

## **Acknowledgement**

At first I would like to express my deep gratitude to God and my parents, by whose grace I have been able to reach so far. I am also very grateful to my supervisor Dr. Fakrul Alam who has encouraged me to complete the dissertation paper. The attractive personality and excellent behavior of Professor Alam will inspire me for ever. Finally, I would like to thank East West University, particularly its English Department, and I would like to state that I am proud of being a student of East West University.

# ***Possession: A Romance as a Postmodern Novel***

## **Introduction**

*Possession: A Romance* (1990), by A.S. Byatt, is indeed a romance, but also a mystery, a satire, a detective story and a fairy tale, a novel about English Departments and both a historical and contemporary work of fiction. The plot of *Possession* deals with an illicit love affair between two fictitious Victorian poets, Randolph Henry Ash and Charitable LaMotte. Their story is graphically revealed in a narrative which follows the research of two twentieth century literary scholars, the Ash expert Roland Michel, and Maud Bailey, an authority on LaMotte. Polvinen (2004) declares that the novel portrays various kinds of possession: material, spiritual and sexual. We can note here that *Possession*: possession can be defined somehow as the compulsion to make someone, something completely ones own.

The essence of many postmodern novels is to play around with the conventions of various genres, and to move towards hybridity, simulation etc. In *Possession: A Romance* Byatt does a wonderful job of giving each character, whether major or minor, own unique voice and personality. The novel's use of intertextuality, hybridity, double coding, pastiche, self reflexivity etc makes of a postmodern novel. According to Rudaityte (2007) this Booker-prize winning novel regarded as an emblematic postmodern novel in which texts, authors and literary movements of the past are transformed and reflected. He also noted that they are presented in the form of

metafictional narrative, of rewriting, of parody and pastiche, giving them a reinterpretation and recoding in a totally different cultural and literary context. In *Possession: A Romance*, Byatt constructs a very serious game about postmodernism. Its hybrid quality, intertextuality and playful tendencies of moving from past to present, double coding etc are examples of postmodern techniques of narration.

Byatt's plot in *Possession* is a postmodern plot. She has a story within a story that is a plot within a plot. According to Rudaityte (2007) it is a truly complex, intricate and multilayered novel both in terms of its structure and themes, it is blatantly intertextual and can be read through other texts that have been incorporated into the author's narrative. *Possession* is an exhilarating novel of wit and romance, at once an intellectual mystery and triumphant love story too (Rudaityte, 2007). *Possession* is the result of Byatt's affection for intertextual and embedded texts. She has borrowed from various sources. Byatt's style of using many different genres for e.g. the detective genre, the romance etc and her use of myths and fairy tales shows us that in the postmodern world nothing is original. By drawing from various sources and mixing several genres, Byatt creates a novel which reflects the postmodern condition.

*Possession* can be read partly as a romance because the story involves two contemporary academics whose research into the lives of two Victorian poets reveals a love affair between them. It is also a detective story in the sense that there is a quest plot in the novel. The story of the love of the Victorian poets is gradually revealed in a narrative which follows the research of two twentieth century scholars. Byatt has created

a fictional world within a real world. The characters in the real world have a desire to possess and experience the imagined world. Byatt presents a world in which her readers can enter and resurrects Victorian voices. It is the tale of a pair of young scholars researching the lives of two Victorian poets. Roland Mitchell, researching in the London Library, discovers handwritten drafts of a letter by the popular Victorian poet Randolph Henry Ash, which leads him to suspect that the married Ash had a secret affair. He feels compelled to take away the documents secretly, which is an unprofessional act and begins to investigate. The trail leads him to Christabel LaMotte, a minor poet and contemporary of Ash and to Dr. Maud Bailey, a modern LaMotte scholar and distant relative of LaMotte's family. She was drawn into helping Roland solve the unfolding mystery. They become obsessed with uncovering the truth and unearth more letters and evidence of an affair between the poets. Their own personal romantic lives, neither of which is happy or even satisfactory, develop and become entwined in an echo of Ash and LaMotte, whose story is told a parallel to theirs. A.S. Byatt models her fictitious 19<sup>th</sup> century characters on actual Victorian poets. She makes her characters write dramatic monologues in blank verse, Ash's writings resembles that of like Robert Browning while LaMotte's style is more like a combination of Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti and Emily Bronte. Byatt's treatment of history shows the Victorian past can have an effect on the present in *Possession*. She makes the Victorian past have a mystifying effect on the contemporary scene.

According to Hassan (2004) 'postmodernism' believes in anti-form, anarchy, decoration, play, dadaism, chance, process, participation, happening,

deconstruction, antithesis, absence, dispersal, rhetoric, parataxis and metonymy. It depends on combination, surfaces, misreading and also believes in idiolect, mutual, schizophrenia, differences, irony etc. "Postmodernism relates itself to the earlier modes of chance as turn of the century avant-gardes or the high modernism of the 20th century" (Hassan, 2004). The significance of postmodernism touches the people of the present age. There is a large change in education, culture, language, economics, science, etc. A. S. Byatt's story telling is unique because she makes use of almost all literary devices to narrate her story. In her novel, Byatt develops two sets of stories. One is set in the present story and other is in the Victorian period. The Victorian one is narrated through various literary devices such as poems, letters, journals and diaries. Most chapters begin with a fictitious work by her 19th century characters Randolph Henry Ash and Cristobel LaMotte; for example the very first chapter begins with a poem written by Ash. Then we have the letters. The great number of letters is what actually creates *Possession*. The letters give out a great deal of information, not only to the readers but also to Maud and Roland. The journals also provide a good deal of information. The journals of Glover Blanche, the women with whom LaMotte had been living tell us that Cristobel had been regularly receiving letters from Randolph.

