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Ruth Robbins

Gender and Genre in the Short Story

When you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is ‘male or female?’ and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty. (Sigmund Freud)¹

Genre theory is ... about the ways in which different structures of meaning and truth are produced in and by the various kinds of writing ...by which the universe of discourse is structured. That is why genre matters: it is central to human meaning-making and to the social struggle over meanings. (John Frow)²

Gender and genre are related in more ways than one. A glance at the dictionary tells us that the two words were born from the same root word in Latin by way of Old French – *genus*, meaning type or kind. In modern French, *genre* means both gender and genre. That etymological connectedness expands beyond the simple fact of the shared root word: genre is gendered; gender (in literary terms, at least) is also ‘genred’. What writers produce and what readers consume is often (but certainly not always) closely aligned to their genders. The ‘unhesitating certainty’ of gender distinctions in social life of which Freud writes in his 1933 essay on ‘Femininity’ is also a form of genre reading. His suggestion is that we know a man from a woman by signs that we have learned to read as part of our social training: these signs are biological (facial hair or its lack, deep or high voices etc.); they are also social – masculinity and femininity are signalled by conventions of clothing and predicted behaviours that attach to the genders in a given society.

John Frow's comments are focused on forms of writing rather than on forms of people, but his comment that genre is 'central to human meaning-making' echoes Freud's focus on the centrality of gender in social interactions beyond the page. This is not accidental. The social learning that goes into telling us both that a given person is male or female and that certain behaviours are expected of us as men or women is part of a continuum in which literary texts also play their part. Texts both reflect in mediated ways an existing social reality, and they are also one means for understanding that reality. And in genre, gender matters from the outset – from the very first 'once-upon-a-time' – of our reading lives. To a very large extent, Freud's comment tells us that we judge people by their covers; this is a judgement that very often also extends to books.

It is important here to make the point that there are least two ways in which the word genre is used in common parlance, because there is a confusion between form (type or kind of writing, for example, prose, poetry, drama) and (sub-)genre (a shared set of generic conventions such as those to be found in the ghost story, the romance, the thriller or the western which provide interpretative clues for the reader, and markets for the writer or publisher or film company). The sense of genre as referring to form is sometimes disallowed by scholars, and is sometimes their central focus. Contemporary criticism of genre tends to focus much more on genre as the sets of sub-divisions within the individual form or mode, a tendency which is strongly at play in film studies but which also has its part in literary thought. A play might be comedy or tragedy or tragi-comedy (or many other things). A novel might be a thriller or an Aga-Saga, or a work of science fiction, and so forth. Readers and booksellers really like genre in that sense of subdivision. It tells you what you are buying and what you are selling, provides a safety net against the accidental purchase of an antipathetic kind of story, and helps with the marketing process. As Heta Pyrhönen puts it, rather less cynically and with less attention to the demands of the market:

Genre theory today signals opportunity and common purpose: genre functions as an enabling device for readers and writers, the vehicle for the acquisition of competence. Familiarity with genre fosters generic competence, that is, an ability (1) to recognize and interpret the codes typical of a given genre; and (2) to perceive departures from it.³

The competence that is being described here is both textual and paratextual. It exists both within the individual text, in its plot elements, typologies of character and action, and in its endings, and outside it, in the marginalia of the text, in signs such as the book's cover or the magazine's title, the author's signature, and the associations that the competent reader makes with the publisher's colophon. This competence tells readers what to expect and it alerts us to those moments when our expectations are not met. If Elizabeth Bennet meets a zombie, we know we are outside the generic norms of the ordered social world that Jane Austen's signature is meant to guarantee.

