

depict Canada as a fragmented entity (xvii). Edwards also makes an effort to differentiate what he calls “Northern Gothic” from its American and European relations in his introduction; unfortunately he is sidetracked by his American expertise and spends more time explicating what the “southern gothic” means in a U.S. regional context than considering how regionalism could be relevant to gothic readings of Canadian texts. Certainly, *Gothic Canada* covers a wide range of works, incorporating novels by ethnic and racial minorities, the First Nations, and writers and filmmakers living across Canada—from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to British Columbia. However, given the tendency in previous critical studies of the gothic in Canada to use the term “southern Ontario gothic,” as in Michael Hurley’s study of John Richardson, *The Borders of Nightmare*, might regionalism still be relevant? Oddly however, Hurley’s monograph is never mentioned by Edwards.

In addition, there are some limitations to Edwards’s selection of texts. Obviously, the choice of works studied is a personal one, and for every reader the selection may or not seem entirely satisfying; to be fair, most of Edwards’s pairings are thoughtful and compelling. Yet the argument put forth in his chapter on the gothic sublime, which looks at Jane Urquhart’s *The Whirlpool* and Susanna Moodie’s *Life in the Clearings*, would have benefited from the addition of Suzette Mayr’s *The Widows* (1998) to the mix. Mayr’s novel is about a group of older German-Canadian women including a lesbian couple who, haunted by the legacy of Annie Taylor, who was the first woman to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel, decide to make the same journey in order to come to terms with their past; while they too experience the gothic sublime when they reach the waterfall, their subsequent trip in a barrel leads to a kind of recuperation that subverts such monstrous renderings of this natural wonder. Likewise, the absence of Eden Robinson’s fiction, particularly *Monkey Beach* (2000), is notable precisely because her rendering of monsters within a Native community raises significant questions about what monsters and ghosts mean to different cultures and how what might appear menacing to some is, in fact, a source of instruction and reassurance for others. But despite these reservations, *Gothic Canada* is a very useful book—well written, lively, able to make the complex accessible without diminishing its sophistication, and certainly an important step toward rethinking what the gothic means for Canadian literature and culture today.

Jane Campbell

*A. S. Byatt and the Heliotropic Imagination*

Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004. Pp. x + 310. \$42.95

Reviewed by Arnd Bohm

Based on original research, clearly structured, carefully written, and elegantly printed, *A. S. Byatt and the Heliotropic Imagination* is a major contribution on one of the most successful contemporary British writers. Jane

Campbell, now professor emerita of English at Wilfrid Laurier University, was among the first academic critics to give Byatt's writings serious consideration. This volume incorporates the earlier analyses into a comprehensive examination of Byatt's oeuvre down to 2002.

Campbell's approach is straightforward, treating the primary texts in chronological order, with one chapter for each of the books. Brief summaries of key plot elements and central characters are interwoven with comments on Byatt's narrative technique and aims, as well as with references to the opinions of other critics. Although the rigid adherence to the parenthetical MLA citation style becomes irritating at times—footnotes would have been less distracting—the style makes the study accessible to a wide range of readers; one would expect no less of a Byatt fan.

That Campbell is a fan is readily apparent. Even though this is not an adulatory biography, Campbell's sympathies lie with her subject, who is presented as a noble campaigner for women's rights and autonomies. The introduction outlines the comforting thesis that Byatt, while enlarging the space for women's voices and roles, is not a strident feminist: "In the complex worlds of Byatt's fiction, women's voices are in dialogue with those from the male tradition" (2). Byatt emerges as an advocate of good things such as truth, moral responsibility, and ordinary decency among people. A dominant theme of Byatt's feminism is, according to Campbell, the "heliotropic imagination" of a "genderless sun": "there is nothing intrinsically male about the sun, or female about the earth" (16). The notion that both feminine and masculine beings can radiate and enlighten is nice enough, but is perhaps less important in Byatt's mythology than her fundamental allegiance to fluidity and flux as opposed to masculine rigidity.

As all readers recognize, the main difficulty Byatt's work presents is the density and diversity of her literary and cultural allusions. Campbell does a good job of identifying these references, especially where they concern Victorian influences such as Browning. She is less thorough in dealing with the allusions to German literary sources, such as the German Romantic fairy tales or implications of the Goethe epigraph to *The Biographer's Tale*.

The main shortcoming of the study follows from Campbell's aversion to letting any sort of sophisticated theory inform, much less destabilize, a somewhat simplistic model of writing and reading. The intentional fallacy sneaks in via quoting what Byatt in her role as a critic says about other writers or about her own work (e.g., 160–61), and then applying it to the texts. This would be less damaging if Byatt were not operating in the grand tradition of Menippean satire, which ensnares all critics as gullible participants, as hapless victims. For instance, when Campbell attempts to classify the genre of *Possession*, she grasps at metafiction and at postmodernism, and thereby becomes the sort of critic that

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

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

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

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

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