (Ithaca & New York: Cornell University Press, 1983 & 1988)

----------, *Fiction and Diction*, (trans. Catherine Porter), (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1991 & 1993)

Gilligan, Carol, *In a Different Voice*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982)

Gindin, James, *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1962)

Gomis van Hetern, Annette, see Martínez López

Grice, H. P., "Logic and Conversation" in P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics. Vol. 3: Speech Acts*, (New York: Academic Press, 1967 & 1975) pp. 41-59

Halliday, M. A. K. & R. Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, (London & New York: Longman, 1976)

Halperin, John, *The Theory of the Novel: New Essays*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974)

Hanson, Clare, *Short Stories and Short Fictions 1880-1980*, (London: Macmillan, 1985)

----------, *Re-reading the Short Story*, (London: Macmillan, 1989)

Hardy, Barbara, *The Appropriate Form*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1964)

----------, *Tellers and Listeners: The Narrative Imagination*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1975)

Harris, Wendell, "Vision and Form: the English Novel and the Emergence of the Short Story", *Victorian Newsletter*, 47, 11 (1975)

Hartmann, R. R. K., *Lexicography: Principles and Practice*, (London & New York: Academic Press, 1983)

----------, (ed.), *Lexeter '83 Proceedings. Papers from the International Conference on Lexicography at Exeter, 9-12 Sept. 1983*, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1984)

Harvey, W. J., *Character and the Novel*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1965)

Hawthorn, Jeremy, *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*, (London & New York: Edward Arnold, 1992)

Hayman, Ronald, *The Novel Today 1967-75*, (London: Longman for the British Council, 1976)

Heaton, Caroline, see Park, Christine,

Heron, Liz, (ed.), *Streets of Desire: Women's Fictions of the Twentieth Century*, (London: Virago, 1993)

Hidalgo, Pilar, *Tiempos de mujeres*, (Madrid: Horas y Horas, 1995)

Hillis Miller, J., *Aspects of Narrative: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, (New York, 1971)

Hoey, M., *Patterns of Lexis in Text*, (Oxford: Oxford Universtiy Press, 1991)

Holbrook, David, *The Quest for Love*, (London: Methuen, 1964)

Holub, R. C., *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*, (London & New York: Methuen, 1984)

Humm, Maggie, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism*, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994)

Iser, Wolfgang, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, (Baltimore, 1974)

----------, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, (London, 1978)

Jackson, H., *Words and their Meaning*, (London & New York: Longman, 1988)

Jacobus, Mary, (ed.), *Women Writing and Writing about Women*, (Oxford: Croom Helm/Oxford University Women's Studies Committee, 1979)

James, Henry, see Current-García

Jameson, Frederic, *The Prison-house of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972)

Jauss, Hans Robert, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, (trans. Timothy Bahti), (Minneapolis, 1982)

Jefferson, Ann, "Autobiography as Intertext: Barthes, Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet", in Worton & Still (eds.), *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, pp. 108-129

Johnson, Mark, *The Body in the Mind*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

Josipovici, Gabriel, *The World and the Book: A Study of Modern Fiction*, (Herts.: Paladin, 1971)

Jump, H. D., (ed.), *Diverse Voices, Essays on Twentieth-century Women Writers in English*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991)

Kaplan, S. J., *Feminine Consciousness in the Modern British Novel*, (Chicago & London: University of Illinois Press, 1975)

Karl, F. R., *A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1963 & 1972)

Kellogg, R., see Scholes, Robert

Kennedy, A., *The Protean Self*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974)

Kenyon, Olga, *Writing Women: Contemporary Women Novelists*, (London: Pluto Press, 1991)

Kermode, Frank, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, (London & New York, 1967)

Kilduff, M. (et al), *Working with Short Stories*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Kittay, Eva Fedor, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)

Knight, Diana, "Roland Barthes: An Intertextual Figure", see Worton & Still, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-107

Kristeva, Julia, "Word, dialogue and novel", see Moi, (ed.), and Roudiez, (ed.)

Lacan, Jacques, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, (trans. Alan Sheridon), (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973 & 1977)

Lakoff, George, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things. What Categories Tell Us about the Nature of Thought*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987)

Landow, George P., *Victorian Types and Victorian Shadows: Biblical Typology in Victorian Literature, Art and Thought*, (Boston & London: Routledge, 1980)

Lawrence, D. H., "Morality and the Novel", *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, (London: Heinemann, 1936)

Leech, Geoffrey, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, (London & New York: Longman, 1969)

----------, *Style in Fiction. A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, (London & New York: Longman, 1981)

Lehrer, Adrienne, *Semantic Fields and Lexical Structure*, (Amsterdam & London: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1974)

Lehrer, Adrienne, & Eva Fedor Kittay, (eds.), *Frames, Fields and Contrasts*, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1992)

Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Mythologiques. Le cru et le cuit*, (Paris: Plon, 1964)

Lieberman, Marcia K., "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale", in Zipes, Jack, *Don't Bet On the Prince*, pp. 185-200

Lodge, David, *Language of Fiction*, (London: Routledge, 1966 & 1984)