Because of the ways in which short fiction in particular is consumed, the connections between gender and genre are often acutely realised in this form. Publishers are wary of the short stories because they sell less reliably than the long-form fiction of the novel. They have habitually been defined as a lesser form on a scale of value which has as much to do with hard cash as it does with aesthetic worth. There are exceptions made for those short fictions which appear on university reading lists: writers such as Henry James, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield, whose artful modernist and proto-modernist experiments lend academic respectability to a more usually ephemeral form, have garnered the kinds of critical attention that makes them central texts for the university curriculum. Beyond these exceptions, however, short stories often appear as magazine fictions whose reader is typically

‘a light, usually female, reader’,⁴ and in anthologies constructed along lines of national identity (*The Penguin Best Australian Short Stories*), theme or genre (*Victorian Fairy Tales*, *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*), or gender (*The Story: Love, Loss and the Lives of Women*; *The Secret Self: Short Stories by Women*). In the anthology market, there are no collections in the Amazon catalogue entitled *The Masculine Short Story* or *Short Fictions by Men*, which implies both that men have no gendered interests (that they are the norm against which femininity is measured, a judgement that we should all be very wary of accepting); and possibly also particular types of short story are gendered as feminine. There are, by way of contrast, many examples of short fiction collections that bring together women’s writing, which suggests that women writers (and readers) are defined by their gender in a way that male readers and writers are not. Even apparently gender-neutral anthologies turn out not to be neutral at all. Statistical analyses of such apparently disinterested titles as V. S. Pritchett’s 1981 *The Oxford Book of Short Stories* shows that 41 stories are collected of which a mere 7 are by women writers, a ratio of just under 6:1 male to female (and this is not atypical).⁵ Gender demarcation becomes even clearer when popular genres are in play. Westerns and hard-boiled detective fictions are ‘masculine’ at least in the sense that they are marketed at men; and romance and cosy detective stories (the ones without too much blood or violence) are feminine in the same way. These demarcations are not quite the concern of this chapter, which focuses rather on the formal qualities of the short story as gendered genre, but they are named here because it is important to understand that the short story itself can be understood as a feminine form, and that its gendered delineation has effects on its production, consumption and reception. Frank O’Connor observed long ago that the short-story form was ideal for describing the pains of what he called ‘submerged populations’ and ‘outlaw figures.’⁶ His particular concern was with the varieties of spiritual malaise and the discomfort that specifically affect colonised or otherwise impoverished peoples. He did not

mention women at all amongst the examples of ‘submerged populations’, which, as Mary Eagleton notes in a very important essay, is a highly significant omission.⁷ His words, however, also apply to the form as it was adopted by women in the later part of the nineteenth century, and to a range of its subsequent performances in the twentieth century and beyond. O’Connor’s comments, Eagleton notes, which image the short story writer as ‘non-hegemonic, peripheral, contradictory’ is also ‘a reflection of the position of women in a patriarchal society’.⁸

Eagleton’s essay, ‘Gender and Genre’ first published in 1989, is a suggestive discussion of how the two terms might be better understood, and a plea for a for critics to find a mode of feminist criticism in general, and for the short story in particular, which is ‘non-essentialist, non-reductive, but [also] subtly alive to the links between gender and genre’.⁹ Eagleton points to the fact that value judgements about genre in the past privileged a male canon of good taste and of aesthetic worth, and has made a virtue out of large scale in terms of both word count and subject matter:

High tragedy, epic poetry, sermons, the philosophical treatise, criticism carry more weight than journals, letters, diaries, even, for the most part, fiction – forms in which women have proliferated. The female forms, we have been told, are less literary, less intellectual, less wide-ranging, less profound.¹⁰

These judgements, however, are not ‘neutral’, but are part of a patriarchal narrative that seeks to keep writing and reading women in their place. She argues that the new fictional form of the novel in the eighteenth century and beyond attracted women writers because it had no tradition of great masters or rigid generic rules to contend with. The education required to emulate the tradition and to abide by the conventions, which were often denied to women in

earlier periods, shut them out of the highly valued forms of epic poetry and philosophical debate. But the novel was new and the rules were unformed and women writers and readers leapt into the gap. The short story shares some of these conditions: 'If we are talking about new forms and low status, then the short story is even newer and lower than the novel', Eagleton comments ironically.¹¹ The woman writer can make her own space in this genre in part because the men weren't bothered.

