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INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT IN A. S. BYATT'S "POSSESSION: A ROMANCE"

A. S. Byatt's 1990 novel "Possession: A Romance" is a penetrating exploration of historical fiction, literary analysis, romanticism, and the power of language, identity and knowledge. The novel tells the story of two modern academics, Roland and Maud, who has discovered secret love affair between two popular poets lived in the 19th century. Taking place in two basic time periods, both the 19th and 20th centuries, his story explores various themes. As the book investigates the intersections between the past and the present, history is noy only approached as a background but also as a fact that helps to form the characters' identities, determines their meanings, and is constantly questioned. History triggers main characters' researchers and transformations in the novel both intellectually and emotionally. The possession of historical documents and written materials is one of the essential themes of the novel. Gained information about the poets' lives, the process of reshaping and reinterpreting of personal and literary histories in the modern world demonstrates how history can be repossessed. History is not just about having information about past, but also about reinterpreting it and building identity based on this understanding. History is in the center of characters' search for their own identities in the novel. While Ash and Christabel's secret love reveals repressed and ignored aspects of the past, Roland and Maud's investigation leads them to realize their own identities and connection the history. Great interest in history is also associated with a type of romanticism. This romance in the book is not only connected to love affair, but also about a deep passion for history and a wish to search for it. In the language of "Possession" academic style and historical facts have been utilized a lot. Byatt includes several literary quotes and references through the text, blurring the boundaries between real and fictional literature. This allows the novel to be appreciated both as a literary analysis and historical study.

Key words: *history, A. S. Byatt, the past, the present.*

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ВЗАЄМОЗВ'ЯЗОК МИНУЛОГО І СЬОГОДЕННЯ У А. С. БАЯТТА «ВОЛОДІННЯ: РОМАН»

Роман А. С. Баятта 1990 року «Володіння: романтика» – це проникливе дослідження історичної фантастики, літературного аналізу, романтизму та сили мови, ідентичності та знання. Роман розповідає про двох сучасних академіків, Роланда і Мод, які виявили таємний роман між двома популярними поетами, що жили в 19 столітті. Його історія розгортається в двох основних періодах часу, як у 19-му, так і в 20-му століттях. Оскільки книга досліджує перетини між минулим і сьогоденням, історія розглядається не лише як фон, а й як факт, який допомагає сформувати ідентичність персонажів, визначає їхні значення та постійно ставиться під сумнів. Історія спонукає до дослідників і трансформацій головних героїв у романі як інтелектуально, так і емоційно. Володіння історичними документами та письмовими матеріалами є однією з істотних тем роману. Отримана інформація про життя поетів, процес переформатування та переосмислення особистих і літературних історій у сучасному світі демонструє, як можна повернути історію. Історія – це не лише наявність інформації про минуле, а й її переосмислення та побудова ідентичності на основі цього розуміння. У центрі пошуку персонажами власної ідентичності в романі – історія. У той час як таємне кохання Еша та Крістабель розкриває пригнічені та проігноровані аспекти минулого, розслідування Роланда та Мод змушує їх усвідомити свою особистість і пов'язати історію. Великий інтерес до історії також пов'язаний з типом романтизму. Цей роман у книзі пов'язаний не лише з коханням, а й про глибоку пристрасть до історії та бажання її шукати. У мові «володіння» багато використовувався академічний

стиль та історичні факти. Баятт включає в текст кілька літературних цитат і посилань, стираючи межі між справжньою та вигаданою літературою. Це дозволяє оцінити роман і як літературний аналіз, і як історичне дослідження.

