

Romance Forms in A. S. Byatt's *Possession*

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ABSTRACT

A. S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance* (1990) is best defined as a quest narrative, as it follows the pattern that Campbell, Propp and Frye among others have described. Although mainly working with archetypes, Byatt also deploys here elements taken from romance subgenres such as detective stories and gothic fiction. Through this generic encoding of her work, Byatt raises questions as to the reception of these archetypes, the function of the author and the very process of reading.

I. The Questers and the Quest

With the choice of subtitle for *Possession: A Romance* (1990), A. S. Byatt claims a specific generic 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, considered as a whole, as the epic of the creature, man's vision of his own life as a quest" (*The Secular Scripture* 15).¹ The subtitle then would seem to hint at the organizing principle behind Byatt's tale, which follows the traditional pattern of the quest narrative.

The quest in this case involves two literary scholars, Roland Michell and Maud Bailey, in the discovery and reconstruction of the illicit affair between two fictional Victorian poets, Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte. The story opens with Roland's unexpected find of the drafts of a letter written by Ash to an unnamed lady, folded inside Ash's personal copy of Vico's *Principi di scienza nuova*. Feeling "possessed" by the need to learn more about this relationship, Roland decides to keep those drafts (which belong to the library) and not to enlighten anyone else as to their existence.

This first transgression expels Roland from the secure world of the "Ash factory" where he works, and sends him out into the wider world, very much like the quest hero as described by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (see also Propp's description of the transgression motif in fairy tales).² Campbell identifies this as the

starting point for a quest: willingly or not, the hero must leave the original setting. Frye too points out, in his analysis of recurrent themes of descent, that the series of adventures usually begins with

some kind of break of consciousness, one which often involves actual forgetfulness of the previous state. We may call this the motif of amnesia. Such a catastrophe, which is what it normally is, may be internalized as a break in memory, or externalized as a change in fortunes or social context. (*The Secular Scripture* 102)

Roland's breach of the scholarly code, "seized by a strange and uncharacteristic impulse of his own" (8), may well stand for the motif of amnesia here.

The second stage is the actual quest, which often entails a journey fraught with dangers that are overcome with the assistance of helpers, and which may also include a chase and an escape (see Propp). During the quest or, to use Frye's term, the descent, the hero suffers increasing isolation and loneliness, and he may even be trapped, imprisoned or otherwise immobilized. This, as we will see next, also applies for the plot of *Possession*.

The quest in Byatt's novel is, nevertheless, much more complex than in the average quest narrative, due to the deployment of two sets of characters (the contemporary scholars and the Victorian poets) closely knitted together by means of an all-encompassing mirroring technique. Through the theme of transgression mentioned above, which marks the onset of the quest, Byatt establishes a first link between the contemporary and the Victorian storylines, since Roland's behaviour sins against the scholarly code just as the illicit relationship of Ash and LaMotte breaks with Victorian sexual mores. From now on, both storylines will advance simultaneously, as the scholars' quest proceeds in the typical fashion of romance, i.e. by means of episodes connected to the unearthing of manuscripts related to Ash and LaMotte and their close associates.

The mirroring technique affects the defining traits of a significant number of the characters in *Possession*, though more prominently as regards the protagonists. Maud Bailey and Christabel LaMotte concur in physical as in psychological features. Some of them (their very fair hair) can be explained away as revealing their family connection; but others cannot, such as their persistent association with the colour green, in Maud's clothes and in Christabel's leather boots. Both women will fiercely defend their independence from the male characters in the novel, and both rely on female friends (Leonora and Blanche, respectively) for moral support.

Randolph Ash and Roland Michell lead apparently uneventful lives up to their transgressions, when these men become "possessed" and endanger their status: Roland is often described as a dull but conscientious scholar, and Ash has the reputation of the model gentleman and writer of the Victorian age. They both maintain unsatisfactory relationships, Roland with Val, Randolph with his wife Ellen.

Likewise, Val and Ellen are twin images of dejection. Val's academic failure leads her to believe that she is no good, a superfluous person (see 13 and 218); Ellen cannot stand sexual intercourse and as a result feels less of a woman and a wife (459). Both will try to make up for their shortcomings: Val becomes the breadwinner while Roland pursues his research, and Ellen is Randolph's trusted secretary and housekeeper.