But in choosing a shorter form, one which was not accorded literary status nor highly regarded by critical opinion, there are dangers for women writers. Eagleton notes a potential analogy between the valuation of epic (masculine poetic form *par excellence*, in which the men are all very warlike, and there are hardly any women at all) and the lyric, a form that women were permitted to excel in so long as they did not exceed the boundaries of feminine propriety, for example by discussing their own sexual desires or taking strong political stances. Because the lyric is personal not public, intimate and inward looking not declamatory and assertive, it is a poetic form that nice girls can write and not sacrifice their niceness. Short fiction often has some of the same attributes as the lyric: as lyric is to epic, so the short story is to the novel. It can be an intimate form, focused on a single incident which values 'the personal, the closely detailed, the miniature' and does not risk a woman writer's status as appropriately feminine. But – and this is the double bind for women writers – if this is what women writers do and the reasons for doing it are focused on maintaining their femininity, 'By implication, the short story becomes both a lesser form and about all women can manage'.¹² This is a double bind that feminist criticism has not always been able to avoid in its own judgements. In the introduction to her 1997 anthology of nineteenth-century women writers of short fiction, *Scribbling Women*, Elaine Showalter undertakes the important work of recovery, anthologising a number of texts that had more or less disappeared from view. (The short story, often having ephemeral publication forms such as

magazines, is very prone to disappearance from the record.) But even she almost suggests that the short story was a form that women chose for tactical reasons because the novel ‘demanded a commitment of time that many American women could not afford,’ implying that it was a pragmatic choice, not a deliberate aesthetic one.¹³ And for Rebecca Bowler, in a discussion of the woman writer’s modernist short stories, writers like May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson and even Katherine Mansfield, were always ambivalent about the value of the short form’s aesthetic claims versus its practical value to them as something to keep an income rolling in: ‘short stories were viewed,’ she writes, ‘as a popular and ephemeral product. It was the novels that a writer produced that would create and sustain their reputation and standing in the literary marketplace.’¹⁴

Because there is so much potentially to say, this chapter is limited to short-story form as it is enacted by women writers who engage with the question of marriage. There are limitations which arise from this choice of writers and theme. For instance, the focus is on heterosexual relationships. It also risks the assumption that the short story is focused on purely domestic issues which somehow attach only to women readers and writers. In ‘Gender and Genre’, Mary Eagleton, however, points out that romance – of which marriage is generically meant to be the denouement – is a primary case study for a gendered genre because it is ‘a form ... produced almost exclusively by women, for women’.¹⁵ Although there are clearly problems with identifying the romance genre in short fiction (or anywhere else for that matter) as a form with radical potential because of its required ending in monogamous, straight marriages, romance does have some disruptive potential in its expression of the excess of female desire that cannot quite be contained in the usual story. The interest from its audiences is also an expression – perhaps oblique – of that audience’s dissatisfaction with an unromantic status quo. She suggests further that women writers are attracted to short fiction not because the form itself is ‘known and safe’ but because it is

‘flexible, open-ended’ and may therefore offer ‘a transforming potential, an ability to ask the unspoken question, to raise new subject matter’.¹⁶ In similar vein, Sabine Coelsh-Foisner comments that modernist women short story writers ‘expressed realms of experience hitherto unnoticed and unexpressed, experimented with modes of perception and style, and opened up disruptive alternative perspectives on life.’¹⁷ More recently Emma Young and James Bailey, who are appropriately careful not to essentialise what women writers can and cannot do, note that some possible characteristics of the woman’s short story include an emphasis on ‘the politics of time, the significance of the short story’s ending, episodic nature and narrative brevity, the open and ambiguous nature of the form ... the relationship between text and reader, and the treatment of character and voice.’¹⁸ They deliberately don’t specify further how those emphases might play out or what distinguishes a woman writer or reader’s interests in these elements from a man’s. There is, though, in these tentative descriptions of what women may write and read about a glimpse of a common understanding of what a gendered version of short fiction might offer: a distinctive point of view which undercuts the old old story.