Ключові слова: *історія, А. С. Баятт, минуле, сучасність.*

Introduction. A close bond between past and present in "Possession: A Romance" is one of the most essential plots. The novel connects the love story in the 19th century with the academic investigation at the end of the 20th century. The link between past and modern time is set on the basis of the attempts to reveal historical fact by different characters. The main protagonists follow the traces of secret love affairs hidden in the 19th century between English poet Randolph Ash and American poet Christabel LaMotte. The love has been investigated by two modern time academics Maud and Roland. Roland and Maud set a bridge between past and present trying to solve the mystery of the past with the help of letters and poems. Other academics like James Blackadder, Mortimer Cropper and others also participate in the process of investigation about two dead poets. 20th century characters' interactions with ancient works set forth the effects of past in modern life. Each character is formed with the effect of the past. The researchers' analysis undergoes a transformation personally and academically and it emphasizes the continuity and connection between two periods. Byatt shows how characters haunted by past memories in the process of searching for meaning by reconstructing historical knowledge, literary heritage, how they deal with ancient documents and in what way the information they got is used in today's world. At this point, searching for the past is not only understanding history, but also shape current identities. The novel demonstrates how literary works can make a connection between time while traveling back in time and texts. Ash and LaMotte's poems denote both interest in history and modern people's mental state and existential problems. Creating deep impact of the ancient works on modern individuals is one of the characteristics Byatt has desired to convey.

Research analysis. One of the essential threads of the novel is that two modern academics, Roland and Maud, discover the secret affair and related works of the 19th century poets Ash and LaMotte. These investigations do not only help to reveal the poetry of the past and secret relationships, but also play a great role in the process of the investigators' development. Love affair between Ash and LaMotte in the past makes a deep connection with Maud's and Bailey's private lives, and it shows the close interconnection between past and present. Thus, the novel tells the story of relationship between past and present, dead minds and living people, modern people and their ancestors. In the book, a few precious academics make great effort for researching dead poet Roland Ash. While reading the novel, readers encounter a Scottish scholar Prof. Blackadder, managing his Ash Factory and spending his life to look for every detail about the writer there. He has not even left the British Isles except for participating in the conferences on Victorian poems. The Professor realizes the situation that he has been turned into the reflection of the poet, and the past has already taken over his thinking and life. However, he feels satisfied with the case and it seems he voluntarily allows things to happen. An American Professor Cropper is the director of Ash Collection and his target is to know every detail about Ash, what he did, the people he loved, the little things he enjoyed. He tries to reveal every single thing about the past. He looks as the Lord of the writes, but, in fact, he has completely been taken over by Ash. So, it is his obsession with the dead past that obliges him to dig the writer's grave and puts him in great shame.

Purpose of the article. The representatives of the society that does not believe in love, Maud and Roland, are affected by the love story of two Victorian time poets and they feel the desire for change on themselves. They discover that they have a common desire for the future realizing they are trapped by unfulfilling relationships in the own lives. They feel the similar dissatisfaction and misery about the modern ideology that values everything as human sexuality which restricts people and causes them to move away from loving. The passionate love of the Victorian poets prompts them to search for modern ideology on love and emotions. The investigation between lovers in the past brings two modern scholars together and drags them into similar plot gradually.

The past in the novel provides a completely various mirror for the modern time and a standard for the behavior of the heroes, especially for the women to find out their true identities. Analyzing the life of his lovely writer and discovering his valuable poetry, he also realizes the week sides of idealized writer as other Victorian poets. Meanwhile, his attitudes towards life also changes and he gets rid of laziness and indifference. In this literary journey he turns into a real poet and finds the job he wishes. This journey has also good effects on his partner Maud, she retraces her roots and her cold detachment is abandoned.

The main protagonists Roland and Maud struggle with numerous problems related to 20th century lifestyle. They do not feel confident in the field of love and creativity. They miss the past when people valued themselves and felt safe. On the other hand, past representatives Ash and LaMotte are confident about their own identities and are able to value their own culture. Moreover, they represent their Victorian style being creative, passionate and curious. A century later, two young researchers find their secret love affairs and it gives the novel extraordinary popularity. "Possession" provides us with colorful content that includes legendary quest, espionage story and Romance patterns. Main protagonists and heroines undergo a number of experiences and changes, and they start to adapt to different sides in perspective to expand their capacity of understanding and pursue their true identities. In fact, the influence of the past is much more essential than the real facts because we are able to learn from them not only negatively, but also positively.