Leonora Stern and Blanche Glover stand as yet another pair of mirror figures in their distrust of men and their total reliance on female friendship (which in Leonora takes the form of lesbianism). The two women will be betrayed by their friends as they become "possessed"; Christabel in a love affair, Maud in an academic quest. However, whereas betrayal brought Blanche to commit suicide, the differences between Maud and Leonora are bridged with a hug (478).

Byatt's mirroring technique encompasses the whole of the novel, since parallelisms can be traced as well between characters and events of the two storylines, and of some of the intertexts that make up much of the bulk of the novel.³ These other connections serve a twofold function: on the one hand, they highlight certain roles and traits of the characters; on the other, because the intertexts are minor but recognizable quests, they enhance the romance structure of *Possession*.

A case in point is LaMotte's tale "The Glass Coffin" (58ff.), where a tailor is rewarded for his good-natured behaviour towards a little grey man and his pets with the glass key that will allow him to rescue a princess. The villain in this tale, variously described as a black artist or dark magician, has cast an evil spell on the princess, her brother and their castle, turning the latter into a miniature. The little tailor, "a good and unremarkable man" (58), has much in common with Roland, who has been said to excite "no emotion more passionate than solid approbation" (14). Both are skilled but unemployed and the reward episode works identically in both cases: Roland's assistance to Lady Bailey, to be discussed below, will give him access to Christabel's room, which had remained locked ever since her death, just as the tailor opens the glass coffin where the princess lies.

The black magician in the tale is mirrored by the American scholar Mortimer Cropper, who is first introduced to us wearing a black silk dressing gown over black silk pyjamas (93). Cropper, like the magician, is driven by a compulsion to possess;⁴ he dreams of "new glass cases containing treasures" (304), the treasures being manuscripts and other items related to famous people to enrich his already sizeable collection, a dream that mirrors the magician's locking up the princess in the glass coffin of the tale's title. Even more significantly, Cropper is ready to use whatever means at his disposal to achieve his ends; his making illegal copies of manuscripts may be interpreted as the contemporary equivalent to the magician's turning the castle into a miniature:

[Cropper] was greatly attached to his black box, a device he had invented and perfected in the 1950s, and was now reluctant to abandon in favour of newer or slicker machines since it had served him well over the decades. He was adept at acquiring invitations into the most unlikely houses where some relic of Ash's hand might be found; once there he had come to the conclusion that it was necessary to make some record, privately, for himself, of what he found, in case the owner subsequently proved reluctant to sell, or even to allow copies to be made, as had been known, once or twice, most detrimentally to the cause of scholarship. There were cases when his clandestine pictures were the only record, anywhere in the world, of documents that had vanished without trace. (94)

The connection with the black artist in Christabel's tale casts Cropper in the role of the villain, as his very name would seem to suggest,⁵ and subsequent events in *Possession* will

only confirm him in that status. Even though the landmarks of this quest are the findings themselves, most of Maud and Roland's efforts are addressed to the recognition and interpretation of the clues hidden in the texts, which range from the main corpus of letters and several diaries (Ellen Ash's, Blanche Glover's, etc) to Ash and LaMotte's own works, as well as modern assessments of their lives and writings, like Cropper's biography of Ash. As a result, theirs is primarily a textual quest, which befits both the academic setting and characters as much as the very author, since Byatt is in her own right a reputed critic.

However, Maud and Roland's painstaking quest is made possible only thanks to the well-timed appearance of a succession of helpers, in many cases characters who are very much peripheral to the main plot and whose primary function is to provide assistance. For instance, when Ewan MacIntyre happens to come across LaMotte's will, he is willing not only to give it to Roland and Maud, but also to offer them legal advice on it. His only other contribution to the story also bears the mark of Byatt's attempt to tie loose ends: MacIntyre conveniently carries Val off, thus freeing Roland of his previous commitment and enabling him to strike off a new relationship with Maud. Where MacIntyre's help is arbitrary, and the reasons behind it never properly or consistently explored, Leonora Stern's is even involuntary: she shows up in Maud's flat bearing news of a letter she has received, unwittingly providing Maud with the next piece of the puzzle she is trying to put together. In some other episodes these helpers, as in the characteristic pattern of fairy tales, respond to the good actions of the protagonists. When Roland saves Lady Bailey's life, he is rewarded by being given access to LaMotte's former room, where the main corpus of the correspondence with Ash awaits discovery (see Propp's description of the motifs of the test and the reward); because Maud has been sympathetic to Beatrice Nest, she will be forewarned of Mortimer Cropper's plot and will then be in a position to prevent its success.

