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Foreword

Michelle Ryan-Sautour and G rald Pr her



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Foreword

Michelle Ryan-Sautour and Gérald Préher

- 1 We are pleased to present this sixty-fourth issue of the *Journal of the Short Story in English* which proposes a dual format, including a thematic section and a general section.
- 2 The thematic section in part I of this volume deals with the short story in the modernist period with articles that seek to reinvestigate traditional concepts of modernism and the short story form. These articles were collected following a conference “The Short Story and Short Story Collection in the Modernist Period: Between Theory and Practice,” organized by the departments of literary studies of the universities of Ghent, Leuven and Perugia in September 2013 at the Academia Belgica in Rome. The guest editors include the following scholars: Mathijs Duyck, Michael Basseler, Anne Besnault-Levita, Christine Reynier, and Bart Van Den Bossche. These articles are framed in the first part of this issue by an introduction by Michael Basseler and Christine Reynier, and a probing afterword by Adrian Hunter. The contributors to this special section raise new questions about what we call the “modernist” short story and thus open new avenues for future research. We are very pleased to include it in this issue.
- 3 The general section in part II of this volume proposes a striking array of articles that attest to the transnational dimension of short story production. Authors from places as diverse as Barbados, Canada, the United States (north and south), England and Ireland are explored by researchers, and the variety of methodological approaches accentuate this multiplicity by manifesting a broad range of conceptual approaches.
- 4 Three articles propose a studied focus on gender. Bryony Randall, in “What Time is ‘The Next Time’? Writing, Gender and Temporality in Some Short Stories by Henry James,” examines a cluster of stories Henry James wrote specifically about women writers. With a focus on four tales written in the mid-1890s, Randall discusses the imbrication of temporality and the relationship of gender to writing. She argues that the stories appear to foster hierarchical gendered distinctions between narrative models. However, the narrative structure, unexpectedly, ultimately breaks down such hierarchies to confirm the power of the woman writer.

- 5 Robert Lecker also engages with the question of time and gender, as he explores the nature of memory, narrative and female duplicity. In “‘Like Following a Mirage’: Memory and Empowerment in Alice Munro’s ‘The Bear Came Over the Mountain,’” Lecker shows how Munro’s story proposes a portrait of grief, loss, betrayal and, surprisingly, female agency. Lecker studies the “double edge” apparent in the story, as the main character, Fiona, copes with Alzheimer’s and the loss of her memory. He notes how this story appears at first sight to be a simple story of loss of the self. However, the narrative develops in a more subtle fashion, leading the reader to wonder if Fiona is not simply proposing a performance of memory loss to become empowered and escape from a difficult marriage. Her withdrawal from the world appears to be suggestive of a different form of freedom, therefore contributing to Munro’s preoccupation with the everyday lives of women.
- 6 Andrew Armstrong demonstrates a similar preoccupation with the situation of women, but engages with questions of gender through the lens of space in “Narrative, Itineraries, and the Negotiation of ‘Domestic’ Space in Cherie Jones’s *The Burning Bush Women*.” Armstrong explains how Barbadian writer Cherie Jones’ collection explores the concepts of “home” and “away” in relation to ideas of migration, identity formation, travel and exile. He sees these dominant themes as being intertwined with gender relations, space and society, as they relate to the lives of Caribbean women at home and abroad. The collection is shown by Armstrong to propose a counterhegemonic potential to creating alternative spaces for enacting female subjectivity. As opposed to Randall, he privileges space over temporality, in order to show how the short story genre can allow for specific forms of “architexture” (Gretlund).
- 7 Suzanne Bray demonstrates a similar preoccupation with identity and territory but turns her attention to the South of the United States in “Melville Davisson Post’s Uncle Abner Stories, or the Recreation of Virginia as the Biblical Promised Land with Abner as its Prophet.” Bray studies how the success of the Uncle Abner series by Melville Davisson Post can be attributed to the context in which the stories take place. Virginia is explored as being representative of the Promised Land, in which Uncle Abner appears as a sort of Old Testament prophet figure who gives divinely inspired advice to people for whom law appears as a distant entity. She proposes a specific focus on the first story in *Uncle Abner: Master of Mysteries*, “The Doomedorf Mystery,” studying the parallel between Hebrew texts and the atmosphere, discourse and world vision proposed.
- 8 Quan Manh Ha and Jonathan Mark Hoyer, in “Charles Baxter’s ‘Gryphon’: A Postmodernist Substitute in a Traditional Classroom,” propose an exploration of intellectual territory, that of the classroom. These authors address how Charles Baxter’s short story “Gryphon” can be placed within a framework of intellectual and pedagogical history from the end of the European Enlightenment through the rise of postmodernism. They focus on Immanuel Kant’s subjectivism as it contributes to the attribution of a relative value to material traditionally presented in the classroom as fact. They see this Kantian shift as being the focus for events in the story. Ha and Hoyer use Reader-Response interpretation in order to explain how the classroom context is used by Baxter to confront philosophical and pedagogical perspectives. In this sense, the story cannot be reduced to binary oppositions, but rather proposes a more subtle representation of classroom thought.

- 9 Charles Holdefer deals with similar conceptual issues, but directs his attention to the genre of the dystopia and the short story with his article: “Another Kind of Hell: Fundamentals of the Dystopian Short Story.” His article seeks to study the relationship between the short story and the concept of dystopia with its different representation of *topos* in relation to the short story’s close relationship to the spaces of myth. Through a study of stories by Shirley Jackson, Kurt Vonnegut, Jennifer Egan and George Saunders, Holdefer isolates specificities of the dystopian short story, studying, for example, how the representation of states of hell function as social commentary, and how such representation ultimately highlights and exploits some of the fundamental aspects of the short story form.
- 10 Catriona Ryan demonstrates a similar preoccupation with social commentary, but her focus is on Ireland and the short stories of Tom Mac Intyre in “‘The Hurt Mind’: A Paleo-Postmodern Reading of Tom Mac Intyre’s Short Prose.” As suggested in the title, Ryan proposes a new paradigm she identifies as “paleo-postmodern” through which she analyzes Mac Intyre’s aesthetics. She borrows from psychoanalysis (notably Lacan) and trauma studies to explain how Mac Intyre’s stories bring together postmodern deconstruction and Yeatsian revivalism. Tragic characters are shown to be in search of an unreachable Irish identity, hindered by a Hiberno-English language that fosters alienation.
- 11 We are particularly thrilled with this dual issue as it is rich in insights about evolving perceptions of the short story genre and proposes many paths for future research.

AUTHORS

MICHELLE RYAN-SAUTOUR

JSSE Editor

GÉRALD PRÉHER

JSSE Associate Editor