----------, *The Novelist at the Crossroads and Other Essays on Fiction and Criticism*, (London: Routledge, 1971)

----------, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1977)

----------, *Working with Structuralism*, (London: Routledge, 1981)

----------, *Write On: Occasional Essays 1965-1985*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1986)

----------, "The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?" in Bradbury & Cooke, *op. cit.*, 1992, pp. 203-216

Lohafer, Susan, & J. E. Clarey, (eds.), *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1989)

Lovejoy, A. O., *The Great Chain of Being*, (London, 1936), (trans. as *La gran cadena del ser*, Barcelona: Icaria, 1983)

Luckmann, Thomas, see Berger, Peter,

Lyons, J. *Semantics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)

MacCabe, Colin, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, (London: Macmillan, 1979)

Martínez López, M. & A. Gomis van Heteren, (eds.), *Dreams and Realities: Visions of Utopia in English Fiction from Swift to Byatt*, (Almería: University of Almería Press, 1997, in press)

May, Charles E., *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice*, (New York: Twayne, 1995) (Twayne's Studies in Literary Themes and Genres)

Meredith, Michael, (ed.), *More Than Friend: the Letters of Robert Browning to Katherine de Kay Bronson* (Waco, Texas: Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University, Wedgestone, 1985)

Miles, Rosalind, *The Fiction of Sex*, (London: Vision Press, 1974)

----------, *The Female Form: Women Writers and the Conquest of the Novel*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1987)

Miller, Jane, *Women Writing about Men*, (London: Virago, 1986)

Moddelmog, Debra A., *Readers and Mythic Signs: The Oedipus Myth in Twentieth-century Fiction*, (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993)

Moers, Ellen, *Literary Women*, (London: The Women's Press, 1978)

Moi, Toril, (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986)

Monteith, Moira, *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1986)

Motion, Andrew, & Candice Rodd, (eds.), *New Writing: An Anthology 3*, (London: Minerva in assocn. with the British Council, 1993)

Oates, Joyce Carol, "The Short Story", *Southern Humanities Review*, 5 (1971) pp. 213-4

O'Connor, Frank, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story*, (London, 1965)

Park, Christine, & Caroline Heaton, *Caught in a Story*, (London: Vintage, 1994), (contains A. S. Byatt's "The Story of the Eldest Princess")

Parker, P., *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, (London & New York: Methuen, 1987)

Parrinder, Patrick, *The Failure of Theory: Essays on Criticism and Contemporary Fiction*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1987)

Patrick, Walton R., see Current-García

Pavel, T. G., *Fictional Worlds*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986)

Peter, R., *Freud and Oedipus*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987)

Rabinowitz, R., *The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel 1950-60*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967)

Ragussin, Michael, *Acts of Naming: The Family Plot in Fiction*, (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)

Reid, I., *The Short Story*, (London: Methuen, 1977)

Rice, Philip, & Patricia Waugh, (eds.), *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, (New York: Edward Arnold, 1989 & 1992)

Richards, I. A., *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, (London, 1965)

Ricoeur, Paul, *La Métaphore Vive*, (Paris, 1975), (trans. R. Czerny, *The Rule of Metaphor*, (Toronto, 1977)

Rieser, H., see Eikmeyer

Riffaterre, Michael, *Semiotics of Poetry*, (London, 1980)

----------, *Text Production*, (trans. Terese Lyons), (Paris, 1979 & London, 1983)

----------, *Fictional Truth*, (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990)

----------, "Compulsory Reader Response: The Intertextual Drive", in Worton & Still, *op. cit.*, 1990, pp. 56-78

Robbe-Grillet, Alain, *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel*, (trans. Barbara Wright), (London: Calder & Boyars, 1965)

Rosebury, Brian, *Art and Desire: A Study in the Aesthetics of Fiction*, (London: Macmillan, 1988)

Roudiez, Léon S. (ed.), *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980)

Rowe, Karen, "Feminism and Fairy Tales" in Zipes, Jack, *Dont' Bet on the Prince*, pp. 209-226

Sabiston, Elizabeth Jean, *The Prison of Womanhood*, (London: Macmillan, 1987)

Sagan, Françoise, *Bonjour Tristesse*, (Paris, 1954)

Sage, Lorna, *Women in the House of Fiction: Post-war Women Novelists*, (London: Macmillan, 1992)

Sarup, M., *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1993)

Scholes, Robert, & R. Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, (New York & London, 1966)

Schorer, M., (ed.), *Modern British Fiction: Essays in Criticism*, (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961)

Selden, Raman, (ed.), *The Theory of Criticism, from Plato to the Present: A Reader*, (London & New York: Longman, 1988)

----------, *Practising Theory and Reading Literature*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1989)

Shaw, Valerie, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction*, (London: Longman, 1983)

Sheppard, E. A., (ed.), *Henry James and "The Turn of the Screw"*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974)

Sheridan, Susan, *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, (London: Verso, 1988)

Short, Mick, "Stylistics", see D'Haen, *op. cit.*, 1986, pp. 158-163

Showalter, Elaine, *A Literature of Their Own. British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977)