A short story by Lucia Berlin offers a kind of parable both for the writing of a story and for the point of view it might offer – it is called, deliberately signalling its ambivalence, ‘Point of View’. A writer considers the value of first person versus third person narrative, in a story that she is possibly writing about a doctor’s assistant called Henrietta. If Henrietta told her own desperately dull story which is a recounting of the habits and diurnal activities of her life, she muses, the reader would lose patience and say ‘Give me a break’. But if she starts the story in the third person, then the reader will ‘read on and see what happens’.¹⁹ In fact, nothing will happen. Henrietta will go to work in her doctor’s surgery, a bit in love with him (a classic set up for the doctor and nurse romance), but utterly unappreciated and indeed very badly treated by him. This is the romance plot when it fails to meet its generic goals. It is also

the story of the writing of a story in which a woman's experience is placed centre stage – but whether it is the woman *in* the story or the woman who is ostensibly writing the story who is the point of our interest is deliberately unresolved. The character, or the narrator, or the writer, goes to bed, watches her neighbours through a steamed-up window. 'In the steam of the glass, I write a word. What? My name? A man's name? Henrietta? Love? Whatever it is, I erase it quickly before anyone can see'.²⁰ The short form allows the self-assertion and self-expression that come from writing anything at all. It can also be a retreat from the kind of confident statement that prescribes as it inscribes, from the aggressive solidification of ideas and views that amount to a totalising vision. Irresolution gives more freedom than certainty does.

Who the New Woman of the late nineteenth century was very much depended on who was defining her. There were hostile descriptions of her in the contemporary press which emphasised her sexlessness, unattractiveness and stridency. When she was permitted to define herself, however, she was, argues Carol A. Senf, 'a type of well-educated, middle-class woman who was openly critical of the traditional roles established for women, especially marriage and motherhood, and who was influenced by the feminist movement to speak out in favour of equal education for women'.²¹ She might also speak of her own desires and needs – though this was rarer, in a context where social and sexual purity for women was a fiercely enforced norm. What is certain, though, is that New Women writers adopted the short story form as a key mode in their struggle for self-expression and social emancipation. The reasons for this choice are not difficult to seek. In part they relate to the material conditions of book publication. Because their focus was on controversial subjects, the New Woman writer was constrained by the aesthetics and market conditions for the production and consumption of long-form fictions. She often turned to more ephemeral markets than

those that pertained to the novel, placing her shocking fictions in the smaller circulation specialist magazines. She may well also have been responding to the problem of the novel form itself: as Jane Eldridge Miller has pointed out, for the Victorians, courtship and marriage were the central structural devices of long-form fiction, and marriage was the most usual endpoint for such fictions, which was constraining for those who wished to explore alternative possibilities for female lives.²² Because the alternatives were experimental, the experimental short story form was more suitable for exploring them.

Of the New Woman short fictions, probably the most famous is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wall-paper' (1892), which Gilman wrote as a response to her treatment for a uniquely female form of mental distress, post-partum psychosis, following the birth of her son. The story adopts the trappings of the ghost story, one of the most popular genres in nineteenth-century short fiction, in order to chart in fragmented, staccato sentences, the disintegration of its narrator's mind. The story is painful and frightening as a good ghost story should be; but it is also a diagnosis and critique of an unimaginative masculine medical profession which seeks to confine femininity to the domestic sphere, forbidding the narrator to write, and insisting that she ought to be focused on her recovery, not for her own sake but for those of her husband and baby. The story tells how the narrator becomes haunted by the wall-paper in her room, and the story ends with her creeping around the room, trying to free the woman (possibly a reflection of herself) that she imagines has been imprisoned in its monstrous yellow pattern. The story hints that she is driven mad in turn by domesticity, matrimony and maternity.