It is clear from the subtitle that *Possession* defines itself as *A Romance*. In fact it draws much of its form from the medieval romance quest. With the choice of subtitle for *Possession: A Romance* (1990), A.S. Byatt claims a specific general coding for her narrative. According to Northrop Frye, romance is "the structural code of all fiction: being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect to

the sense of fiction. As is clear from its subtitle, *Possession* defines itself as *A Romance*, and it does draw much of its form from the medieval romance quest. In addition to self-conscious comments by the characters (particularly Ash and LaMotte) that frequently compare their situation to the conventions of romance, (Byatt, 1991:193, 456, 500), the general interest felt during the Victorian era towards the chivalric romance permeates the novel. There is a quest to be fulfilled (Byatt, 1991:328); women are viewed as princesses in towers (Byatt, 1991:277) and men as devouring dragons (Byatt, 1991:503). One of the epigraphs is a quotation from Nathaniel Hawthorne where he defends romance as a valid literary genre. Romance has, Hawthorne writes, “fairly a right to present [the truth of the human heart] under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer’s own choosing or creation,” whereas the realist novel “is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man’s experience”. Polvinen (2004) recommends that Byatt’s use of both medieval and modern romance conventions and her adoption of Hawthorne’s defense of romance as a genre which tells human truths about in fantastic circumstances that remind the reader that this novel is representative neither of Victorian realism nor of postmodern intertextual play in their most common forms, but a combination of the two. Byatt mixes the realistic and the fantastic or romantic in *Possession* and this is what makes her achievement in fiction a unique kind of window into reality. Rudaityte (2007) focuses on the novel’s subtitle – *A Romance* – points to its archtextual relations with the genre of the romance and guides the reader into the reception and interpretation of Byatt’s novel as a romance. However, the metatextual layer testifies to Byatt’s novel being a postmodern double-coded text: it is both the imitation of the romance and Victorian poetry as well as

their critical reconsideration and reappraisal from the perspective of the contemporary context (Rudaityte, 2007). It is metafiction in which the writer resorts to parody, pastiche and the narrative destabilizing intertextuality, the moves which foreground fictiveness (ibid). In this novel Rantholph Ash and Christopher LaMotte's relationship constitutes intellectual, literary romance. When Rantholph Ash quotes a line Christopher LaMotte gives her own opinions about it. This is a witty play of their love.

But we, by a love so much refined,  
That ourselves know not what it is,

Inter-assured of the mind

Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Byatt (1991: 199)

Byatt's handling of the duo is quite unique. She makes Roland and Maud fall in love as they pursue the love of the Victorian lovers. The working relationship of the academics, who are researching the lives of the Victorian poets, slowly develops into a romance, even if both are unwilling to acknowledge this at first. She takes her characters to a "Romance plot" which is a "coherent plot". We see Maud and Roland in love with each other. Byatt gives to her modern day scholars the plot of a romance.

He was in a Romance, a vulgar and a high romance simultaneously,

A Romance was one of the systems that controlled him ....  
Byatt(1991:425)

Roland also becomes sick with compassion or love. But Byatt's characters do not end up in the tragic mode. Their story ends on an optimistic note. We see them move to a world of happiness and peace. Their obsession with the "Romance plot" does not lead them to tragedy. We can guess that they must live happily ever-after.

In the morning the whole had a strange new smell.....it smelled fresh and lively

and hopeful ( Byatt,1991:507) .

In this paper the specific attention is to suggest a different approach, first by showing how the novel illustrates the postmodern concepts, how the writer masterfully shows the aspect of the plot is the superimposition of the two love stories, the 20th century one involving Mitchell and his accomplice Dr. Maud Bailey, a famous LaMotte scholar, and the 19th century romance between Ash and LaMotte. This paper will also discuss postmodern qualities like the way A.S Byatt uses the intertextuality, hybridity, self reflexively, double coding and so on in his novel

*Possession: A Romance*. When the researcher reads *Possession: A Romance*, by A.S. Byatt,

was fascinated by it, specially its postmodernist aspect. From then on the researcher has



been cherishing a dream to analyze the aspects of postmodernism and implications of postmodernism aspect which A.S. Byatt, shows in *Possession: A Romance*.

The study would be very helpful for the readers to understand easily, why *Possession: A Romance*, by A.S. Byatt, is called as a postmodern novel. It will also very helpful for readers to get some prior knowledge about the postmodern condition in brief. This paper demands the attention of readers because its suspense, quest narratives, mixing of high and low, use of different genres etc. This research will also very helpful for readers to understand how A.S. Byatt in his novel *Possession: A Romance*, uses the postmodern qualities like allusions, playfulness, intertextuality, hybridity, selfreflexivity, double coding etc. This research will help me to find out things that I did not know and will also enlighten many others and give them a guideline for fresh research in this field.

## **Literature Review**

Many articles, journals, essays, and books have been written, and a lot of studies and research done regarding postmodernism as well as Byatt's novel *Possession: A Romance*. All these materials will aid me to carry out my research efficiently.

“Toward a Concept of Postmodernism” by Ihab Hassan, gives us a complete picture of postmodernism. In this article Hassan discusses the characteristics of postmodernism. According to Hassan (2004) “postmodernism” are a “tradition of the new” and a renovation not of social institutions but of man himself. A.S. Byatt’s plot is a postmodern plot. She has a story within a story. Byatt goes to other plots and remakes them in her own way. The most striking aspect of her novel is the use of the Victorian age. She creates a Victorian plot and weaves it into the main story. Present day characters are seen to by lives of the 19<sup>th</sup> century poets. The Victorian plot is recreated and represented in her contemporary novel.

“ Postmodernism is a style of culture which reflects something of epochal change, is a depthless, ungrounded, selfreflexive, playful, derivation, electric pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between the ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture, as well as between art and everyday experiences” (Eagleton,1996). In postmodernism there is no single meaning. Postmodernism denies presence. Postmodernist does not believe in originality. It implies that nothing is authentic, real, pure and original. In the postmodern world everything is made up. Some other key feature of postmodern thought include: intertextuality, change, self-consciousness, hybridity, parody, surface, arbitrariness, randomness, skepticism, simulation and so on. So from all these views and perceptions we can understand that postmodernism is a vast area and one that is very difficult to define.

According to Connor (2004), “Postmodernism has indeed shown an extraordinary capacity to renew itself in the conflagration of its demise”. Connor also says, “It is true that something like a sex culture is in the process of arising this may suggest that, though sexuality has certainly featured centrally in many discussions of the postmodern, it may now itself have achieved a kind of autonomy from it.” (Connor, 2004). Traces of the sexuality repressed Victorian society can be found in *Possession*.

