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Foreword

Gérald Préher, Colette Colligan and Xavier Le Brun



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FOREWORD

Daphne du Maurier has haunted the literary scene for decades and readers of her novels, as well as viewers of Alfred Hitchcock's adaptations, often have (at least) one of her opening lines in mind... "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again..." *Rebecca* has now undeniably become a classic—it is part of Virago's "Modern Classics" as is most of her work these days. Virago has reissued her books with introductions by a wide variety of writers and, obviously, admirers. Her short stories are also readily available from Virago, and Patrick McGrath also selected and introduced a collection of them for New York Review Books in 2008. In his introductory comments, McGrath notes that du Maurier's "imagination is liberated in the short story, where brilliant flashes of originality, pessimism, and even perversity are to be glimpsed." There is always in her stories a "collision, preferably violent, of humanity and the natural world." This is easily noticeable in "The Birds," but "The Blue Lenses" also offers a striking illustration of a beastly menace hovering over du Maurier's protagonist, only this time humans themselves, becoming animal-like, are the threat. In the story, an eye operation has made it possible for a woman to see the true colors of the people around her, something McGrath relates to du Maurier's treatment of "*clairvoyance*, the paranormal ability to see beyond the immediate physical world." It is also quite often the gap between surface and depth that du Maurier explores and elaborates upon—her characters may have double lives ("The Alibi"); they may try to escape a story they have written themselves and in which they are now trapped ("Panic"); or they may have secret longings that they want to keep hidden ("The Doll"). Therefore, readers are likely to meet parasites, when they are not turned into parasites themselves, becoming as they read voyeurs trapped

in somebody else's eyes, as Bernadette Bertrandias aptly showed in a study of *My Cousin Rachel* which comes to mind when reading shorter texts by du Maurier.

This issue of the *Journal of the Short Story in English* owes much to Xavier Lachazette, who launched the idea of this volume while preparing to host a Daphne du Maurier conference at Le Mans Université in 2019 to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of du Maurier's death. He approached the journal's editorial board with a carefully drafted call for papers on du Maurier's short fiction and, of course, everyone was enthusiastic about adding such a fine short-story writer to its monograph series. Xavier Lachazette has devoted much of his time to the study of du Maurier's work, her long and short fiction, her archives, and the bibliography he compiled for this issue will be precious for many years to come. The articles examine classics (such as "The Birds," "Don't Look Now," and "The Blue Lenses") and lesser-known short work together with newly discovered material, and draw parallels with other writers' texts (a comparative study of du Maurier and McEwan is included here). Lachazette's capacity to gather around him specialists from many different countries is showcased here, and his expertise filters through in his thought-provoking introduction and editorial work.

We hope that with this issue many more readers will dream of going to Manderley again to explore du Maurier's fictional worlds and, more specifically, her short fiction which, inhabited as it is by "sundered selves" and "opaque others," proves at once inviting and terrifying.

Gérald Préher

JSSE Editor, Textes et Cultures, Université d'Artois

Colette Colligan

JSSE Associate Editor, CIRPaLL, Université d'Angers

Xavier Le Brun

JSSE Associate Editor, CIRPaLL, Université d'Angers