Spacks, P. M., *The Female Imagination*, (New York: Knopf, 1975, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976)

Stanton, Robert J., *A Bibliography of Modern British Novelists*, (Troy, New York: Whitston, 1978)

Steiner, George, *Language and Silence: Essays 1958-66*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1967 & 1985)

----------, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, (London: Oxford Press, 1975)

Stevenson, Lionel, "The Short Story in Embryo", *English Literature in Transition*, 15 (1972) pp. 261-68

Stevenson, Randall, *A Reader's Guide to the Twentieth-century Novel in Britain*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1993)

Still, Judith, "Rousseau in *Daniel Deronda*", *Revue de littérature comparée* LVI (1982), pp. 62-77

Still, Judith, see Worton, Michael

Stubbs, P., *Women and Fiction*, (London: Methuen, 1979)

Tallack, Douglas, (ed.), *Critical Theory: A Reader*, (London & New York: Harvester, 1995)

Thomas, Sue, (ed.), *Wild Women: Contemporary Short Stories by Women Celebrating Women*, (London: Vintage, 1994)

Tillyard, E. M. W., *The Elizabethan World Picture*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963)

Tomaszczyk, J., & Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, (eds.), *Meaning and Lexicography*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990)

Turner, Mark, see Lakoff, George

Tylor, Edward B., *Primitive Culture*, (London: John Murray, 1871 & 1891)

Uglow, Jenny, *George Eliot*, (London: Virago, 1987)

Vinson, James, (ed.), *Contemporary Novelists*, (London: St James

Press, 1972)

Walcutt, C. C., *Man's Changing Mask: Models and Methods of Characterization in Fiction*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesots Press, 1966)

Wallhead, Celia, see Faber, Pamela; Fernández-Barrientos Martín, Jorge

Wandor, M., (ed.), *On Gender and Writing*, (London: Pandora Press, 1983)

Warner, Marina, (ed. & introd.), *Wonder Tales: Six Stories of Enchantment*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994)

Watson, George, *The Story of the Novel*, (London: Macmillan, 1979)

Watt, Ian, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957)

Waugh, Patricia, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1984)

----------, *Feminine Fictions: Re-visiting the Postmodern*, (London: Routledge, 1989)

----------, see Rice, Philip

Wheelwright, Philip, *Metaphor and Reality*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962)

----------, *The Burning Fountain*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1968)

White, John, *Mythology in the Modern Novel: A Study of Prefigurative Techniques*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971)

Widdowson, H. G., *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*, (Harlow: Longman, 1975 & 1986)

Williams, R., *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970)

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, (trans. G. E. Auscombe), (New York: Macmillan, 1973)

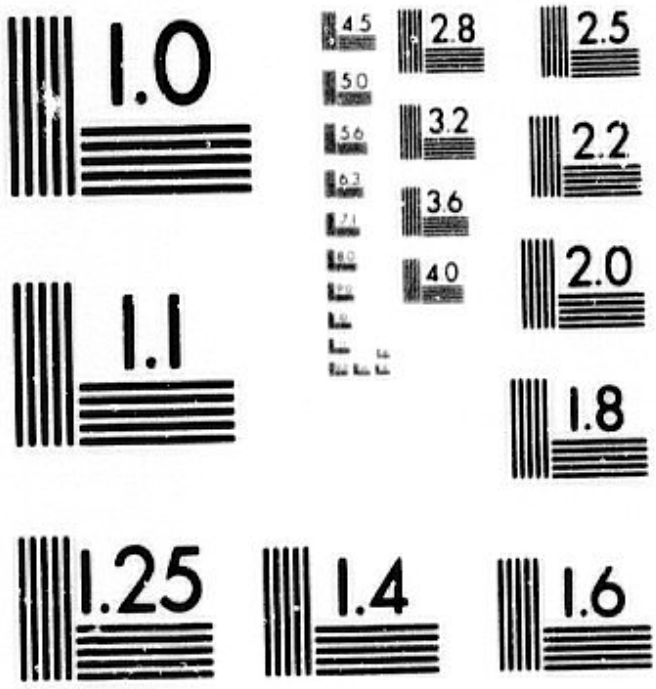
Worton, Michael, "Courbet, Corot, Char: du tableau au texte", *Littérature* LIX (1985), pp. 15-30

----------, & Judith Still, (eds.), *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990)

Zeman, A., *Presumptuous Girls: Women and Their World in the Serious Woman's Novel*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1977)

Zipes, Jack, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context*, (South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey, 1983; London: Heinemann, 1983)

----------, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*, (New York: Wildman, 1983; London: Heinemann, 1983)




MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

Zipes, Jack, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context*, (South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey, 1983; London: Heinemann, 1983)

----------, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*, (New York: Wildman, 1983; London: Heinemann, 1983)

*De conformidad con lo establecido en la Normativa de Doctorado de la Universidad de Granada, se adjunta a continuación un resumen en español de las conclusiones de esta tesis.*