Armed with their deductive powers and assisted by these helpers, Maud and Roland embark on the reconstruction of the story of Christabel and Randolph. This reconstruction affects multiple layers of the novel. First and foremost, as mentioned above, it is textual, since it is through the tracking and reading of texts that the different fragments of the story come together. Second, it is also a geographical quest, because in so doing Maud and Roland will track down the movements of the Victorian couple in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, and later in Brittany (see the motif of the journey, characteristic of quest narratives). Third, the reconstruction affects the actions of the questers, since they will behave and act very much like their earlier counterparts. As the analysis of their defining traits has already disclosed, Maud and Roland stand as mirrors of Christabel and Randolph, and their story of transgression is shaped on the Victorian transgression.

The contemporary re-enactment of the Victorian plot first becomes evident in the section concerning Roland and Maud's reading of the main correspondence in Seal Court. Although the whole corpus will later appear on its own (chapter 10), we are given here a glimpse of several fragments, interspersed with glimpses of Roland and Maud while reading. What becomes apparent at this point is how the relationship between the two scholars resembles the early phase of Ash and LaMotte's affair. In his early letters Randolph, who felt a keen interest in Christabel, tried to draw her out of her voluntary seclusion; Christabel on her part wrote with a polite coldness, and was altogether reluctant

to engage in a relationship. The same applies now: whereas Maud is completely absorbed in her task, Roland's attention is divided between her and the texts, and he is also always the one to initiate conversations (see 130 and 133). The very method of their reading makes explicit the difference between Maud's stand-offish stance and Roland's eagerness to reach out to her:

There was a frostiness between the two of them when Maud brought out her proposals for the way they should proceed. She decided that they should each read the letters of the poet who interested them . . . Roland objected to this, partly because he felt he was being hustled, partly because he had a vision, which he now saw was ridiculous and romantic, of their two heads bent together on the manuscripts, following the story, sharing, he had supposed, the emotion. (129)

The next phase in both relationships is enacted in Yorkshire. There Ash and LaMotte had consummated their love affair; there Roland and Maud's realization that they have things in common turns them into quest partners. LaMotte's loss of virginity is echoed in the sensual description of Maud letting loose her hair, which she had always kept covered:

She began slowly to undo, with unweaving fingers, the long, thick braids. Roland watched, intently. There was a final moment when six thick strands, twice three, lay still and formed over her shoulders. And then she put down her head and shook it from side to side, and the heavy hair flew up, and the air got into it. Her long neck bowed, she shook her head faster and faster, and Roland saw the light rush towards it and glitter on it, the whirling mass, and Maud inside it saw a moving sea of gold lines, waving, and closed her eyes and saw scarlet blood. (272)

In the final phase of this relationship, when the purpose of their quest is discovered by other scholars and Roland and Maud become the prey in this wild chase instead of the hunters (see the motif of persecution in traditional quest narratives), they will again reproduce the earlier pattern, as they flee to Brittany on the tracks of Christabel, who had sought shelter there when she found out she was pregnant. The contemporary storyline does however improve on the Victorian plot in this as in other respects, for Roland and Maud stay together whereas Ash and LaMotte broke apart.

Byatt emphasizes the growing interrelatedness between the action of the two couples on several occasions. At times their distinctive features are blurred: when chapter 15 opens with a description of a man and a woman travelling by train, it is hard at first to pinpoint which of the two couples this is, since only pronouns or general terms are used for them. Only when other data, such as Victorian clothing, are later mentioned, will we be able to identify them unmistakably.

Furthermore, Byatt also sets up a number of ironic coincidences. In buying a jet brooch for her friend Leonora, Maud does not seem to be aware that Christabel bought an identical one, with hands clasped and the word "friendship," for Blanche Glover, a fact we get to know about in Blanche's suicide note (308). The motif of the jet brooch, besides, points at the intimate connection between Leonora and Blanche as twin characters, already noted above. Even more poignant is Maud and Roland's choice of Boggle Hole for a day

trip on the assumption that Ash and LaMotte had not been there (“perhaps we could take a day off from them, get out of their story, go and look at something for ourselves” 268). The author-cum-narrator curtails this attempt at freedom when she lets us know that, although it was never recorded, Ash and LaMotte had indeed visited the very same place: Roland and Maud *are* after all in their story.