"Possession" can be understood as its writer Byatt's respect for the past and defense for the present. If Byatt has really written historical metafiction, there must be a feeling that the work makes our perception of past and modern time worry. However, in this novel, only the present is destabilized. Past is depicted like a desired memory. Byatt has demonstrated her magnificent writing skills serving great characteristics of Victorian poetry to her readers but at the same time following main principles of postmodern novels. In "Possession" history is utilized as a source of information and this information gives advantages to its owner on other people. In the beginning of the novel, main heroes are described as the people who desire to use the history for their own sake not trying to build an emphatic relationship with it. However, as the story continues, the heroes are able to turn into emotionally developed individuals comprehending the past using their intuitive and poetic skills from egoistic professionals. While they appreciate themselves highly for knowing everything about different theories at the beginning, they start realizing the effect of freedom on Victorian poets' blissful style. That kind of awareness leads them to a deep passion for a life free from mess and self-consciousness as if starting to live the life as a blank page. The desire reflects their needs to catch the simple style and confidence of their ancestors. The discovery of this mutual desire is the initial moment of real connection between two characters. In fact, both of them are surprised to have similar wishes for the future. After their awareness, Roland suggests to do something different leaving their investigation for the next day. "I just want to look at something with interest and without layers of meaning. Something new." Roland wishes to see the objects completely free from the past or previous conceptions for the first time. Roland and Maud can recreate their ancestors' actions only when they escape from the chains and numerous theoretical prejudices. Roland and Maud gradually free themselves from their own obstacles and academic traps and commence to get in touch with their emotions as other Victorians. Roland asks Maud to untie her hair which has been tied in various designs and is the symbol of repeating the same theoretical structures again and again. When Maud unties her hair, Roland feels something loosen up in him and both of them feel relaxed. As a result, two main characters of the novel have freed from the chains of poststructuralist obligations and they will be able to reveal the secret about Ash and LaMotte relationship. Roland's transformation from being an obsessive literary critic into a passionate poet is a precious moment for him to connect with the historical and literary past. It is important to realize that Roland's talent allows him to analyze the past and recreate the present (Byatt, 1990).

Byatt puts two periods side by side for demonstrating all of the misunderstandings about the past denoting lack of knowledge and information as the reasons of those misunderstanding. According to the author, Victorian time seems more stable and durable than Postmodernism for some reasons. One of the reasons is that Victorian poets can express their emotions without the restrictions by Postmodern doubts. The next one is that Byatt creates a self-confirming textual world and various texts such as poems or letters are useful for making connections between eachother. That connection makes us feel the world as less separated and solid. The next one is about much more empathic thoughts, that is, Victorians accept the opinions which are much closer to the writers' hearts and spiritual worlds. In fact, Byatt's representation of the past is closely linked to her personal passion for Victorian period, the misunderstandings about that time and her love to favorite writers in the past life like Robert Browning, George Eliot, Iris Murdock, etc. As time passes, she tries to change the direction in her style and convince the readers not to read the works of the past just like a simple text but read them with their ability of imaginations. However, the writer has also denoted the great role of the language that Victorians used for showing the characters' own thoughts much more than Postmodernists have done. (Interview, 2012) She has declared her sincere thoughts about her miss for that time in her interviews. She appreciates the people in that time much more lively and happier than modern people who live just like a robot asking

question themselves nonstop. In "Possession", while Maud and Roland are investigating the lives of dead poets, they are shocked after revealing the monotony of their lives and the fact that the people's days in the past is livelier than now.