Este estudio de la ficción de la autora inglesa A. S. Byatt empezó con ciertas premisas. La principal era que la trayectoria novelística de Byatt, que hasta el presente ha durado más de treinta años, tuvo unos comienzos un tanto difíciles. No es que sus primeros cuentos y novelas no tuviesen éxito, sino que eran apreciados por un reducido número de personas, y el reconocimiento y el éxito en círculos más amplios llegaron bastante tarde. Cuando por fin Byatt fue reconocida en Gran Bretaña y los Estados Unidos como una de las escritoras contemporáneas de mayor calado, no fue porque hubiera cambiado su manera de escribir o sus estrategias novelísticas. Ella había seguido fiel a sus creencias y lealtades originales, pero su pequeño grupo de seguidores había crecido hasta formar un gran club de fans que ahora abarca todo el mundo de habla inglesa, y otros países, a través de traducciones. Nuestro estudio confirma que, mientras que la obra de Byatt muestra una cierta evolución, no abandona los primeros focos de interés, sino que ahonda más en el mismo terreno fértil.

La segunda premisa era que, desde que Byatt reconoció, como influencias y modelos de inspiración, a pensadores y escritores

que proponían un elemento moral en la literatura --George Eliot, F. R. Leavis e Iris Murdoch-- sus propias obras deberían reflejar también una responsabilidad moral, aunque fuera de orden estético. Al principio del estudio, señalamos que hubo una tendencia después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, a convertir los problemas de la vida real, a la hora de escribir en material para la obra literaria. Byatt se inscribió en esta línea novelística, ya que padecía una problemática tripartita: era novata, era mujer y hubo de enfrentarse a una ruptura en la tradición nacional, en todas las esferas, social, cultural y literaria, causada por la Guerra. Nuestro estudio de las primeras obras de Byatt demuestra que éstas revelan a una escritora que, como dijo el novelista y crítico inglés David Lodge, cuando se encuentra en un cruce de caminos entre la novela realista y la novela modernista e innovadora, no elige ninguna de estas dos, por considerarlas ya agotadas como vías dentro del género. Lo que hace es seguir hacia adelante, incorporando elementos de las dos, y planteando explícitamente los problemas lingüísticos y "estratégicos" del novelista de hoy en día. El posmodernismo es metaficcional, ya que el escritor más consciente escribe su historia, pero con un comentario sobre ella misma incorporado en el texto. En este sentido, Byatt se ocupa no sólo de las actitudes morales de índole estética en la novela moderna, sino también, como le enseñó George Eliot, de la ficción como expresión artística de la época, con todas sus facetas.

Otro novelista-crítico contemporáneo, Malcolm Bradbury, diagnosticó a principios de los años setenta algunos de los

problemas a los que se enfrentaba el novelista de la segunda mitad del siglo XX. Entre ellos está la inseguridad, puesto que el escritor ya no es el sabio de otros tiempos, que reunía todos los conocimientos humanísticos, religiosos, científicos, etc., que solían formar parte de una novela. La cultura en que vivimos ya no es estable ni fija, así que el escritor tiene que dedicarse más bien a explorar que a enseñar y explicar. La idea del conocimiento debe ser como una innovación, y el punto de vista de la narrativa pasará a ser multiple más que unilateral o unívoco. Las primeras obras de Byatt, en efecto, dramatizaban el conflicto entre el escritor aislado, donde la comunidad homogénea ya no existía, y su sentido del deber hacia las principales corrientes de pensamiento, morales y estéticas. Un nuevo espíritu de autocrítica invadió la ficción, mientras las novelas y los cuentos insistían en su naturaleza en tanto que juegos, juegos lingüísticos y estratégicos, con sus propias reglas, pero que no se podían aplicar fuera del ámbito de cada juego en cuestión. Se puede identificar en la obra temprana de Byatt la novela como autocrítica y la novela como juego. Así puede afirmarse que, desde el principio, la ficción de Byatt ha sido metaficcional y sigue siéndolo, ya que la fórmula general de inscribir el problema explícitamente en la obra de manera metatextual ha resultado muy fructífera para ella como para los mejores narradores contemporáneos. Así pues, no es de extrañar que, veinte años después de los comienzos de la carrera novelística de Byatt, David Lodge encuentre a la novelista "todavía en el cruce".

Sin embargo, hay una contradicción inherente a esta problemática de la obra de Byatt, y es que, a pesar de la aparente inseguridad y autocrítica, todas sus obras, ya sean de ficción o de crítica, tienen un tono de autoridad, de seguridad intelectual, incluso de superioridad. Sus narradores, que suelen ser sus portavoces, aunque no siempre, también parecen seguros de sí mismos. Mientras que están explorando la relación entre, por ejemplo, el mundo y el lenguaje, o el ser y su sentido de identidad, dan la impresión de que son la fuente de información veraz. Un buen ejemplo de esto lo constituye el narrador o la narradora de su cuarta novela *Still Life* (*Bodegón*), donde habla de la interrelación del lenguaje y la realidad, expresando sus dudas sobre la capacidad del lenguaje literal a la hora de describir y comunicar. Sin embargo, mientras tanto, la voz narradora insinúa que está controlando los hechos, tal vez por su proximidad a la creadora de la ficción.