As the quest unfolds, the fellow questers will be locked into increasing isolation. With the villain (Mortimer Cropper) on their tracks, the range of possible courses of action reduces them to near immobility. Roland in particular, having been initially compelled to leave everything in order to undertake the quest, now feels useless, a failure:

That was the problem. He felt marginal.

Marginal to [Maud’s] family, her feminism, her ease with her social peers. There were a great many circles her, all of which he was outside. He had begun this—what should it be called—this investigation—and had lost everything—whilst handing to Maud the materials with which she could improve her own lot immeasurably—job, fortune, Christabel, money . . . he hated eating dinners he could not have paid for. He hated living off Maud. (438)

The final stage in quest narratives has the hero return to the original setting, equipped with new knowledge and abilities; this is what Frye calls “ascent” and Propp “transfiguration.” Similarly, the quest brings about a substantial self-development in Roland, whose eventual return to the academic milieu he had left will be marked by his feeling that he has “learned a lot” (505). To ensure the return, nevertheless, the initial conflict must be solved. For Roland, whose quest started with his transgressive appropriation of the library drafts of Ash’s letter, it implies their devolution. Besides, his break of consciousness (Byatt’s version of the motif of amnesia, as will be remembered) will be resolved as well when Ronald wakes up from his period of “possession.” This other resolution is conveyed again in terms connected to the all-pervading motif of possession: he steps out into the garden annexed to his apartment, to which he had always been forbidden entrance, and there he now regains his own voice (474-75). The success of his quest also results in his superior status once he returns to his initial place; he has now secured a proper job, whereas at the beginning he was a humble part-time research assistant.

Frye points out that one of the most recurrent themes of ascent is the recognition scene, which normally involves “producing some equivalent of a birth certificate” and is often accompanied or followed by a marriage (136-37). A twist in the pattern would seem to have been introduced in *Possession* in that the final revelation does not interest Roland so much as Maud, who is found to be a direct descendant of Ash and LaMotte. The twist is nevertheless consistent with Byatt’s mirroring technique, which makes use of twins or pairs of elements throughout the whole narrative, a device that is itself characteristic of the romance (Frye 140ff.). Thus, instead of the lonely hero of traditional quest tales, she deploys two fellow questers; the fact that the revelation affects directly only one of them does not significantly depart from the pattern. Moreover, the author dutifully follows the

rules by offering next the contemporary equivalent of marriage: the consummation of Maud and Roland's love affair.

II. Reading the Romance in *Possession*

In *Possession*, Byatt masterfully puts to use romance conventions, or rather, the many conventions, sometimes altogether disparate, that have come together under that heading.⁶ As we have seen, archetypal romance shapes the structure of the story around the central motif of the quest. However, *Possession* may also be defined as "romantic" in that it develops a love story, and there also appear conventions borrowed from those romance subgenres that came into being in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, most significantly perhaps detective stories.

All in all, the success of Roland and Maud's quest is based on their powers of deduction, a fact that establishes a parallelism with the structure of those tales. It is true that they sometimes act on hunches rather than on evidence; their belief, for instance, that LaMotte had accompanied Ash to Yorkshire can at that stage be neither proved nor disproved (216). But later events always show them to have been in the right; therefore, intuition appears to be here a further sign of the skills all detectives display at their best. Byatt is certainly aware of the connection with detective fiction, and she playfully sets it off at times, most remarkably towards the end of *Possession*. In chapter 27, Maud, Roland, and a group of allies pool their resources in order to stop Mortimer Cropper from illegally seizing the last piece of evidence concerning the Ash-LaMotte affair. They tail Cropper and contrive to catch him red-handed; as one of the characters points out, this scene is very much "like the unmasking at the end of a detective story" (483; see Propp's unmasking and punishment of the villain). However, traces of a parodic intent can be found in that section, thus belying the parallelism. Furthermore, in *Possession* coincidence overrules the causality that is the master principle behind detective stories, as proved by the number of helpers needed to the success of the quest.