Byatt does not idealize Victorian time and claim that to be perfect. She tries to analyze the time appropriately and use the techniques of modern time to see every detail about the past correctly and integrate the valuable sides of the past to the present. The writer combines past and present so closely that sometimes it is very difficult for the readers not to confuse in the process of storytelling. For example, in the novel, Maud buys a brooch for Leonora that is very similar to the brooch that Christabel had bought for Blanche. In the same unit, both Roland's current girlfriend Val and Christabel's partner call themselves like useless beings. Another issue that connects two periods to each-other is the investigation of the problematic sides of women's status. Moreover, the most powerful connection is set between the new developing relationship of Roland and Maud and the relationship of Christabel and Ash. The academics' passionate approaches to their investigation subjects causes them to leave their postmodernist obligations and appreciate the past more humanistically (Gauthier, 2006).

Byatt emphasizes the relationship between the figures of past and the modern characters who are willing to search for the information about them. What pushes Roland and Maud to search for Christabel and Ash's relationships is not only their interest in the investigation, but also to gain strength to learn something about themselves. Both have a strong believe in improvement they would get in their lives through the process. At the beginning of the novel, Roland experiences great excitement for learning something that has not been revealed yet. Firstly, he gets Ash's hidden notes while reading Vico's less known text. However, as the novel goes on, his attention is directed to a different side after finding his uncompleted letters addressed to a secret woman. At this point, Roland's desire to unclose the secrets of the past has appeared apparently. In "Possession" the relative success of histography depends mainly on finding the balance between self and object.

There is a difference between women and men scholars in the field of investigation in the novel. Men scholars such as Blackadder and Cooper approach to the historical documents like their own possessions but women academics, Nest and Stern are eager to share the information they have found with others. However, all of the scholars have good and bad sides in their working process. What distinguishes Maud and Roland from others is about their perception of the past as something alive. Past is already dead for other scholars but still alive for modern lovers. The difference lets them to unclose the secret. Therefore, Byatt supports the believe that past exists and if we analyze it correctly, there are a lot of lessons we can take and use for today. Before reaching this level of awareness, Roland and Maud had to overcome obstacles coming from outside and inside. As the writer tells, they knew everything theoretically but they could not feel that deeply. They start to put themselves in Christopher and Ash's shoes and use their imaginations to solve the problems they have faced. Their empathy ability improves and this feeling leads them to see their similarity and affection to each-other. In this journey, they act like detectives, start from the selected time in the past, collect all of the hints and reveals every detail till modern time. Buxton says his opinion about the novel and calls it as detective writing and Byatt herself analyzes her characters: "In fact, both academics are detectives. They look for hints nonstop and when they find a piece of poem, they are excited. That poem helps them to understand the characters' behaviors better. Scholars generally do this, they try to find the meanings of the poems, the true emotions on the background of them and what the poet has desired to focus on (Wu, 2019).

In "Possession" Byatt creates a powerful plot that connects the past to the present. She achieves this establishing a blood bond between Maud and Victorian lovers. The result of the novel denotes the possibility of knowing the past, and the person who can give meaning to this is an understanding reader. Byatt acts as a connector between us and the Victorian past, stretching the line between the real, the distant, and intuition. She utilizes two different categories, truth and fiction, to support each-other, so, according to her concept, fiction is strengthened by the truth and truth is realized by fiction. Like several modern academics, Byatt also recognizes the paradox of postmodernism, stating that we look for the past even if we know it is impossible to bring it back. Byatt intends to tell a kind of story that allows the successful connection with the past and a part of the present to flourish. Approaching from Romanticist point of view allows her to present the past in a sympathetic light, and to emphasize the difference in the means of passion and love between the past and present.

Byatt's novel contains an overlapping of two plot lines. The first plot is about the conscious academics paralyzed by their own consciousness, and the second one is Romantic love plot that overcomes all difficulties. History is always in the middle of the process

from the beginning till the end. Byatt tries to own and overcome her lack of historical knowledge. She rejects the believe that past cannot be fully known, with the help of her characters. By making references to the characteristics of the past that have been damaged by time, the author gives us a chance to experience some of the existential fear connected with the same realization but she also lets herself to recover it by applying Romanticism that is coherent and fully completed in itself.

