**Some Comments By and About A.S. Byatt**

For more see her official website <http://www.asbyatt.com/>



Byatt in June 2007 in Lyon, France

Brief bio from her website: “A S Byatt is renowned internationally for her novels and short stories. Her novels include the Booker Prize-winning Possession, The Biographer’s Tale and the quartet, The Virgin in the Garden, Still Life, Babel Tower and A Whistling Woman. Her most recent novel, The Children’s Book was published in 2009. Her highly acclaimed collections of short stories include Sugar and Other Stories, The Matisse Stories, The Djinn in the Nightingale’s Eye, Elementals and Little Black Book of Stories. A distinguished critic as well as a writer of fiction, A S Byatt was appointed CBE in 1990 and DBE in 1999.”

Her official bio is too modest to include any of her prizes, which include the Booker Prize (twice), many honorary doctorates, and the Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (which is the female equivalent of being knighted).

**Full name: Dame Antonia Susan Duffy** [DBE](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dame_Commander_of_the_Order_of_the_British_Empire) (née Drabble; born 24 August 1936)

**On balancing the life of the mind with domestic duties** from a *Guardian* interview about her novel *The Children’s Hour* “On another level, [*The Children’s Book]* is stuffed with the motifs of fairy stories: doubles, changelings, locked rooms, underground journeys, boys who refuse to grow up. Like Possession, it nests a story within a story. It plays deliberately with mythic motifs such as silver and gold, or the spinning of webs. ‘I can't say how important it was to me when Angela Carter said 'I grew up on fairy stories - they're much more important to me than realist narratives'. I hadn't had the nerve to think that until she said it, and I owe her a great deal.’"

**On her use of fairytale motifs** “Fairystories and utopian politics are entwined in the book. ‘I'm a naturally pessimistic animal and there's a sort of innocence in these people. They came after the high Victorians, whom I love in a way I don't love these people. I love Browning in a way I love nobody in the period this novel is set in, except perhaps Rodin. I love Tennyson too. I feel they understood that the world might be tragic whereas the Shaw, and even the Woolf generation ... ‘

She identifies the same soppy spirit in the second half of the century: ‘I don't like the 1960s either. The last big novel I wrote was called *A Whistling Woman* and it was about utopianism on the one hand and a dangerous sort of mystical romanticism on the other. I don't believe that human beings are basically good, so I think all utopian movements are doomed to fail, but I am interested in them.’”

From a *Guardian* review of a recent book: “Ragnarok is a clever, lucid, lovely book. But it isn't a novel, or even a story in the usual sense. It's a discourse on myth, woven in and around a polemic about pollution and loss of species diversity: Yggdrasil the World Tree reinscribed as a doomed ecosystem. Byatt's ideas lie close to the surface; moreover, the author herself is waiting patiently at the end of everything, to make sure we take her point.”

More on her stance as a woman writer: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/aug/20/as-byatt-intellectual-women-strange>

**AS Byatt says women who write intellectual books seen as unnatural** Grande dame of literature AS Byatt criticises Orange prize for fiction saying there is no such thing as feminine subject matter. [This was on the occasion when she won James Tait Black Memorial prize, Britain's oldest literary award.] <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/aug/20/as-byatt-intellectual-women-strange>