For Gilman, the choice of short fiction was pragmatic. She wanted to write something that would be read by the doctors who treated her. Writing years later of her intentions, she said that it was written with a purpose and therefore was not literature (Gilman 1990).²³ The separation that she identifies between politics and aesthetics is not one that many people

would now agree with: both the personal and the aesthetic can be highly political. And this story has garnered a great deal of critical attention because it is also very artful, deliberately blurring interpretative certainties so that we cannot be sure whether the narrator is reliable; it thereby unsettles the totalising paradigm of the medical point of view of her case. The narrative is just a few pages; its disorienting effects are produced with a brevity and a misleading simplicity that could not be sustained if it went on much longer. It works in part because it is not couched as a complaint but as a description, apparently without agenda, of what happens. In the end, though, it is like much New Woman fiction, a diagnosis not a prescription for what might be woman's condition in unequal marital relationships and in an unequal social world.

Marriage looms large in New Woman fiction because it is perceived to be an unsatisfactory condition. Despite the many changes to the laws on marriage during the nineteenth century (a series of Married Women's Property Acts, shifts in the balance of power on marriage breakdown to favour the mother over the father in infant custody, and the slow liberalisation of divorce), marriage remained both a staple of romantic fiction and the presumed end of a woman's life-journey. As such it was meant to close down possibilities: 'Readers, she married him, and then she stayed home with the children', so that there is no more story to tell, since narrative apparently demands action, and childcare (mistakenly) is regarded as passive. The assumption that marriage is both a wished-for goal and the end of narrative possibility is often called into question by New Woman writing.

Two stories by George Egerton (pen name of Mary Chavelita Dunne) make this point very effectively. In 'A Cross Line', first published in *Keynotes* (1893), a young married woman who appears to be fond enough of her husband nonetheless toys with the possibilities offered by adultery. In the end she decides against it. In the midst of this story, the unnamed woman also indulges in an astonishing (for the mid 1890s) sexual fantasy, in which she

performs, Salome-like, an erotic dance for an audience of thousands of besotted men. The story makes the point that there is a world of possible adventure, including sexual adventure, after the wedding ceremony. In its time, it was regarded as a scandalous. In ‘A Cross Line’, the reader has to infer the situation that is being described. In ‘Wedlock’, which appeared in Egerton’s second volume, *Discords* (1894) we hear much of the plot from the conversation of two cockney builders working in a working-class London neighbourhood. As they work, they observe the lives around them and comment on the domestic goings-on of a local family, which is heading for disaster because of the mother’s habitual drunkenness. The reasons for her alcoholism are not easily explained. They may be the result of poor heredity, one of the builders speculates, drawing on the eugenicist ideas of the times, or they may be the logical outcome of her married life to a brutal man who beats her and who has broken his promises to her. She is his second wife, married by her husband primarily in order to provide a mother to his first wife’s children. He promised to let her keep her own child, but had insisted in the end that the child be sent away. In other words, there are biological, social and psychological reasons for her escape into drink. In the midst of the story we meet a second woman, scarcely introduced (unnamed, not socially located), who lodges in the unhappy house. The second woman is a writer who tries – though not very hard – to help the unhappy wife. Because her own life is difficult, however, she has not much sympathy to spare:

She is writing for money, writing because she must, because it is the tool given to her wherewith to carve her way; she is nervous, overwrought, every one of her fingers seems as if it had a burning nerve knot in its tip... she is writing feverishly now, for she has been undergoing the agony of a barren period for some weeks, her brain has seemed arid as a sand plain ... she has felt in her despair as if she were hollowed out, honeycombed by her emotions, and she has cried over her sterility.²⁴

The style here is typical of Egerton. The use of the present tense, which is common in her work, implies that the narrative she is telling is ongoing. There is no distancing of these events into the past. They are happening even now, the tense suggests. This experimental and elliptical style is more effective in short bursts than in longer fictions; and it has a political force. At the same time, it is also a poetic medium. The story makes use, as in the extract above, of metaphors which direct the reader's mind towards questions of maternity. The blocked writer risks images herself as a 'barren', unable to bring forth her figurative children, which are just as important to her as real children are to biological mothers.