The gothic mode also bears an unquestionable influence. In the description of Mortimer Cropper's spooky night visit to a graveyard, where he digs out the box of documents Ellen Ash had put in her husband's coffin, Byatt resorts to the staple elements to create a gothic mood:

Cropper snuffed the air. Something seemed to move and swing and sway in it, as if ready to slap at him. He felt for a moment, very purely, a presence, not of someone, but of some mobile thing, and for a moment rested dully on his spade, forbidden. In that moment, the great storm hit Sussex. A long tongue of wind howled past, a wall of air banged at Hildebrand, who sat down suddenly in the clay, winded. Cropper began to dig again. A kind of dull howling and whistling began, and then a chorus of groans, and creaking sighs, the trees, protesting. A tile spun off the church roof. Cropper opened his mouth and shut it again. The wind moved in the graveyard like a creature from another dimension, trapped and screaming. The branches of the yew and cedar gesticulated desperately. (493-94)

In gothic fiction, as in Byatt's story, possession, whether legal or illegal, and both sexual and purely concerning material gain, is the key issue, and the one that marks off the villain from the hero(ine). The gothic mode also provides Byatt with the convention she most persistently uses in her novel, that of the hidden or lost manuscript. In the gothic, such a discovery discloses the secret of the hero(ine)'s mysterious origin, and brings a solution to issues of rightful inheritance and social status. Very much the same, as noted above, happens in *Possession*, where Christabel's last letter to Ash reveals that Maud is their direct descendant, simultaneously solving the problem of property and copyright of the documents themselves. Byatt employs letters too, though contemporary ones, to elucidate Roland's prospects with the arrival of three job offers.

With these timely occurrences Byatt contrives to bring about a happy ending for all parties concerned, naturally excepting the "villain" of the story, Mortimer Cropper. This sort of conventional ending is the trademark of romance, and one that has traditionally ensured a negative assessment of the mode, but it is also the kind of device that effectively conveys the author's claim to total control over his/her work, as s/he takes on the role of a providential power allotting final reward or punishment to the characters. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Byatt's selection of epigraphs for *Possession* includes Hawthorne's often quoted preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*:

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition 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. The former—while as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation . . . The point of view in which this tale comes under the Romantic definition lies in the attempt to connect a bygone time with the very present that is getting away from us.

Needless to say, that last sentence might apply to Byatt's as to Hawthorne's work.

Byatt's control is exposed in respects other than the conventional happy ending. Even though the Victorian plot evolves on the information gathered from the intertexts, it is not always or consistently so. On three occasions the omniscient narrator (that is usually privy only to the contemporary characters' minds) intervenes in order to share with us particulars of the Victorian storyline that were never a matter of record.⁷ Both the recreation of Ash and LaMotte's Yorkshire trip (273-88) and of Ellen Ash's thoughts on the night of her husband's death (442-62) serve to highlight aspects of these characters that had not been unveiled in the intertexts (these being samples of writing more often than not meant to be read by others), and that therefore necessarily had to be explored through an omniscient narrator. The "Postscript 1868" that closes *Possession* is, however, rather more explicitly a narratorial intrusion:

There are things which happen and leave no discernible trace, are not spoken or written of, though it would be very wrong to say that subsequent events go on indifferently, all the same, as though such things had never been.

Two people met, on a hot May day, and never later mentioned their meeting. This is how it was. (508)

Since that meeting was not recorded, we have to assume that this information is not available to Maud and Roland, and thus the postscript makes apparent the split between two levels of awareness, concerning the Victorian plot in *Possession*, that during the quest have overlapped and been altogether undistinguishable: ours and the contemporary characters'. Byatt's mirroring technique involves the readers in a *mise en abyme*, as we find ourselves occasionally reading Maud and Roland reading what other people had read or written to be read, and throughout the whole narrative we follow the trail of the scholars as they trace the Victorian poets. Nevertheless, the fact that we are also given full access to the very same corpus on which they base their conclusions (in separate sections where the texts stand on their own and are therefore free of Maud and Roland's interpretation) takes us one step further: we become for the most part their fellow-questers, able to frame our own hypotheses and agree or disagree with the theories they develop.

The "Postscript" then imposes a reassessment of the whole previous narrative in a number of ways. Most of all, it comes to destroy the readers' confidence in the reliability of the written text, a confidence that had been enforced and built on time and again throughout five hundred pages. Up to now it was possible to maintain the illusion that the whole truth about Christabel and Randolph's affair was to be found in written accounts, even if we were forced to piece it together slowly and painstakingly. This illusion held even after the two former narratorial intrusions, for they could well be understood as elaborations on information that Maud and Roland also possessed, though more simplified. But not anymore: the illusion is shattered and we must now regard these texts as incomplete and/or as at least partly unreliable accounts of the story. In this respect also *Possession* differs from detective fiction, since in that mode the data are always complete, self-contained, and reliable, the implication being that we are justified in the belief that there is an objective truth within our reach. The "Postscript" then suggests a distrust of the written word, a feature to be found in much contemporary fiction, but Byatt differs in that here she makes us fall back on the author's authority in order to achieve a feeling of completion, whereas in many recent novels the readers' thrust towards such a satisfaction is more often than not systematically thwarted.