As far as the critic Powell is concerned “Postmodernists often see no reason for a centre. Instead they favor a decentering –a play of chance, anti-form and surface. Postmodernists often create, compose, or paint entirely by chance, randomly determining the pitch and duration of musical notes in a melody, seeking to define art to create non-art or anti-art.” (Powell, 1998:18)

*Possession: A Romance*, signals its postmodernity through devices like its fluctuating narrative perspectives, intertextuality, hybridity, paradox, ambiguity and self-reflexivity (Hansson, 1999). Hansson also interprets the novel as a postmodern romance or as a postmodern Victorian novel. The novel has been written in a playful manner but we soon become aware of the fact that it is a deconstruction of a few of the central foundations which uphold postmodern thought. Byatt’s purpose within her novel is a very serious critique of postmodernism. The novel reflects the postmodern condition and any deficiencies in the character lives can be seen as a deficiency in that particular ideology.

According to Polvinen (2004) *Possession: A Romance* is replete with literary pastiches of Victorian poetry and other postmodern literary devices. Byatt very consciously crafted metaphors, historical references and narrative conventions which draw readers' attention to the formal aspects of the novel and its status as fiction.

In 1986, Jencks in his essay named "The Death of Modern Architecture" talked about the "Double Coding" which is a combination of old and new, high and low, serious and mocking. In *Possession* the multiple narrative voices, the open contradictions, and the consistent allusions shows the postmodern world. The academic perspective, uses of different genres, romance feminism etc gives the novel a hybrid quality. At the same time use of fairy tales, farce as scenes and the quest motif shows that she mixes higher genres with popular ones. Byatt uses two plots and then interlinks them. This is why in the novel the story moves back and forth between two time periods.

The above mentioned articles, researches, books and journals will prove quite helpful in doing this research. As it has been mentioned earlier that many works has been done regarding, it will not be a problem to carry out this research.

### **Key Postmodern Concepts Used by Byatt**

“Darwin, Marx, Baudrillard, Nietzsche, Cezanne, Debussy, Freud, and Einstein still pervade the Western mind” (Hassan, 2004). History repeats it self again and again. Postmodernism revises their ideas in new way. Ihab Hassan mentions the names of those who are involved with the development of postmodernism. They are: Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard (philosophy), Michel Foucault, Hayden White (history) Jacques Lacan and in America, John Barth, William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Donald Bartelme, David Austen and Robert Wilson. These people formed a movement against modernism. After that they become successful and give new ideologies from postmodernism.

“Postmodern theory can be seen and understood as the latest version of a long standing attempt to address social and political issues through an aesthetics view of the world” (Waugh, 1992:6)

The idea of “Intertextuality” will mainly be used in this study. “Intertextuality” has become a major focus in postmodern literary criticism. Simply stated, intertextuality is carrying or referring to another text. When a text carries another text then it can be defined as intertextuality. Intertextuality is the process whereby one text plays upon another text and the way in which it refers endlessly to further elements within the realm of cultural production (Barthes, 1977). Intertextuality is a very common feature of every postmodern text. A.S. Byatt’s use of intertextuality is evident in her novel. She shows that in a postmodern world, there are no

originals. As a postmodern novelist she rejects the notion that origin of the postmodernist novel is merely life and not other texts and plots. So Byatt goes to other plots and remakes them. She remakes the Victorian plot and sets it in a new context. Byatt's remaking of past is done through her characters. She shapes her modern day characters in the shadow of nineteenth century characters. By doing so Byatt recreates Victorian characters in the contemporary world. She also borrows from myths and old tales. She is fascinated with the way myths and old tales retain their essence from in telling to the next. This theme surfaces for example in Randolph Ash's poem "The Garden of Proserpina". The poem compares several mythical gardens and asks whether they are all "shadows" of one true original garden. Even the poem she includes in her novel is a reflection of poems by Robert Browning and Emily Dickinson. In the very first chapter we see a poem by Ash that is a dramatic monologue in blank verse which was Browning's style. LaMotte's poems are like Emily Dickinson's. Byatt goes to other plots and recreates them in the light of the present. She creates an intertextual game thereby constructing a postmodernist environment. This novel is written in a very playful manner mixes literary works and genres.

French sociologist Jean Baudrillard's (2004) theory of simulacra shows that we are living in a world where nothing is fixed and everything is artificial and simulated. Life is full of artificial elements and there are no fixed values, value is contextualized and unstable. Baudrillard (2004:422-427) states that we are in the world of simulation and no originality is here. We live in a world which is full of artifices and suggests that we live in a world of mirrors, where every thing is glossy and everything reflects everything else

(ibid). In other words there is no longer any distinction between reality and representation, for there is only simulacrum. Baudrillard (2004) in his essay believes that we are in a world where there is no love and everything is up for sale. Byatt's use of various genres, historical references and voices reflect a postmodern fragmented world. Her novel is nothing but a pastiche of several other forms and devices. She shows that in the postmodern world nothing is original or fixed. Through both content and technique, Byatt constructs a very serious game about postmodernism and it plays it directly with her readers.

The theory of "Double coding" is used in a paper by the famous architect Charles Jencks. Jencks (2004:458-462) declared that postmodernism is "Double coding" which is a combination of old and new, the serious and the comic. Byatt's novel *Possession: A Romance* mixes up romance, detective story and a fairy tale. It can be read partly as a romance because the story involves two contemporary academics whose research into the lives of two Victorian poets reveals a love affair between them. The same love affair is later develops between the contemporary academics in the story. *Possession* is also a detective story in the sense that there is a quest plot in the novel. There are serious academic aspects too and also the humor which makes Byatt's novel *Possession: A Romance* a postmodern novel.

The theory of "Hybridity" will also be used in this dissertation. A hybrid is something that is mixed, and hybridity is simply a mixture. Byatt successfully creates a literary hybrid by making her fictitious 19th century characters write poems, letters,

journals and diaries and including them in her novel for example, there is a story within a story in her novel. Byatt makes use of one story to narrate the other story. Byatt weaves other sets of literary works within a literary work and this makes her novel a literary hybrid.

As Francis Lyotard defines it “postmodern” is “incredibility towards metanarratives”. Byatt goes beyond the metanarratives or the grand narratives and creates a patchwork of other texts and genres. She recycles the earlier genres in new contexts; as a result her novel becomes fragmented. According to Lyotard (2004) in his “Report on Knowledge” the grand narratives has lost its incredibility in the contemporary post industrial society. So Byatt breaks down the grand narrative into pieces and creates a pastiche. Her use of historical references and different genres, voices and stories is nothing but recognition of the plurality and indeterminacy in the postmodern world.



