Foreword

Linda Collinge-Germain
The current issue of the *Journal of the Short Story in English* is a general issue. The articles are presented in chronological order based on dates of publication of the stories studied, yet they can be considered thematically as well and fruitfully read in resonance one to the other.

A first group of articles looks at female authorship and/or female readership, the first two looking at how the female authors studied take into consideration their often feminine reading public, in some cases because the story was initially published in a magazine targeted at a feminine public. Stella Deen studies such an instance in her article entitled “E.H. Young’s ‘The Stream,’ *Good Housekeeping*, and the Cultivation of Active Readers.” In her semiological approach to the story as it was first published, Deen tries to recreate the 1932 *Good Housekeeping* reader’s encounter with “The Stream.” She argues that “readers would have drawn on the entire contents of the magazine—even of multiple issues of the magazine—as a set of intertexts for ‘The Stream,’ setting it in dialogue with topical questions interrogating man’s nature and his postwar predicament” in order to resolve enigmas in this story which is “neither about nor particularly for women.” According to Deen, the magazine considered its readers as “keepers of the cultural heritage and informed participants in contemporary society.” Ailsa Cox also studies a feminine reading public, but more precisely at it appears in Helen Simpson’s story “The Festival of the Immortals,” a story which, in spite of its satire of literary festivals, includes “an affectionate portrait of two elderly festival-goers” whose satisfaction, having spent their lives at home, taking care of the family, comes from reading and imagining “the figure of the author.” Cox argues that “Simpson addresses the silencing of female voices and the marginalizing of women’s experience.”

In her article “The First Fruits of Literary Rebellion,” Jolene Hubbs considers female authorship, notably that of Flannery O’Connor in her portrayal of a female writer in the short story “The Crop,” a story set in the US South and used, according to Hubbs, “to critique contemporary models of authorship.” Hubbs argues that “‘The Crop’ exposes the limitations of 1920s pastoral fiction, a woman-authored form, as well as 1930s gritty social realism, a genre dominated by male writers.” “‘The Crop’ thus sets forth,” says Hubbs,
“the first fruits of the iconoclastic style that characterizes O’Connor’s body of work.”

Gérald Préher, in his article “Joan Williams’ Invisible Woman in “Pariah,”’ studies a female Southern author as well, one, precisely, less well known to the public than O’Connor. Joan Williams published “Pariah” in 1967 in McCall’s magazine. The story uses narrated monologue abundantly to express the subjectivity of Ruth, “a wife and mother who has momentarily found comfort in alcohol to avoid looking into the void her life has become.” Préher argues that her “descent into hell, namely reality, shows that she longs for visibility in a world where women are invisible,” perhaps echoing, he suggests, Williams’ own dilemma in relation to her mentor William Faulkner.

4 This question of feminine subjection is raised as well by Richard Pedot in his article entitled “‘He was a shit to boot’: abjection, subjection and feminism in Black Venus.” The “Black Venus” is Baudelaire’s muse, Jeanne Duval, whom Carter looks back to in the writing of her story. Pedot examines “Angela Carter’s disputed relation to feminism in the light of the play of the abject in her works—not only as a recurring theme often inseparable from that of the exclusion of the feminine, but also as a pervading force within her writing.” He suggests that “much of the debate about Carter’s feminism results from the indeterminate status of the abject” as it appears in such a story and argues that this indeterminacy fosters a “more complex perception of the mechanisms of feminine subjection.”

5 The feminine subjection that Alice Clark-Wehinger studies in her article “The Power of Illusion and the Illusion of Power” is of a different nature in that the story written by Mary Orr “The Wisdom of Eve” and its film adaptation by Mankiewicz recount the successive manipulating of women characters by other women characters. Performance is at the heart of this manipulating as “a young actress plays on the appearance of youthful innocence to claw her way to success” and “supplant her rival.” Alice Clark Wehinger examines the trope of theatre “as a construct which contaminates both space and identity” in these works and then proceeds to consider “the aesthetic implications of theatre as a motif for the baroque aesthetics of illusion.”

6 A second group of articles in the present volume is devoted to the aesthetics of modern short story writing. First of all, Mathilde La Cassagnère studies Virginia Woolf’s story “Kew Gardens” in relation to Woolf’s 1919 essay on the art of fiction. “The purpose of the essay,” says La Cassagnère, “was to emancipate fiction from its conventional modes of representation so as to make it able to capture and voice all things infinitesimal and intangible, in an exploration of the hitherto neglected ‘heavy nothing(s).’” The story’s snail is one of those infinitely small beings, and La Cassagnère suggests that in the end, “the snail has become the entire short story. The snail is all the story’s spectacularly divergent tales about nothings,” from the Sartrean dialectic of being and nothingness to modern neuroscience’s “illusions of the brain.”

7 Paul Sweeten examines two versions of Raymond Carver’s stories from the 1970s and their relation to Hemingway’s modernist style of short story writing. Sweeten argues that Gordon Lish, the editor who published Carver’s 1980 collection What We Talk About When We Talk About Love, was more influenced by and interested in Hemingway’s minimalist style than Carver was. The recent publication (2009) of Beginners, the unedited version of those same stories, is the basis for Sweeten’s genetic study. He argues that the stories in these first drafts can be seen as “having different effects and perhaps even as aiming at something altogether distinct from their edited counterparts.”
A third group of articles in this volume takes an explicitly philosophical approach to the stories they study. Daniel Thomières’ article entitled “Being and Time in Ernest Hemingway’s ‘Cat in the Rain’” considers Hemingway’s story as a series of philosophical interrogations. In his study of this story of a couple undergoing a crisis, Thomières argues that the story “can be read as a fundamental question: what are the implications of this crisis in which a woman starts questioning her desire and her identity?” Thomières writes that “perhaps Hemingway’s main discovery was that we are part of time and that the states in which we live never last long. Hemingway was concerned with what could be called the fate of our desires.”

In his article “‘Spoiled People’: Narcissism and the De-centered Self in Richard Ford’s Women with Men,” Ian McGuire also examines the desires of the protagonists from a philosophical standpoint. He identifies Charley Matthews’ affirmation of no longer wanting to be the “center of things” as a “desire connecting him to a long-standing tradition of American individualism, but also to a more recent strain of European postmodernism.” “Ford’s critique of postmodernism,” says McGuire, “emphasises its narcissistic and relativistic tendencies. Ford offers, as an alternative, a version of philosophical realism that may be usefully compared to the ‘internal realism’ argued for by American philosopher Hilary Putnam.”

The issue is concluded with a note written by Morgane Jourdren—“Parody in ‘Startling Revelations from the Lost Book of Stan’ by Shalom Auslander”—a study which concludes that “parody and self-parody are here a way of retrieving a sense of being for a moment, away from an oppressive and dull society.”

AUTHOR

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Linda Collinge-Germain is an Associate Professor at the University of Angers where she teaches English language and literature and is an active member of the Centre de Recherches Interdisciplinaires en Langue Anglaise. She is the author of Beckett traduit Beckett: de Malone meurt à Malone Dies, l’imaginaire en traduction (Droz, 2000), a study of Beckett as self-translator, and has also published articles on the subject which have appeared in Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd’hui or thematic collections. Her areas of interest are the bilingual works of Samuel Beckett, reception theory and more currently, cultural in-betweenness in short-story writing, and film adaptations of short stories as a form of translation. She was co-editor of the Journal of the Short Story in English from 1997 to 2012 and has been editor since 2012.