Moreover, the split between our level of awareness and Maud and Roland's surfaces just after they have changed their stance concerning the Victorian story. During their quest, they have been driven entirely by "narrative curiosity" (to the extent that they have committed several transgressions of the scholarly code), thus mirroring our own reception. But now the quest is over, Maud and Roland return to their previous scholarly viewpoint and the link is broken. Two parallel forms of reading are therefore contrasted throughout *Possession*: narrative curiosity (i.e. an affective reception) versus scholarly analysis (i.e. a critical reception). Byatt pokes fun at literary schools of criticism on several occasions, especially in her parodies both of feminist criticism (see the excerpt from Leonora Stern's

Motif and Matrix in the Poems of LaMotte, 243-46) and of literary biographies (see the excerpts from Mortimer Cropper's *The Great Ventriloquist*, 246-52).⁸ This would be enough evidence to conclude that narrative curiosity is the favoured form, although we must not lose sight of the fact that the novel is constructed on a delicate balance of both (we are, after all, taken through the steps of scholarly research). But there is a very explicit narratorial outburst towards the end of the novel that comes to support this thesis:

It is possible for a writer to make, or remake at least for a reader, the primary pleasures of eating, or drinking, or looking on, or sex. Novels . . . do not habitually elaborate on the equally intense pleasure of reading. There are obvious reasons for this, the most obvious being the regressive nature of the pleasure, a *mise-en-abime* even, where words draw attention to the power and delight of words, and so ad infinitum, thus making the imagination experience something papery and dry, narcissistic and yet disagreeably distanced, without the immediacy of sexual moisture or the scented garnet glow of good burgundy. And yet, natures such as Roland's are at their most alert and heady when reading is violently yet steadily alive. (What an amazing word "heady" is, *en passant*, suggesting both acute sensuous alertness and its opposite, the pleasure of the brain as opposed to the viscera—though each is implicated in the other, as we know very well, with both, when they are working.) (470-71)

Possession then seems to demand of us precisely such a visceral reception, this being the "secret" of a pleasurable reading according to Byatt. To that purpose we are being asked to yield partial or even total intellectual control to the author; in other words, Byatt wants us to become as "possessed" by this textual quest as Maud and Roland. That is, after all, the privilege the romance writer claims for him/herself, according to Hawthorne's definition.

Notes

1. For the implications of Frye's study as regards the traditional distinction between fantasy and realism, see Kathryn Hume's *Fantasy and Mimesis* 29-51.

2. The structure of quest narratives was first analysed in chivalric literature by Jessie L. Weston in *From Ritual to Romance* (1920). I am following here Campbell's work as set forth by Villegas in *La estructura mítica del héroe* 69-136. I also owe a debt to Meletinski's useful critique of the analysis of fairy tales done by Propp and others in his *Estudio estructural y morfológico del cuento*, first published in 1969. Full references to these works can be found below.

3. Monterrey has pointed out the parallelisms between both plots, but he relates them to Vico's theories on history, and attributes them the function of showing similarities and differences between concepts of art in the 19th and 20th centuries (*Estudios sobre metaficción inglesa* 220).

4. See Díaz Bild's analysis of Cropper in *Estudios sobre metaficción inglesa* 169).

5. See other famous villains bearing names with the root "Mor(t)," i.e. death, like Moriarty in Sherlock Holmes stories. Monterrey has studied the names of the main characters in the novel (*Estudios sobre metaficción inglesa* 219-20), but he fails to see this connection, nor does he apparently realize that the names of the two couples of protagonists bear a striking similarity in sound (Maud/LaMotte) or are near acronyms (Roland/Randolph, if the letters *ph* are left out). This

device, characteristic of the romance mode, contributes to strengthen the already tight links between them.

6. Diane Elam has reminded us of the problematic use of the term, as it encompasses "a wide range of often divergent materials which simply do not seem to fit the generic category very comfortably" (*Romancing the Postmodern* 4). She concludes that unlike literary realism, which considers reality as its ontological ground, romance in any of its renderings exposes reality as a constructed referent.

7. See Monterrey's analysis of the narrator-cum-editor in *Estudios sobre metaficción inglesa* 216ff.

8. For a more detailed analysis of this topic, see Ann Hulbert and also Díaz Bild.

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