## **Intertextuality in *Possession: A Romance***

Intertextuality is carrying or referring to another text. When a text carries another text then it can be defined as intertextuality. Intertextuality is the process whereby one text plays upon other text and the way in which it refers endlessly to further elements within the realm of culture production (Barthes, 1977). Intertextuality is a very common feature of every postmodern text. Intertextuality is a very useful concept indeed; some would say it is essential for literary study. According to Barthes (1977) the term intertextuality would normally be used to refer to allusions to other texts; a related kind of allusion is what might be called 'intratextuality', involving internal relations within the text. It deals with the relationship between a text and other ones.

*Possession* reveals Byatt's fondness for intertextuality and embedded texts.

*Possession: A Romance* is one of the master pieces in British literary history. The author A. S. Byatt is renowned for her excellent writing and broad knowledge of literature.

According to Leader (1997), when considering the story-telling style of *Possession* in light of *Lucinda* and *Waterland*, it becomes immediately evident that Byatt employs quite

a few of the tropes that fall under the heading of postmodern. In *Possession* the past occasionally exists on the same plane as the present, hinting at synchronicity (Leader 1997). Byatt applies detective, romantic and literarily archeological elements to create this work which is rich in poetry, fairytale and myth. Polvinen (2004) states that Byatt herself is constantly mediating works of the past, both by creating pastiches and through including discussions concerning historical works in her own narratives. But unlike the authors of most postmodern metafiction, whose self-conscious use of intertexts is meant to break through the illusion of realism, Byatt's own work takes a very different approach to the metafictional and intertextual developments in the postmodern novel itself (Polvinen, 2004).

In the first chapter Byatt borrows texts from myths and old tales. She uses them to give the real essence of her characters. Byatt writes a poem for Ash in the first chapter "The Garden of Proserpina". According to Polvinen (2004) in *Possession* he find Byatt's thinking the idea of poetry and narrative as a method of arranging and ordering objects, whether individual words, metaphors, or entire tales. The same theme also surfaces in one of the poems Byatt wrote for Ash, "The Garden of Proserpina". This poem compares several different mythical gardens and asks whether they are all "shadows" of one, true, original garden; whether the quest for the essence of stories is also a search for their referentiality (Polvinen, 2004).

The serpent at its root, the fruit of gold

The women in the shadow of the boughs

The running water and the grassy space

(Byatt, 1991: 1)

Byatt makes repeated use embedded self-representation. A good example of this is where Roland peers through the bathroom keyhole at Seal Court to check if Maud is in there, (Byatt, 1991: 147). This detail corresponds directly to LaMotte's epic about the Fairy Melusina, in which the fairy's mortal husband spies her through the keyhole in a great marble bath disporting her, (Byatt, 1991: 33).

Byatt's conscious use of allusions, the borrowing of names and settings from previous works of literature and biography all suggest an intertextual approach to composition.

Christabel LaMotte's style of poetry writing is like Emily Dickinson.

Who are you?

Here on a high shelf

In webbed flask I

Hook up my folded self

Bat-leather dry

(Byatt, 1991: 54)

In this poem Christabel LaMotte is trying to hide her from the world. Her life, shape and style of writings all are mysterious like Emily Dickinson. Her uses of dashes are characteristics of Emily Dickinson's style.

Or white marbling nakedness

Frozen—is it—That?

(Byatt, 1991:383)

The letters which Byatt uses in the novel "*Possession: A Romance*" are also examples of intertextuality as there is reference of "Hamlet" in the letters of Ash.

I am not become any kind of an Atheist, nor yet.....

I wish my fellow men well and find them endlessly interesting... Byatt (1991:164).

*Possession* is full of intertextuality. There is a letter in page 188 from R.H. Ash to Christabel LaMotte where in the last line Ash uses "Olive-Branch" from the famous novel "*Pride and Prejudice*". Throughout their letters and poems there is intertextuality such as in page 193 and in page 199, Ash uses reference of John Donne. In page 198 there are reference from "Merchant of Venice". These references are showing that they are not only sharing the letters rather these are viewing an academic, literary romance. When R.H. Ash quotes a line Christabel LaMotte is also giving her own opinion about it. It is an intelligent play of their love.

Byatt's uses of the poetry of Robert Browning, S.T Coleridge, Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti and Alfred Tennyson shows her love for intertextuality. There are three points that can be made about the aspect of intertextuality in Byatt's

novel *Possession*. They are her love of -citations, parodies and female dialogues. In *Possession*, there are many excerpts from the works of fictional poet Ash and poetess LaMotte. The excerpts used in the novel fall mainly into two kinds according to the author of this paper. One is as epigraph and the other is as quotation. The Epigraphs provides clues to the content of the chapter. Citations, on the other hand, appear in the text and relate a text to another one. Though interpolation of whole quotations rarely occurs, other more subtle instances of intertextuality are present in *Possession*.

*Possession* recognizes that intertextuality makes an essential connection between past and present texts. Byatt's work is highly intertextual and self-consciously draws on

Victorian poetry, biography and other texts. Byatt is conscious of the theory of intertextuality, as the discovery of Maud and Roland in Chapter 12 makes clear:

'Well is there an echo here? This is out of *Ask to Embla*. It possibly links that

fountain to the one in the Song of Songs, as well. Listen:

We drank deep of the Fountain of Vancluse

And where the northern Force incessantly

Stirs the still pool, were stirred. And shall those founts

Which freely flowed to meet our thirsts, be sealed?'

Maud said 'Say that again.'

Roland said it again.

Maud said, 'Have you ever really felt your hackles rise? Because I just have.

Prickles all down my spine and at the roots of my hair. You listen to this.

This is what Raimondin says to Melusine after he is told she knows he has

looked at her in her marble bath and broken the prohibition:

Ah, Melusine, I have betrayed your faith.

Is there no remedy? Must we two part?

Shall our hearth's ash grow pale, and shall those founts

Which freely flowed to meet our thirsts, be sealed?

'Which came first? His line or her line? There are problems about dating *Ask to Embla* - which we're obviously on the way to solving, among other things.

It reads like a classic literary clue. She was a clever and hinting sort of

woman. Look at those dolls.'

'Literary critics make natural detectives,' said Maud, (Byatt, 1991:237)

In this example of Byatt's use of intertextuality reading a whole quotation has been tracked from one text into another. The existence of intertextuality at the level of quotation aids them in interpreting the two texts in question, leading them to assume

arguments for intention, date and context. Byatt is obviously aware of the intertextual approach and appears to be recommending a similar approach to her reader. In *Possession* the Victorian poets love story is interwoven with various other stories, myths, fairy-tales and fables, taken from the tradition of the medieval romance and its 19<sup>th</sup> century's rewritings. Thus Victorian fiction, poetry and culture are major intertexts of Byatt's novel.