Byatt attempts to deliver the awareness to her readers that our lives are full of unexpressed and unfollowed thoughts and emotions. "Possession" conveys these messages paradoxically. Even if we know that the exact transcription of the past is impossible, the novel makes us feel the possibility of realizing the past with the help of mixture of reality and fiction, and the usage of historical imagination empathetically. By blurring the boundaries between historical fact and fiction, Byatt gives the reader the chance to build a bridge between the past and present. Although two poets' love story is historically real, the modern characters of the book explore this past and transform it into literary fiction. Letter, diaries and poems are accepted as historical documents, but from other side, they have been used in the process and creating fiction. As a result, there is an interaction between the reflection of the past as a reality and the recreation of the past as a fiction. Byatt creates an irony about the link between real file and fiction. While dead poets' lives are being investigated by modern writers, there is a kind of research both for those two different strategies.

Letters play a significant role for working in the past in the novel. They describe mysticism and romantic sides of late Victorian period as important symbols of strong love existed in the history. The diaries are mainly related to three women characters, Sabine, Blanche, Ellen, in the work. Telling strategies in the diaries and letters open the way to the past. Ellen's diary gives us a hint about Christabel's pregnancy. Another interesting diary is Christabel's cousin Sabine's, it helps us to understand what happens to Christabel after breaking up with Ash. These writings give an idea about historical figures that heroes have been transformed in the book. The texts do not only unclose the love affair but also provide valuable knowledge on the social and cultural norms in that period. The letters conveys both personal emotions and literary meaning. The language in Ash's and LaMotte's letters reflect both love and the literary and poetic atmosphere of the time. LaMotte's poems give her the great status as a feminist figure. Letters are also demonstrations of cultural values, personal identities and reflection of social history. For instance, the lovers' relationship intersects with class and sexual norms of the time. The diaries and letters also deepen the literary and philosophical reflection of the texts.

History in "Possession" is not only the story about the past, it is also an influential power on both main protagonists and other characters. The main heroes Roland and Maud reconstruct their own identities and question their bonds with past. Other characters are also affected by the effects of ancient time. Fergus Wolff who is Roland's friend and a former academic, changes his literary perspective while attempting to analyze the meaning on the background of Ash's poems. Fergus who analyzes past as a literature professor, gains awareness about bringing past into present via literary texts. This makes his relationship more complex with past goes beyond an academic investigation into a personal discovery. A biography writer Euan McVicar has faced the past for solving his own misunderstandings about the texts written in the past. He has always interested in writing biographies of different poets, but investigating Ash and Christabel's love affair creates him a chance of understanding how the past can be misunderstood, distorted and misinterpreted. This process strengthens his thoughts on how history can be so fragile and manipulative. The hidden facts in Maud's workmate Heather's life his relation to past demonstrate how historical events are internalized individually. Though Heather is a figure who analyzes past academically, his story show that past is perceived individually not only historically or romantically. Maud's ex-lover displays the effect of Maud's interest in past on her personal relationships (Babaliku, 2020).

Conclusion. In conclusion, the contact between past and present in Byatt's "Possession" is not only established by bringing historical events and personal relationships together, but also achieved by transitivity of texts and meanings. Byatt analyzes the love story disappeared in the darkness of the past and its interaction with today approaching academically and emotionally. In this way, the influence of the past shows itself in a modern life and strengthen the relationship between two time periods. One of the valuable achievements of the novel is about the exploration of history and literary texts. A part of the novel focuses on the feeling of historicity derived from letters, diaries and biographies. That's why, Byatt has taken the material from the history and merged that into the fictional story masterfully. By doing this skillful merging, she has been able to write this loved and highly appreciated novel.

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