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Duplicitous Writing: A.S. Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia"

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“Duplicitous Writing: A.S. Byatt’s *Morpho Eugenia*”

In “Duplicitous Writing: A.S. Byatt’s *Morpho Eugenia*,” Nicole Flynn examines this (post)modernist novella’s simultaneous orientation to past and future. By setting her contemporary novella in the 1860s, Byatt doubles the temporal frame. Furthermore, *Morpho Eugenia* is embedded with manifold texts by other authors, a structural device that transforms the diegetic authors and novella-readers into perpetual travelers. Flynn argues that William Adamson’s sea voyages, which bookend the novella, introduce its most striking and symbolic intertext: his journal. During his trip, the journal mirrors the novella’s textual complexity by intermingling two modes of writing: logistical details (present) and visionary narration (future). Upon returning to England, the journal mirrors William’s “double vision”; he simultaneously relives moments from his travels alongside experiences in the present (Byatt 7). This simultaneity makes everything seem strange and uncertain, but also intensely exciting. Byatt’s structural and temporal experimentation compels readers to roam back and forth between text and intertext, past and present, creating an experience that is both vertiginously disorienting and intensely pleasurable.