## **Simulacra and *Possession***

The term postmodernism has in the last decade become an increasingly popular label for something about the end of twentieth century. Members of postmodern family not only express similar views, but are interested in barely overlapping subject matters: arts, communications, media, history, economics, politics, ethics, cosmology, theology, methodology, literature and education (Cahoone, 1996).

In the theory of simulacra, Baudrillard shows that in the postmodern world where we are living nothing is fixed and everything is artificial and simulated. In this world everything is made up of everything else. Baudrillard (2004) in his essay believes that we are in a world where there is no love and everything is up for sale. Byatt's use of various genres, historical references and voices reflect a postmodern and fragmented world. Her novel is nothing but a pastiche of several other forms and devices. She shows that in the postmodern world nothing is original, fixed. Through both content and technique, Byatt constructs a very ingenious tale about postmodernism and presents it to her readers.

Postmodernism begins by doubting everything. Postmodernists believe that everything is arbitrary, subject to change and ambiguous. It does not limit the idea of truth to only that which can be observed. Postmodernism combines simultaneous fragmentation and blurring of boundaries in a universe where no absolute truth governs the definition of reality and morality. Postmodernism deals with a floating world, nothing is fixed here, and there is no more morality or sense of responsibility (<http://sv2.123helpme.com/preview.asp?id=63794>).



In the postmodern world there is no question of originality. Postmodernism doesn't believe in originality. It implies that nothing is authentic, original, real and pure. Byatt very craftily and in a playful manner reflects the postmodern world in her novel. In it she shows that the contemporary world is nothing but a simulated and fragmented world. In this novel an obscure scholar named Roland Mitchell, carrying out research in the London Library, discovers handwritten drafts of a letter by the popular Victorian poet Randolph Henry Ash, which leads him to suspect that the married Ash had a hitherto unknown romance. He feels compelled to take away the documents secretly, although this is an unprofessional act, and begins to investigate. The trail leads him to Christabel LaMotte, a minor poet and contemporary of Ash, and to Dr. Maud Bailey, a modern LaMotte scholar and distant relative of LaMotte's family, who is drawn into helping Roland with the unfolding mystery. They become obsessed with uncovering the truth and unearth more letters and evidence of an affair between the poets. In the process their own personal romantic inclinations develop and their lives become entwined in an echo of Ash and LaMotte, whose story is presented as parallel to theirs. In the beginning of the chapters Byatt shows that Roland was an unemployed individual who only had a part-time job like dishwashing. He does not have a fixed income and is looking for a job. The novel starts with an idea of protagonist's broken and fragmented career which reflects the postmodern condition. The relationships which A.S. Byatt portrays in this novel show that almost all relationships are fake, simulated, fragmented and unsatisfactory. Byatt's ability to write a postmodern romance is evidence of her concept of postmodern humanism. The relationships are as depthless as the postmodern world. In the opening chapters the unsatisfactory conditions of relationships reflect the whole scenario. Roland and Val's relationship for example, show that this distance was created over years. Roland's conversation with Val in the first chapter shows the superficial

nature of their relationship. When Roland tells Val that he discovers the letters and he was saying that these letters may give him better jobs, Val does not show any interest at all in his words, rather she undercuts him. She humiliates Roland for his interest in dead people and is cynical about his future. Val considered him a complete loser even though she claimed to be in love with him.

‘There aren’t any jobs.’ She added, ‘And if there, they go to Fergus Wolff.’(Byatt, 1991:17)

His curiosity, inclination to research and interest in dead poet’s letters does not attract Val’s attention; rather she is worried about his activities. The lack of love shows the depthless relationship of the postmodern world. When the reader first encounters Val, she is introduced as a source of tension for Roland, although she once fitted into his life simply and naturally, and without question or hesitation, (Byatt, 1991:11-15). As the novel progresses, readers learn how Val, like Roland, pursued Randolph Henry Ash in academia, but met with failure and had to abandon her scholarly ambitions, consoling herself with Roland and saying to him, "At least you want me... I don't know why you should want me, I'm not good, but you do" (Byatt, 1991:17). Later it becomes apparent that this statement is not just reflective of Val's low sense of self-worth, but of her total despair of self-possession to the unwilling Roland who finds himself dragged down by his responsibility for her unhappiness. And his dependence on the money she earns by doing menial tasks to help him go on with his Ph.D. studies. Their mutually destructive relationship eventually disintegrates as he escapes into the world of Maud Bailey and the

Ash-LaMotte romance. Roland Michell, the researcher who stole a found manuscript and thus inaugurated research battles among various scholars working on LaMotte and Ash, describes himself as "possessed" by the problem of the relationship. Later he tells Maud Bailey, his fellow researcher, and eventual lover, of his total "possession with her"(Byatt, 1991:277). In this novel the Victorian plot gradually takes over from the contemporary one. The characters seem to be driven by some other force beyond their control. Soon the quest becomes an obsession. Maud and Roland were no longer in control. When they were in Brittany, they realized that the investigation had become an obsession.

‘We must be mad,’ said Roland.

‘Of course we are mad. And bad...

All scholars are a bit mad. All obsessions are dangerous..... (Byatt, 1991:332)

Roland and Maud were not only obsessed with the quest, but also obsessed with each other.

‘Val thinks we are obsessed with each other, (Byat, 1991:332)

The ups and down in the relationship of Val and Roland shows the postmodernist way of life where there is no true love and loyalty for each other. Roland is leading a meaningless life. But after he meets Maud Baily, his life is changed. Roland gradually becomes inclined to this lady and finally realizes that he has fallen in love with Maud. The plot of the dead lovers finally takes over. Roland realizes that they are driven by some force.

