



Passions of the Mind: Selected Writings (Vintage International)

By A. S. Byatt

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Whether she is writing about George Eliot or Sylvia Plath; Victorian spiritual malaise or Toni Morrison; mythic strands in the novels of Iris Murdoch and Saul Bellow; politics behind the popularity of Barbara Pym or the ambitions that underlie her own fiction, Byatt manages to be challenging, entertaining, and unflinchingly committed to the alliance of literature and life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Wide-ranging essays in literary criticism from the Booker Prize-winning author of *Possession*.
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From Library Journal

Readers of Byatt's *Still Life* (LJ 11/15/85) and, to a lesser extent, *Possession* (LJ 11/1/90) will find this collection of her criticism true to her quality and themes. The essays range from describing the influences on her own work to analysis of her favorite Victorians, Robert Browning and George Eliot, and such modernist writers as Ford Madox Ford, William Golding, and Iris Murdoch. Some female writers (Willa Cather, Elizabeth Bowen, and Toni Morrison, among others) are treated, as are the relationship of the real and the symbolic, as revealed by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Rycroft, and Vincent Van Gogh. Byatt's interest in the influence of religion on writing shines through. The writing is brilliant, requiring a substantial awareness of English literature and command of the language. For academic and large public libraries. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 10/15/91.

- *Ann Irvine, Montgomery Cty. P.L., Md.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

A collection of previously published essays and reviews (*The Guardian*, *Times Literary Supplement*, etc.), seemingly more the work of a competent grad student than an imaginative novelist, and sure to disappoint those who enjoyed Byatt's Booker Prize-winning *Possession* (1990). In essays about her favorite Victorians (Robert Browning and George Eliot) and moderns such as Ford Madox Ford and William Golding, Byatt, a former lecturer in English and American Literature at the Univ. of London, explores the relations between narrative and religion. These writers, Byatt suggests, vindicate the "fictive form" as the appropriate place to resolve the problem "of the real" in a postreligious world. For Byatt, Browning is "a poet who writes of men and women, all separately incarnate, all separately aware of their necessarily and splendidly limited ways of infinite passion and the pain of finite hearts that yearn." Eliot's intelligence, she concludes, "combined thought and feeling in a new form of poetic but ironic realist fiction." In perhaps the most accessible and persuasive essay here ("Accurate Letters: Ford Madox Ford"), Byatt describes Ford as a writer who taught us the distinction between the "great lie" and "the hard ideas of truth." And a number of her reviews on writers as varied as Toni Morrison, whom she admires, and Barbara Pym, whom she does not ("[Pym] appears gentler than Spark or Weldon but is also infinitely less generous, humane and imaginative") are intelligent, perceptive, and refreshingly opinionated. Most often confined by narrow academic parameters to lengthy quotes and tentatively advanced ideas, Byatt's rich inventive talents are well served here only rarely.
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kerri Goodman:

In this 21st centuries, people become competitive in every single way. By being competitive right now, people have do something to make them survives, being in the middle of the particular crowded place and

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Barbara Shephard:

Reading can called mind hangout, why? Because if you are reading a book specifically book entitled Passions of the Mind: Selected Writings (Vintage International) your thoughts will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every aspect that maybe not known for but surely might be your mind friends. Imaging every single word written in a book then become one form conclusion and explanation that maybe you never get ahead of. The Passions of the Mind: Selected Writings (Vintage International) giving you another experience more than blown away your brain but also giving you useful data for your better life with this era. So now let us teach you the relaxing pattern at this point is your body and mind will be pleased when you are finished looking at it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary wasting spare time activity?

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