Con la excepción de esta última reserva sobre la seguridad personal de Byatt dentro de una inseguridad general, estas premisas generales parecen haber sido confirmadas en este estudio. Antonia Byatt crea un escenario familiar por medio de la repetición de temas como el problema del lenguaje, el artista y su herencia, el individuo en una sociedad en permanente cambio, etc. Luego ella incorpora nueva información y nuevos enfoques, todos reunidos por el poder de la metáfora, que dota a la obra de estructura a la vez que la embellece.

El punto de partida de este estudio se remonta a la visita

de la autora, A. S. Byatt, a la Universidad de Granada en el año 1988. En una conferencia en el Palacio de la Madraza, explicó cómo escribía, cuáles eran sus estrategias así como sus creencias e intereses. En efecto, tiene curiosidad por todo, y le atrae la idea de la novela como un enorme saco en el que se pueden meter muchas cosas. Su sello distintivo es tripartito, ya que dijo que en todas sus obras su fórmula era introducir "lo viejo, lo nuevo y la metáfora". Sobre una base familiar introduce información nueva e innovaciones conceptuales y técnicas, y concibe todo en términos metafóricos.

Cuando empecé este estudio, Byatt era autora de tan sólo cuatro novelas de mediana extensión y de un volumen de cuentos. Durante el curso de la investigación, ha publicado dos nuevas novelas muy largas y complejas, y tres tomos más de ficción corta. Cuando la conocí, hace ya ocho años, era considerada como una escritora muy seria y difícil. Sus cuatro novelas eran vistas por la crítica como pequeñas obras maestras, aunque, como hemos señalado, no tenían una gran audiencia. Cumplían los requisitos de la buena ficción, que son, tener una curva narrativa de tensión para crear y mantener un interés en el lector o la lectora a través de la historia; demostrar una organización temática para aportar satisfacción estética, y finalmente, una forma de verdad, por la cual la novela nos informa con su argumento moral, y nos conmueve con sus momentos puntuales. Michael Riffaterre, el crítico francés, define el realismo en términos de su paradoja básica: es verdad porque es ficción, es realista porque está apartada de la vida. Sostiene el argumento

de que la verdad es una cuestión de percepción lingüística, y que la verdad en la ficción estriba en su poder retórico, no en su parecido con la realidad (Riffaterre, 1990, p. vi). Es en este sentido retórico que Byatt logra dar a su ficción la huella de la autenticidad.

Cuando Antonia Byatt ganó el Premio Booker en 1990 con la novela *Possession*, se inscribió en la línea de los grandes autores como Umberto Eco y Salman Rushdie, que contribuyeron a fundar el concepto, en los años ochenta, del "best-seller literario". Esto parece ser un contrasentido, que un libro sea tan "literario" que es de difícil acceso al mítico lector mediano, y que tenga, sin embargo, ventas millonarias. Algunas novelas han conseguido este estatus, como, por ejemplo, *El Nombre de la Rosa* de Eco, y *Los Hijos de la Medianoche* de Rushdie. La gran ventaja de estas novelas es que se pueden leer en dos niveles. Se pueden leer y disfrutar exclusivamente en el nivel de la historia, pero luego otros lectores más exigentes pueden apreciar toda la complejidad de detalles, efectos estéticos y argumentos secundarios filosóficos, teológicos, histórico-políticos, etc.

La complejidad de *Possession* requiere una herramienta lingüística para ayudarnos en la exploración y lucidación de los enlaces temáticos y verbales que forman la base de la obra. Encontré esta herramienta en la obra de George Lakoff sobre metáforas existenciales y experienciales. La aplicación de las

teorías de Lakoff a *Possession* y a toda la ficción de Byatt nos reveló que, cuando escribe metafóricamente --lo que quiere decir siempre-- la escritora está pensando en un único *dominio objeto*, (en la terminología de Lakoff, el tenor de la metáfora). Este dominio objeto es *la creatividad*, el acto de la creación artística, ya sea verbal, visual u otro. El estudio de las metáforas que Lakoff ha identificado en nuestra vida cotidiana nos ayuda también a ver que es el *dominio fuente* (más a menos equivalente al vehículo de una metáfora) que varía en cada novela de Byatt. Estas metáforas, además, no forman la parte innovadora de la novela; por el contrario, suelen surgir de lo viejo y familiar. En cada caso, la estructuración de la novela tiene como base una metáfora muy reconocible en la vida cotidiana.