Somewhere in the locked-away letters, Ash had referred to the plot or fate which seemed to hold or driven 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....(Byatt, 1991:421)

The relationships of R. H. Ash and Ellen are also not satisfactory at all. They have a husband -wife relationship in the eyes of society but in reality they were not happy with each other. From Ellen's description of her honeymoon the reader discovers the platonic nature of Ellen and Randolph's relationship. This fact in itself is surprising, but what makes the scene even more powerful is Ellen's emotional description of the night. The section in which Byatt depicts Ellen's real character illustrates the inability of literary fragments to reveal Ellen's thoughts and feelings. Perhaps the most shocking part of this section is the description, from Ellen's point of view, of her honeymoon with Randolph. She could not clearly remember their honeymoon. She did not remember it in words. There were no words attached to it that was part of the horror. She had never spoken of it to anyone, not even to Randolph. Ellen's silence about this relationship echoes Byatt's words in the postscript. Ellen's honeymoon, though never spoken or written of, is a very important event that clarifies Ellen's responses to things in her journal and reveals why Randolph and Ellen remain childless. Ash's marriage was barren and unsatisfactory. Ash and LaMotte had a short, passionate affair resulting in the suicide of LaMotte's companion and the secret birth of an illegitimate child. LaMotte conceal the existence of their child from Ash, but whom he did once meet which was unknown to her. Byatt's novel also makes us aware

of the fact that in a postmodern world there is an absence of the whole truth. *Possession* shows us that no amount of historical enquiry can clear away all the dust of the past. The novel's final pages entitled "Postscript 1868" (Byatt, 1991:508-511) tells us of a meeting between Ash and his daughter Maia, but neither Christabel nor present day scholars ever know that Maia, the daughter had once met her real father. Byatt shows how no amount of literary analysis can disclose every truth.

The love story of Randolph Ash –Christopher LaMotte and that of Roland Mitchell-Maud Baily shows the postmodernist mirror game. The simulated, fragmented world in Byatt's *Possession: A Romance* is a reflection of the postmodern world where there is no true love or happiness. Everything is artificial, fake and unsatisfactory.

## **The Fragmented World of *Possession***

According to Ihab Hassan, “postmodernism is a “tradition of the new “and a renovation not only of social institutions but of man himself.

Postmodernism generally refers to a form of contemporary culture. The term postmodernity alludes to a specific historical period. Postmodernity is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the ideas of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanations (Eagleton, 1996).

Using rich and poetic language Byatt brings to life the characters of her novel and the society in which they move. *Possession* presents the relationship between two fictional Victorian poets, Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte, as discovered by present-day scholars Roland Mitchell and Maud Bailey. Roland and Maud attempt to uncover various literary fragments to solve the mystery of Randolph and Christabel’s secret affair. *Possession* can be read as a double quest for identity since the protagonists' search for their biographical subjects also ends up in their own discovery of themselves. In the novel “*Possession: A Romance*” there is an important aspect of individual identity formation that influences the protagonists’ perception of their own selves. The novel presents gender as a marker of difference (Polvinen, 2004). Female identity differs from male identity not only in the Victorian age, where the poetess Christabel LaMotte, in contrast to her contemporary Randolph Henry Ash, struggles for emancipation. Maud Bailey, as a feminist deconstructionist literary scholar, is found to be the

projection surface of men's desires, often being described by her physical features, where Roland is self-sufficient and the reader gains more introspective insights into his character (Polvinen, 2004).

"Who am I?" (Byatt, 1991: 251) is the thought being pondered by the academic Maud Bailey, the main modern female protagonist of *Possession*, it is perhaps the most common question that arises when one self-reflects. At the same time this question implies a longing for identity, the key theme of the novel. Individual identity is lost in the way the book is written. The secret relationship of the fictional Victorian poet Randolph Henry Ash with the poetess Christabel LaMotte, who remained sunk in obscurity, unfold in parallel lines with the romance of the two modern lovers Roland and Maud, connecting the past with the present and producing a duality of vision. The author plays with time, constantly moving between the past and the present. Many times, the reader cannot tell one couple from the other; for example who is reading Ash's poetry, kissing, running away on a honeymoon of sorts, and making love? Is it Roland and Maud, or is she suddenly writing about Christabel and Ash again? Throughout the book, Byatt switches between scenes without telling the reader. The effect is that the narrative is essentially no different for each couple through they live in different time periods. The same love story that defines Christabel and Ash in the 1860's also describes Roland and Maud in the 1980's, whose research focuses on the writings, biography, letters and diaries of the two Victorian poets, they often comment on the love story of the nineteenth-century heroes, trying to reconstruct from the fragments of their poems and letters the past, the poets' personalities and their love story. *Possession* emphasizes on the weakness of historical facts, it parallel displays dissatisfaction with the values of postmodern literature, with its tendency towards humanity and indeterminacy. These inconsistent features of this novel symbolize the fragmented world of postmodernism.

In most of the novel Byatt presents the history of Christabel, Ash and Ash's wife, Ellen. She presents their past through a variety of letters, journals and poems. There are a few sections in the novel *Possession* in where readers become confused about these historical figures. For example Christabel's and Randolph's trip to Yorkshire; Ellen's connection with Randolph; and Randolph's meeting with his daughter, Maia etc. These situations highlight the reader's inability to capture the essence of these characters. These letters, journals and poems shows the necessary details of events that took place in the past. And the details suggest only a simple outline of those events. These details can tell readers what happened to these people, but they cannot show the intensity and complication of their feelings and belief. Moreover, these sections reveal the readers incapability to familiar with the whole story. These fragmented facts and details puzzle readers to get the true flavor from the novel *Possession*.

Byatt's use of various genres, historical references and voices reflect the postmodern fragmented world. Her novel is nothing but a pastiche of several other forms and devices. She shows that in a postmodern world nothing is original. The postmodern novel is a patch work made out of other texts. *Possession* is a very serious game about postmodernism. Through both content and technique, Byatt constructs a very serious game about postmodernism and plays it directly to readers. The novel is written in a playful manner with the mixture of literary works and genres.



## Double Coding in *Possession: A Romance*

Double coding is a term coined by Charles Jencks in his book *The New Paradigm in Architecture*, to suggest that postmodern architecture is a language that depends on double understanding, comparable to irony. It was the rise of postmodern architecture during the late 1970s and early 1980s that gave rise to the idea that avant-gardism was linked to popular culture something according to which, it was argued by postmodern critics such as Charles Jencks, that had been derided by modernist architecture.

