A Whistling Woman concludes the quartet of novels which A. S. Byatt began in 1978 with The Virgin in the Garden. The first novel introduced the Potter family and their circle, living in North Yorkshire in the early 1950s. Its sequel, Still Life (1985), traced the family's progress—especially the experiences of the two sisters, Stephanie and Frederica—to 1957, when Stephanie, who is married to Daniel Orton and the mother of two young children, dies in an accident and Frederica, at the age of twenty-one, graduates from Cambridge. Byatt did not return to her project until the mid-nineties. Together, Babel Tower (1996) and A Whistling Woman take the story through the sixties. Throughout the series, endings are resisted, and the last volume, true to the open form of most of Byatt's fiction, concludes with questions still unanswered and loose ends still untied. The strong narrative thread is carried throughout by Frederica, but there are chronological gaps, most notably the seven years between Stephanie's death and the beginning of Babel Tower, when Frederica reappears, miserably married to Nigel Reiver and the mother of four-year-old Leo, and Daniel, having survived the shock...
A Whistling Woman portrays the antic, thrilling, and dangerous period of the late ‘60s as seen through the eyes of a woman whose life is forever changed by her times. Frederica Potter, a smart, spirited 33-year-old single mother, lucks into a job hosting a groundbreaking television talk show based in London. Meanwhile, in her native Yorkshire where her lover is involved in academic research, the university is planning a prestigious conference on body and mind, and a group of students and agitators is establishing an “anti-university.” And nearby a therapeutic community is beginning to take the