That belief in the importance of her work is partially undermined by the story's shocking conclusion. The wise builder believes that a tragedy is about to happen in the house he has been observing, and he tries to prevent it by keeping a closer watch even when his work is done. However, he is sent on an errand to fetch a doctor for another sick child in the neighbourhood and misses the key moment. The unhappy wife's stepchildren are 'keen-eyed London children' who have 'precocious knowledge of the darker side of life'²⁵ but they do not see what is coming to them. Child murder is presented metonymically as 'a dark streak' seen dimly in moonlight, which trickles 'slowly from the pool beside the bedside out under the door, making a second ghastly pool on the top of the stairs – a thick, sorghum red, blackening as it thickens.'²⁶ Where in Thomas Hardy's novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1892), published at almost exactly the same time as Egerton's collection, the heroine kills her seducer, Egerton ups the ante: the stepmother kills the children probably in a drunken rage, and we leave the story watching her as she sleeps it off downstairs, dreaming a heavenly but macabre scene where she and her own daughter dance among the open graves of her three stepchildren.

The title of the story tells us that the story is in part about marriage and maternity, but it is also about its alternatives. However, in the current state of play, wedlock is deadlock. The married woman is trapped in a violent situation; the unmarried writer has reached the end of her resources as a writer, and is blocked by her material conditions in a brutal household. Neither alternative is especially attractive, Egerton's story argues. Her concerns with marriage and maternity and the professional woman writer connect her to Gilman's interests, as does the clearly feminist agenda of her fictions. Her choice of the short form, like Gilman's, provides a snapshot diagnosis of social ills, but also like Gilman's tale, Egerton proposes no solution except by implication – something (precisely what is not clear) has to change. And the narrative distortions adopted by both women – the fragmented elliptical telling of the tales, which for Gilman and Egerton is the expression of the discomforts of femininity – points forward to modernist techniques, which resist narrative and closure just as the New Woman short fictions often do.

The New Zealand writer Katherine Mansfield was exclusively a writer of short stories, and one has to assume that this was a very deliberate choice on her part, not the result of accident, or of it being 'all she could manage'. Where the New Woman writers of short fictions had very definite purposes in their representations of injustices to women, Mansfield's stories are less overt in the message, and more focused on the emotions that circumstances provoke; the politics play more quietly than the feelings. Nonetheless, there is a clear line of inheritance between her works and those of the earlier generation, and the generic choice of the short story is part of that inheritance. Her stories are concerned on the whole with innocent femininity betrayed. Although these betrayals are sometimes apparently purely personal, in most cases the failings of the individual are exacerbated by the social training Mansfield's

female protagonists have received; her women or girls are also betrayed by the lessons they have been taught in acceptable codes of femininity, and by the lessons men have learned in masculinity. The short-story form enables her to make her point about her characters without stridency or overt preaching.