In the novel *Possession: A Romance* there is double coding as there are combinations of “High and Low”; “Seriousness and Comedy”. *Possession* is a book which people used to enjoy reading as part academic novel, part suspense story, part romance. It is a postmodernist exercise that weaves together many strands: a contemporary story of academic conflicts, rivalries and discoveries; a reconstructed 19<sup>th</sup> century chronicle of ill-fated love; and a meditation on the imagination and creativity. According to Rudaityte (2007) the novel’s subtitle – *A Romance* – points to its architextual relations with the genre of the romance and it guides the reader into the reception and interpretation of Byatt’s novel as a romance. The metatextual layer testifies to Byatt’s novel being a postmodern double-coded text: it is both the imitation of the romance and Victorian poetry as well as their critical reconsideration and reappraisal from the perspective of the contemporary context (Rudaityte, 2007). Winner of the 1990 Booker Prize, *Possession* is a fascinating and compulsively readable novel. There are serious and high issues in this novel like the thirst for knowledge, research, scholar life, possession of keeping letters, poems, feminism, construction of characters etc. At the same time

comic and low issues like, lesbianism, the obsession of the American and British researchers, humorous characters like Mortimer Cropper, desire to become the owner of letters, etc make the novel a double coded postmodern novel. In this novel throughout the letters there is a developing of romance and also about of humor. Letters are beautifully constructed and Byatt knows very well how to create suspense, humor and clues. Victorian letters are cleverly constructed in this novel and these letters are full of clues. This novel is satirical, romantic, serious and cleverly constructed. There is satire in this novel on academic life, on romantic rivalry, satire on obsessions, on feminist scholarship and even male scholarship. Pages of journals, letters, and poems interrupt the outer narrative, where increasing suspense, self-referring literary jokes, and parallels between the Victorian age and the present offer great variety. The ingenious, subtle humor and extraordinary texturing of the past within the present make *Possession* original and unforgettable.

Though the novel *Possession* is also a serious novel with high values, the humorous elements dominate. The two American scholars play the game of historical revisionism and their funny characteristics makes the novel a double coded novel. To deal with this many angled situation Byatt has worked out a very complex tale of rivalries, antagonisms, and mixed emotions among 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars, English and American, as they strive to recover the evidence and indeed possess it in 19<sup>th</sup> century set of relationships. In *Possession*, Byatt parodies scholars and literary critics. Dr. Cropper is a humorous character in this novel and is parodied throughout the novel. In English Cropper here means who takes everything from root or main. This Cropper is an American who hunts for historical resources. Cropper even chases Roland and Maud to Brittany as soon as he becomes aware of their discovery. This man steals

things owned by famous people and smuggles them to his country. Cropper is ready to pay any amount for the resources. So this is how Byatt makes fun of some scholars and literary critics. The other American academic is Dr. Leonora Stern who is large, jolly, richly and picturesquely dressed, bi-sexual, a survivor of two husbands and four female mistresses. She belongs to a school of critics who treat LaMotte as feminist or lesbian. The antagonisms, funny characters, humor, satire of American and British person give *Possession* a comical touch.

Feminism is an important aspect in the novel *Possession*. Maud is a modern feminist, attempting to balance her identity as a woman with that of an academic scholar. Christabel was trying to overcome her femininity by living as a recluse with another woman before she met R. H. Ash. Similarly, Maud is a withdrawn person, wary of men, and distrustful. Christabel is doing what many women of her time were doing, that is, struggling for masculine freedom in a world that was very limited for a woman. Maud is typically a contemporary woman, trying to reconcile and accept her femininity in an academic. Byatt plays up this feminist view of literature and society by choosing to base Christabel's poetry on the strongly feminist poetry of Emily Dickinson, rather than on the softer voice of Christina Rossetti. Another character, Roland's old girlfriend Val, is anything but a feminist portrayal. She seems to serve as a balance and takes on a typical, subservient, Victorian woman's role, even though she is a modern woman. Val and the decrepit Victorian house where she and Roland share an apartment represent oppressive Victorian society, while Roland and Maud live in a more liberated place.

Sexuality is another issue that connects the two time periods. In the opening chapter, there is a passage on R.H. Ash's poem representing Proserpina, an ideal Greek woman,

as "Glowed golden on eternal boughs," (Byatt, 1991:1). This is an example of idealized fertility and sexuality in Victorian women. It represents sexuality as something that can be conquered and possessed, like gold. The suppression of sexuality in the Victorian era is a theme seen throughout the book, in both time periods, as is the sexual freedom that both couples eventually reach. The traces of sexuality in Victorian society have to be searched for and uncovered in *Possession*. There are hints of lesbianism, expressed by LaMotte's retreat from society and setting up house with another woman. Ash and LaMotte's love affair is hidden, in their own day and to the modern scholars, who have to dig through journals, poetry, and letters left by the two Victorian lovers to uncover it. Even Maud's hair is symbolic, and ties her to Victorian society. She wears it covered with a scarf, something symbolic of repressed Victorian sexuality.

Byatt masterfully gives the double-coded taste to her readers. The features of humor, romance, thrill, sexuality, feminism, funny characters, academic life etc make *Possession* a novel where readers can lively imagine the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is fascinating to read this novel because throughout the novel there is quest and the readers get tremendous interest to reveal the quest by reading it.

## Hybridism in *Possession*: A Romance

Hybridity is one of the most important elements of postmodern literature. Hybridity in its most basic sense means “to mix”. A hybrid is something of mixed origin or composition that adds variety or complexity to a system. In literature hybridity could mean the blurring of traditional distinct boundaries between artistic media such as painting, sculpture, film, performance, architecture, and dance (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/hybridity>). Hybrid art forms expand the possibilities for experimentation and innovation in contemporary art (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/hybridity>).

A.S. Byatt masterfully shows that the act of this book takes place in two periods. In *Possession*, the past is contained in the postmodern present. It shapes the present, and influences the future. The two main characters, Roland and Maud, are literary scholars living in the 1980's. Their love story is shared and played out by the diaries, poetry, and correspondence of two poets and lovers from the 1860's Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte. Although the book is modern fiction, much of it is a Victorian novel as well. *Possession* is also an example of several literary genres; all written into one book and that makes the novel a hybrid one. At various times it gives evidence of poetry, mythology, a romantic novel, a detective story, a fairy tale, journals and diaries, and scholarly writings. In this novel an epigraph is used to begin a number of chapters. All epigraph serves to point the reader to important descriptions or thoughts that are going to be entire upon throughout the chapter. In chapter one it is apparent that the epigraph is used to introduce the book. As the first thing a reader will see, it serves to incorporate not only those themes primarily used in that chapter, but also themes frequented throughout the novel as a whole.