La gran originalidad de Byatt está en la elaboración de estas metáforas familiares, sobre todo en la manera en que ella aprovecha su estructura latente. El título de cada libro contiene o señala la imagen central que forma el eje de la obra. En su primera novela, *The Shadow of the Sun (La Sombra del Sol)*, las metáforas subyacentes son LAS IDEAS SON FUENTES DE LUZ, COMPRENDER ES VER, y EL DISCURSO ES UN MEDIO DE LUZ. En su segunda novela, *The Game (El Juego)*, la metáfora central es más simple: LA VIDA ES UN JUEGO DE AZAR. Pero le apoyan metáforas segundarias como LO BUENO ESTÁ ARRIBA/LO MALO ESTÁ ABAJO. La tercera novela, *The Virgin in the Garden (La Virgen en el Jardín)*, tiene como base la metáfora LA VIDA ES UN TEATRO, pero también contiene metáforas icónicas y metonímicas como LA CARA ESTÁ EN LUGAR DE LA PERSONA y EL SITIO REPRESENTA EL

ACONTECIMIENTO, además de metáforas ontológicas que contemplan conceptos abstractos como la virginidad o la creatividad como entidades con límites físicos. *Still Life (Bodegón)*, la cuarta novela, utiliza el motivo del "bodegón", especialmente ciertas pinturas de Van Gogh, como iconos para llamar la atención del lector respecto de la interrelación de lo verbal y lo visual. *The Virgin in the Garden, Still Life* y *Babel Tower* son los tres primeros tomos de una propuesta tetralogía, y por tanto tienen muchos temas en común. No es sorprendente que *Babel Tower* use como metáfora imagística la Torre de Babel de la Biblia. En *Possession*, el esquema imagístico se funda en la metáfora EL AMOR ES UNA ENTIDAD, apoyada por metáforas adicionales como EL AMOR ES MAGIA, EL AMOR ES LA GUERRA, EL AMOR ES LOCURA, EL AMOR ES UN PACIENTE. Éstas se relacionan también con la idea del conocimiento como una entidad que puede ser poseída. Estas metáforas se colocan como mapas por encima de la narrativa, y esta estructuración, junto con las ramificaciones detalladas de dichas metáforas, dotan a las novelas de Byatt de un gran sentido de cohesión y coherencia.

Después de terminar su Licenciatura en Literatura Inglesa en la Universidad de Cambridge, Antonia Byatt estaba considerando la idea de hacer una tesis doctoral sobre los mitos de creación en la literatura. Pero en lugar de hacer eso, empezó a escribir novelas, e incorporó sus ideas sobre los mitos a su ficción. Podemos apreciar que el mito está estrechamente relacionado con la metáfora, ya que los grandes mitos de la creación en las distintas religiones no son sino metáforas para explicar sus

ideas sobre el cómo y el por qué del universo, y la posición del hombre en él. LA CREACION ES NACIMIENTO es una metáfora importante en el desarrollo mítico de las ideas cosmogónicas, y a Byatt le fascina sobre todo la mitología solar y su relación con la creatividad y los roles masculinos y femeninos. Hay metáforas muy complejas en la tetralogía, como, por ejemplo, el concepto de la Gran Cadena del Ser. Este concepto es central en *The Virgin in the Garden*, y se halla también en *Angels and Insects*. Los mitos de la creación se refieren a Edenes y otras Utopías, que pueden ser inherentes al texto como aspiraciones para la vida y la creatividad literaria. Byatt utiliza el mito para los tres propósitos destacados por Vickery, a saber: propósitos estructurales, retóricos y actitudinales. La estructura de *Possession*, por ejemplo, se basa en el mito de la Búsqueda, como el Santo Grial. En su función retórica, el mito puede aparecer como un símbolo, alrededor del cual se aglutinan todos los símbolos secundarios. En cuanto a la adaptación actitudinal de un mito, éste puede funcionar como explicación o espejo.

Las teorías de Lakoff nos permiten ver más claramente las verdaderas relaciones entre ejemplos o entidades que pertenecen a dominios diferentes. Ayudan a aclarar el uso que hace Byatt de la segunda función del mito de Vickery, es decir, su función retórica. Las explicaciones de Lakoff de formas estructurales poco ortodoxas, como la estructura radial, nos ayudan, otra vez, a ver conexiones inesperadas. A través de estas formas poco ortodoxas, Byatt puede cuestionar ideas fijas como la rigidez de

la identidad, la linearidad del tiempo y el predominio de lo masculino sobre lo femenino. Las cosas no son constantes, y en efecto, lo único constante en las historias de la creación y el apocalipsis es la metamorfosis. Una constante en la ficción de Byatt es la discusión de la metamórfosis de las cosas y las personas. Desde un punto de vista metafórico, la importancia de la metamórfosis para la creatividad literaria consiste en el hecho de que las entidades básicas pueden tener varias formas, puede que no exista un único punto de vista, y para producir arte, el material ha de ser transformado.

Las ideas comunes sobre el mundo en las grandes cosmologías se asocian siempre con el rito. Una mitología necesita prácticas rituales para perpetuarse y para protegerse mientras que pasa por la tradición y las generaciones. El rito impone orden sobre el caos, y Byatt ve en esto una metáfora de la creatividad literaria. Las culturas llegan a caracterizarse mediante sus prácticas rituales, y los sistemas conceptuales de las culturas dependen en parte de los ambientes físicos en que se han desarrollado. Byatt hace una exploración en su ficción de todos esos ritos culturales y personales que contribuyen a explicar nuestras vidas de una manera metafórica y ordenada. Así, ella se inscribe en la tradición de escrituras nacionales, en el sub-género que se llama "Condition of England", sobre "la Condición de Inglaterra".

