

## Call for Papers: 3<sup>rd</sup> ENSFR CONFERENCE

# Short Fiction: Co-texts and Contexts

University of Leuven (KU Leuven), 4-5-6 May 2017

Since the emergence of the modern short story as a distinct literary form in the second half of the nineteenth century, many critics and writers have sought to decide what it is exactly that distinguishes the short story from longer fiction, such as the novella or the novel – Is it length? Conciseness? A specific thematic concern? Or a particular stylistic feature? The matter has not yet been settled. Perhaps we need to look to more circumstantial, material elements for a pragmatic answer to that question. Indeed, one could argue that one of the discerning features of the short story is that it is rarely if ever published separately. Instead, it appears as one text among others, whether in a newspaper or magazine, an anthology or collection, a short story cycle or sequence, on a website or in a twitter feed. Precisely these different formats and contexts of publication have also been instrumental in the birth and development of the modern short story as we know it today. As several critics have argued, the short story rose to fame as a new and fashionable literary form in the 19<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the boom in the periodical press. Similarly, its decline in popularity in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century correlates with the decimation of magazines willing to publish short fiction. And one could argue that the renewed interest in short fiction today is related to the proliferation of new publishing opportunities through digital media.

This necessary co-textuality of the short story or the different contexts in which it is published and read are slowly receiving more critical attention. Dean Baldwin's *Art and Commerce in the British Short Story: 1880-1950* documents the rise and fall of British short fiction through a study of its modes of publication. Other studies address the processes of unification and collection that go into the making of short story cycles, anthologies or collections, while the interactions between short fiction and new (digital) media formed the topic of the previous ENSFR conference.

This third annual ENSFR conference wants to further explore the many different ways in which short fiction interacts with its co-texts and contexts in different literary traditions. Questions we would like to address are:

- How have the publication formats of short fiction changed over the centuries?
- How is the development of the short story bound up with the printing and publishing context of a particular time and space?
- To what extent have the publication contexts of the short story influenced its perception as an avant-garde or popular genre, or as highbrow/middlebrow/lowbrow literary form?
- What are the new publishing formats emerging today and how do they influence the short story?
- What is the interaction between short fiction and other media (e.g. illustrations, typography, photographs) in such multimedial publishing formats as the magazine or the website?
- What is the importance of the book trade and its marketing strategies on the writing and publishing of short stories?
- How is the co-textual nature of a single-author collection different from that of an anthology or from a short story cycle? How does this context influence our reading of a given short story, as it moves, for instance, from a magazine, to a collection and on to an anthology or syllabus?

- How does a short story take on new meaning throughout its migration across different publishing contexts? What metamorphoses can be observed from a story's initial publication to later, revised versions?
- What connections might be made within an author's complete *oeuvre*? For example, do authors sometimes return to initial stories or storyworlds later in his/her career, creating connections that extend beyond the temporal frame of an initial publication, but also beyond the material boundaries of a single collection?
- In what way do stories interact with the socio-political context of the time and place they reflect? How do they evoke that larger context within a restricted frame?

In other words, possible topics can include, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- The short story cycle
- The anthology
- The collection
- The story as part of an author's oeuvre
- Short fiction in magazines
- Short fiction and other media
- The short story and the book trade
- The short story and prize culture
- The short story and its socio-political contexts
- Interpreting the short story

We welcome papers (in both English and French) that address these questions and topics either through individual case studies or more theoretical or historical explorations as well as in different literary traditions. Proposals for three-paper panels are also welcome.

300-word abstracts for 20-minute papers should be sent to Elke D'hoker ([elke.dhoker@kuleuven.be](mailto:elke.dhoker@kuleuven.be)) and Bart Van den Bossche ([Bart.vandenbossche@kuleuven.be](mailto:Bart.vandenbossche@kuleuven.be)) by the **15<sup>th</sup> of January 2017**. Contributors should also send a short biographical note indicating institutional affiliation.

Further information about the conference will be posted on the conference website <http://www.shortfiction.be>. Further information about the ENSFR can be found on <http://ensfr.hypotheses.org/>. The conference will take place in the Leuven Irish college (<http://www.leuveninstitute.eu/site/index.php>).