Then there are letters which is about the love between R.H. Ash and Christabel LaMotte. The letters also gives information's about to Maud and Roland and through the letters they discover the secret love affair between R.H. Ash and Christabel LaMotte. Through all the letters romance is developing. The following lines show R.H. Ash's interest in Christabel LaMotte.

I had hoped we could be good friends. My good sense knows you are right  
in your stark decision, and yet I regret my good friend. If you are ever in  
trouble –but I have said that once already, and you know it.

Go in peace ..... (Byatt, 1991:89)

Such letters are beautifully and cleverly constructed in *Possession*. Byatt knows how to create suspense and how to create humors. The novel is full of parodies. Byatt not only rewrites old fairytales and myths to provide them with new meanings, but also subverts people's idea about the old tales and myths. The journals in *Possession* also give lot of information. The journals of Glover Blanche, the women with whom LaMotte had been living, tell us that Christabel had been regularly receiving letters from R.H. Ash. This novel is postmodern as Byatt tries to develop the novel by making it a hybrid one. And readers are part of the text and they are also the part of the novel. Byatt tries to use all genres to create a hybrid text.

Byatt's masterful interlacing of nineteenth-century romance and mystery novels, as well as her inspiring revisionist infusion of mysterious and contemporary issues, poetry, and myth are postmodern devices (Rudaityte, 2007). *Possession* is set in a world obsessed with

academia and literary research. This novel is enriched by Byatt's admiration of Victorian consciousness, delivered through the poetry, letters and stories. A.S. Byatt's story telling is exclusive because she makes use of almost all literary strategies to narrate story. Byatt creates a fictitious 19<sup>th</sup> century world with the poems, letters, and the journals through which the story gradually unfolds. Byatt makes other sets of literary works within a literary work and her novel a literary hybrid.

*'Possession: A Romance'* defies simple description: it is a historical detective novel and a romantic novel all rolled into one. Moreover, *Possession* is a feast for lovers of language, and contains a cast of interesting, credible and fully developed characters. It is kind of academic novel, popular in English departments. In this novel Byatt shows her love for hybridity. The novel is full of suspense, thriller, humor, as well as romance. This is a novel of ideas, a historical novel and all these qualities make this novel a postmodern novel full of hybridity.

## Conclusion

The dissertation paper titled “*Possession: A Romance* as a Postmodern Novel” has examined Byatt’s unique writing style and her achievement in creating a postmodern work. Her novel is an example of her unique blend of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century worlds. The main purpose of this study has been to highlight the existence of postmodern elements in Byatt’s *Possession*. This dissertation also discusses the postmodern qualities in the book and the way A.S. Byatt uses intertextuality, hybridity, double coding and a postmodern fragmented world and so on in her novel *Possession: A Romance*. When the researcher read the book she, was enthralled by it, specially its postmodernist aspects. From then on the researcher have been cherishing a dream to analyze the aspects of postmodernism and implications of postmodernism which A.S. Byatt, shows in *Possession: A Romance*.

The first chapter of this dissertation provided an introduction and depicted how A. S. Byatt masterfully evolved her exclusive story telling style. She craftily shows two sets of stories in her novel *Possession*. Her novel describes the romance between two nineteenth century poets and the parallel relationship of their present day biographers. Her plots are connected to each other. Throughout the novel Byatt makes switches in characters between scenes and the effect is that the narrative is no different for each couple living in different time periods. The Victorian world is narrated which has influences on the present contemporary scene. In the second chapter there is review of criticism shows the articles, materials, books, journals used in this dissertation. These materials helps the researchers a lot to analyze and also to gather the information’s to



make this dissertation successfully. The third chapter is about the key concepts which are used in this work. The other chapters discuss the postmodern qualities which makes *Possession* a postmodern novel. Intertextuality has become a major focus in postmodern literary criticism. Byatt's use of intertextuality is evident in *Possession*. She goes to other plots and remakes them. She remakes the Victorian plot in the new context. Byatt shapes her modern day characters in the shadow of the nineteenth century characters. Byatt's use of the poetry of Robert Browning, S.T Coleridge, Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti and Alfred Tennyson shows her love and admiration for intertextuality. The novel also reflects the postmodern condition and the deficiencies in the characters lives. The lack of originality and true love for the life partners are also visible in this novel. The relationships are as depthless as the postmodern world. The unsatisfactory condition of the relationships shows the chaotic condition where relationships are not loyal to each other. In *Possession* the simulated and fragmented conditions shows the artificial, unsatisfactory and fake world which reflects the postmodern situation. The double coded features for example combination of "High and Low"; "serious and comedy" makes *Possession* a enjoyable novel to the readers. The Thirst for knowledge, scholar life, feminism, humorous characters, parody, sexual concepts etc makes *Possession* a pleasurable novel to read and value. Hybridity is also the most important elements which Byatt uses in *Possession*. The great number of letters, journals, poems, reveals a good deal of information which helps the readers, researchers to know the world of nineteenth and twentieth century. These various genres also help the researchers to carry out this dissertation successfully.

*Possession: A Romance* marked a turning point in A. S. Byatt's career. Her reputation was assured when the novel won Britain's most prestigious literary prize, the Booker.

This is a remarkable novel by a remarkable writer. In *Possession*, A. S. Byatt has created characters of immense depth, and she has given her readers a reason to respect them, adore them, love them, value them, hate them and pity them. This novel pleases the reader with its detective novel style plot and the reader's feeling of enjoyment in narrative discovery is mirrored by the characters. Her stunning writing and sense of passion touch and capture the heart and soul of her readers. She blends Mythology, history, romance, a fairy tale and a detective story together. A.S. Byatt's novel can be read as any of this genres. *Possession* is an experimental novel which is full of suspense, thriller, novel of ideas and clues. The reader is a detective here. Byatt gives a perfect title for her novel *Possession: A Romance*. The way she involves things together to make title perfect shows her brilliancy. Byatt's mastery of writing this novel helps the readers to hear the voice of the writer. She creates an amazing imaginative world where her readers can feel each characters emotion, their sorrow and desire for knowledge and love. The structure of *Possession* utilizes postmodern techniques but the difference between this novel and most other intertextual games lies in Byatt's attempt to recover Victorian voices. The novel's postmodern condition plays directly with her readers. To read this novel is to be immersed in an overwhelmingly literary experience.

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