Nos ha enseñado Patricia Waugh, en su estudio de la metaficción, que la realidad se considera cada vez más un

constructo. El hábito y la rutina, contenidos en discursos específicos, son elementos que han llegado a crear de algún modo nuestro sentido de la realidad. A través de su ficción, Antonia Byatt contribuye a la construcción de una realidad cultural, pero también analiza las vías por las cuales los discursos dominantes han conseguido construir el concepto de "la realidad inglesa". Este análisis se evidencia más en su ficción más reciente, en *Babel Tower*, donde el argumento secundario es un estudio de cómo distintos discursos, muchas veces subversivos, contribuyeron a hacer lo que se conoce como la década de los sesenta. Byatt ha efectuado su análisis centrándose en un hecho convencional, por ejemplo, un nacimiento, una boda, o en este caso, un juicio, y al hacerlo particular y personal, lo saca de su rutina y así nos hace verlo con ojos nuevos. Esto le permite cuestionar e implicar al lector en el plantamiento argumental.

Para devolver las convenciones al nivel de nuestra conciencia vital, Byatt adopta un enfoque nuevo, casi opuesto al otro. En lugar de emplear metáforas familiares, bien establecidas en el lenguaje, inventa metáforas únicas y llamativas, que sorprenden al lector. Consigue este efecto al colocar el dominio objeto en un dominio fuente que es totalmente diferente, incluso opuesto. Un buen ejemplo de esta técnica es la descripción del departamento de novias de unos grandes almacenes, ya que lo describe como si fuera una melée de rugby. De esta manera, Byatt consigue hacer un comentario sobre el matrimonio y las bodas, y a la vez continuar su argumento secundario feminista.

En su ficción, Byatt también explora los modos en que se hacen juicios sociales a través de objetos culturales articulados en los distintos códigos culturales. Aprovecha el poder de los códigos y el significado especial de sus entidades mediante la defamiliarización realizada por la metáfora y la metonimia. Byatt es una gran escritora cómica, ya que su punto de vista polivalente le permite ver los aspectos ridículos de la vida humana. El poder cómico de su escritura surge a medida que ella "juega metafóricamente con detalles metonímicos", como ha sugerido David Lodge. Byatt habla de la fluidez de la vida inglesa desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial utilizando detalles metonímicos y referencias culturales específicas. La movilidad de clase, la agitación social, la inseguridad e incluso la ira de algunos sectores se hacen patentes mediante detalles en los códigos. Las sucesivas décadas han traído modas diferentes, y esto se puede detectar no sólo en la moda de vestir y en los gustos, sino también en la literatura y la crítica. En su obra, Byatt nos ofrece miles de ejemplos de interacciones de individuos que, en su conjunto, constituyen una visión global pero aguda de la sociedad inglesa. Las cuatro décadas, desde 1950 hasta 1990, pasan bajo su escrutinio. Como en el sub-género de la "Condición de Inglaterra", Byatt pasa revista a un país como si se tratara de un organismo enfermo. Detecta una crisis moral y ética en los años sesenta, y la describe detalladamente en *Babel Tower*. Nos enseña en *Possession* y *Angels and Insects* que hubo una crisis paralela en Inglaterra hace cien años.

Antonia Byatt utiliza metáforas para estructurar e iluminar

el tema de la creatividad incluso en su ficción corta. El cuento "Sugar" habla de todos los elementos de que se compone el proceso de escribir una historia como si fuera el proceso de hacer caramelos. La dinámica de estructuración es muy compleja en este cuento, y la aplicación de la adaptación de la teoría de *schemata* de Guy Cook nos permite aclararla. La metáfora del proceso de hacer caramelos en la fábrica del abuelo de la narradora tiene muchas ramificaciones, ya que pasa por paradigmas patriarcales. Dotan el texto de cohesión tanto por su estructura como por sus detalles retóricos. El lector percibe señales en el texto que relaciona con otras señales de otro ámbito, y en su conjunto se establece una relación de unidad semántica. El poder interpretar un elemento en función de otro así relacionado, conduce a la formación de un significado textual más allá de la frase, dentro de los términos de discurso establecidos por los límites del cuento.

Nuestro análisis de los diferentes "esquemas" de "Sugar" nos revela como los elementos de los distintos paradigmas pueden leerse como funciones del paradigma principal de la fabricación de cosas. La unidad semántica resultante de la cohesión produce una unidad estética en el cuento. También le da el poder de hacer una afirmación, no sólo sobre la identidad de la narradora, sino también, sobre el arte en general.

Las conclusiones de la teoría de la "Stepwise Lexical Decomposition" (Descomposición léxica gradual), al aplicarlas a la historia corta "Morpho Eugenia", nos permiten también entender

mejor la estructuración del texto. El esquema imagístico del ángel y la mariposa contenido en el título *Angels and Insects*, nos remite a la creación del universo por Dios y a la metáfora de LA GRAN CADENA, ya que el hombre se halla entre los ángeles y los insectos en la escala jerárquica de los seres vivos. Así, el lector está implicado en una consideración de la posición del hombre en el universo y en relación con Dios. Se considera pues, la doble crisis de fe, la de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, y la de las últimas décadas del siglo en que vivimos. Podemos comprender la dinámica de estructuración de ciertas metáforas a gran escala, como LA CREACIÓN ES EL NACIMIENTO, o el concepto del ARCO IRIS o del GIRASOL, pues también podemos ver la estructuración de dominios en el léxico. Cuando todos los detalles significativos de una estructura compleja se unen y se informan mútuamente, se crea en el texto una coherencia apreciable. Al hacer la configuración de los conceptos y relaciones jerárquicas y sintagmáticas mútuamente accesibles y relevantes, se formula un significado más allá de la frase, y ya más allá de la sección. En "Morpho Eugenia" tenemos un texto de muchos niveles de narración en cuanto a narradores y tipos de discurso, pero todos estos narradores hablan del mismo tema: el orden. El campo léxico del orden está bien cubierto y aprovechado, y a través de los personajes que lo utilizan, Byatt habla de la creatividad y de la creación de la forma de lo inerte y sin forma. Esto se considera en todos los niveles, desde la Creación de Dios hasta los comienzos del escritor de ficción novato y humilde.

Un rasgo distintivo de la metaficción es el uso marcado y elaborado de la intertextualidad. En la segunda historia corta de *Angels and Insects*, "The Conjugial Angel", la presencia intertextual del poeta Tennyson abre un camino para que Byatt siga hablando de la creatividad. Así, Tennyson funciona como metáfora para la creatividad literaria. La figura del pintor Matisse funciona igual en el volumen de cuentos *The Matisse Stories (Cuentos de Matisse)*. El interés añadido aquí es que Byatt explora el terreno de intercambio entre lo visual y lo verbal, tal y como había empezado a hacer con la figura de Vincent Van Gogh en *Still Life*. Al aplicar a este volumen de cuentos el modelo de intertextualidad del crítico francés Gérard Genette, podemos demostrar la capacidad a gran escala con que dota su obras en su concepción. Una presencia intertextual fuerte y compleja como la figura de Matisse le permite a Byatt dar unidad a las diversas facetas del proceso creador, desde aspectos como la tradición, la clase social, el poder económico, el predominio masculino o la ortodoxia política, hasta la selección específica del artista de entre toda una gama de discursos o medios posibles, y finalmente también da unidad a los aspectos que éste representa de visión, sensibilidad y trabajo. Matisse es una metáfora ya que se trata de un modelo que representa varias cosas, especialmente la visión artística, la innovación, el atrevimiento y la excelencia. Todos los personajes dan su opinión particular sobre él y sobre el arte.

El argumento feminista subyacente en *The Matisse Stories* es el que predomina en el último volumen de cuentos, *The Djinn*

*in the Nightingale's Eye (El Genio en la Botella Ojo del Ruiseñor)*. Antonia Byatt nunca ha sido feminista militante. Empezamos este estudio citando lo que ella misma declaró sobre su preferencia de no pertenecer a ningún grupo partidario. Sin embargo, siempre ha escrito sobre las mujeres y sus problemas. Sus modelos se han negado a privilegiar personajes masculinos y asuntos masculinos sobre los femeninos: George Eliot e Iris Murdoch. La obra de Byatt está repleta de metáforas de la creatividad femenina, tales como la habilidad de bordar o hacer punto, pero también utiliza metáforas neutrales o incluso masculinas para describir la creación artística femenina. En *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, afronta el mito del deseo femenino. Unos estudios feministas sobre los cuentos de hadas como género que se especializa en encubrir los problemas femeninos con metáforas o eufemismos aclaran las intenciones de Byatt en su utilización en su ficción más reciente de nuevas versiones de cuentos tradicionales o bien de nuevos cuentos de hadas.

Es a través del cuento de hadas que Byatt puede alcanzar las historias arquetípicas que, como mitos, sirven como instrumentos de estructuración y a la vez dotan el cuento de nuevo sentido y significado más profundo. Byatt ha declarado que si hay algún enfoque que le interesa más que los otros es el psicoanalítico. Esto es así porque cree que las ideas principales que informan la ficción vienen del subconsciente y de la imaginación, dos áreas de nuestro ser que están unidas. Su producción más reciente corrobora esto, ya que se advierte en ella una intensa

concentración no sólo sobre la imaginación de un individuo --casi siempre un personaje femenino-- sino sobre la imaginación popular de todo un país: Inglaterra.

En su escritura más reciente, todavía encontramos lo viejo, lo nuevo y la metáfora. Lo viejo sigue siendo el individuo en la sociedad, el escritor como nuevo creador en una tradición antigua, cuyo medio es el lenguaje. Lo nuevo es cualquier cosa que le llama la atención en un momento dado como posible material susceptible de ser incluido coherentemente, aunque éste sea abstruso, como, por ejemplo, la normativa musulmana que gobierna el matrimonio entre genios y humanos. Lo nuevo incluye también las innovaciones formales del escritor de metaficción. En toda su obra narrativa, se aprecian con especial énfasis algunas variaciones sobre un mismo tema: distintas metáforas para expresar la fuente inagotable de ideas que tiene sobre la vida y las actividades del artista creador.