Mansfield is strongly associated with literary modernism, a mode and period of writing which had many, often contradictory concerns. It is in part a reaction against the conventions of realism which were regarded as unsatisfactory because the clarity of realist motivations and representations were viewed as incongruent with life as it is experienced. It charted a shift from social concerns to more psychological ones, and in Mansfield's case, it saw the expression of fragmented consciousness, in which no single point of view can see the whole picture. Her fiction presents its readers, through inference and implication rather than through direct diegesis, with far more than the characters can ever know about themselves or their own milieu. For Dominic Head, Mansfield's key innovation is in the presentation of characters through a complex mix of direct presentation (what they do and say) and their psychological responses to their world, which often shows them to be mistaken or misled in their views.²⁷ In a similar vein, Adrian Hunter notes Mansfield's 'omissions' which he identifies as 'characteristic of the modernist short story.'²⁸ She uses modernist technique to inscribe a view of life which insists that all interpretation is partial and distorted and all meaning is therefore unsettled. Readers have to fill in the gaps, and the interpretations that they come up with are also partial and distorted, because we can never quite know enough to say definitively what the story has told us. At the end of 'The Garden Party', for example, Laura, who has lived a great deal in the course of a single day, who has understood for the first time that her mother's life is snobbish and narrow, and who has confronted death as well, 'stammers' to her brother: "'Isn't life ... isn't life --'" But what life was she couldn't explain.'²⁹ Laura tries to grasp the significance of her experiences, but has no words to

express them because she lacks the vocabulary for describing the emotional impact of the day's events.

Many of Mansfield's stories are about family relationships and romantic attraction (most usually failed in some way) and are characterised by oblique critiques of social norms and conventions. In most cases, though, the critique is less important than the emotions provoked by the social situation. If this technique is derived from New Woman fiction, the emotions conveyed are something new. In one of her most sustained stories, 'Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1922, first published in *The Garden Party and Other Stories*), the question of marriage is approached via that most Victorian of questions: what is a woman to do if she cannot marry? In the immediate aftermath of her father's death, the elder sister, Josephine, experiences an emotion that she cannot name, and which she displaces onto some tiny sparrows on the window ledge:

Some little sparrows, young sparrows they sounded, chirped on the window-ledge. *Yeep – eyeep – yeep*. But Josephine felt that they were not sparrows, not on the window-ledge. It was inside her, that queer little crying noise ... Ah, what was it crying so weak and forlorn?

If mother had lived, might they have married? But there had been nobody for them to marry. There had been father's Anglo-Indian friends, before he quarrelled with them. But after that she and Constantia never met a single man, except clergymen.³⁰

Josephine, in Victorian terms, is a 'relative creature', defined by her relationships with men (her father, her nephew), which is the clear message that the title of the story gives us; and because she is a Victorian, she cannot name the emotion that she feels, the yearning for love

and sex, named by her, because of her need to remain respectable, as the desire for matrimony and motherhood. She vaguely knows, but does not articulate, her loss, which is shown to us only by the juxtaposition of new life stirring on the window ledge, while she remains trapped inside tyrannical domesticity, even after her father's death. His petty tyrannies cannot be named by her as tyrannies, for that would render even more starkly the waste of a life under patriarchal rules: her duty to the father has been damaging, but it would be even more destructive to know consciously that he was not worth her sacrifice. All of these messages are implicit in the spaces of the story. The story does not tell us what to think about it all, but simply expresses the stunted lives that the daughters have led, leaving readers to draw their own conclusions about what should be done about situations such as this.

The daughters of the title – like the father by whom they are defined – are Victorian throwbacks, trapped in ideals about duty which belong to another age, leaving them unloved, unlovable, and wasted. Theirs is, however, a well-heeled, civilised world. They may be worried about butter being wasted, but they are not actually poor. In a much more stark and violent story, 'The Woman at the Store' (1911), set in the New Zealand wild lands that are a rough equivalent to the American wild west, three travellers, a woman and two men, meet a woman who runs a general store in the middle of nowhere. They are not sure why, but the atmosphere of this place is strained with barely repressed violence. While one of the trio takes up a most unromantic liaison with the woman at the store, the other two come to realise, via a picture drawn on a scrap of paper by the woman's little daughter, that she has probably murdered her husband and buried him in the field beyond her domain. Her reasons for the killing are clear:

'Now you listen to me,' shouted the woman, banging her fist on the table. 'It's six years since I was married, and four miscarriages. I says to 'im, I says, what do you

think I'm doin' up 'ere? If you was back on the Coast I'd have you lynched for child murder. Over and over I tells 'im – you've broken my spirit and spoiled my looks, and wot for – that's what I'm driving at. Oh some days – an' months of them – I 'ear those two words knockin' inside me all the time – “Wot for!”³¹

This is a very savage kind of existential crisis. A once pretty girl ('Don't forget there's a woman too ... with blue eyes and yellow hair, who'll promise you something else before she shakes hands with you'³²), buried by her marriage in the back-of-beyond, and alternatively pestered and ignored by her husband, has fallen for a romantic lie about marriage, and when she realises what she has lost in the process, she lashes out. Her child is the witness of the crime: 'The kid had drawn the picture of the woman shooting at a man with a rook rifle and then digging a hole to bury him in'.³³ The story does not resolve. One of the men and the woman resume their journey. The other man stays with the woman at the store, who knows – apparently – one hundred and twenty-five ways to kiss, which means he is willing to take the risk of a second violent attack. This irresolution, like that of Egerton's story, is an indictment of a world in which such things repeatedly happen, keep happening, always happen.

The further away that the tight bounds of marriage in the nineteenth century are in the twentieth, the more it is possible to treat the theme as matter for satire and even occasionally macabre humour. In Doris Lessing's 'To Room Nineteen' (1963), which narrates the doomed marriage of Matthew and Susan Rawlings the tone is far less anguished, even though this will turn out to be tragic story. At its outset, Lessing's narrator announces: 'This is a story, I suppose, about a failure in intelligence: the Rawlings' marriage was grounded in intelligence.'³⁴ The couple have married on rational grounds. They both have lucrative careers, and congratulate themselves for having waited till their late twenties to marry,

avoiding the opposing fates of early marriage which leads to regret or later ‘desperate or romantic marriages’ which are prompted by the fear of being alone. The Rawlings congratulate themselves for being so wise and so modern. They are wrong to be so complacent, and they are not at all modern really, but deeply conventional, with even Matthew’s infidelities treading a well-worn path of infatuation followed by trumped-up remorse. Matthew, it would seem, feels reasonably content with his lot, since he has opportunities to seek alternative relationships via his work. But after their children are born, Susan is much less contented, an exemplary victim of the discontent that Betty Friedan defined in *The Feminine Mystique*, as being the condition of large numbers of intelligent middle-class women in the 1950s and 1960s.³⁵

Lessing’s story typifies a different kind of discontent with marriage. This is not about brutality, waste or lost opportunity, so much as about the possibility that the opportunity taken is the wrong opportunity altogether. Conventional thinking stifles the Rawlings, but its effects on the wife are more extreme than for the husband. While he pursues affairs, she pursues solitude, eventually finding a hotel room in which to sit and be alone, asserting her autonomy through the silence of this slightly sordid space. But if Matthew’s (mis)behaviour is conventional, and therefore permitted, Susan’s demand for apartness is not. At the story’s climax, she is suspected of having an affair by her husband. Because the couple are so ‘modern’ and so ‘intelligent’, Matthew suggests that he should meet her lover at a civilised dinner for four with his new mistress. There is no lover and so rather than be found out in the eccentricity of seeking solitude, Susan gasses herself in Room Nineteen of the hotel in which she has sought refuge from domesticity.

Lessing’s treatment of the Rawlings’ marriage is ironic, and her purpose is satirical. Marriage is a convention, not a *grande passion*; a mode of middle-class living, not an individual choice. Her form of address, ostensibly third-person and dispassionate, skewers the

people whose lives she narrates by speaking their words and their attitudes for them, as though their attitudes are accepted wisdom so that the irony of the story's denouement is even more pointed. The events of this narrative belie the certitudes and platitudes of the Rawlings' manner of living and thinking, and the story is horrific because they know so little about their own motivations and instincts.

In comparison, another mid-century writer about the mores of marriage, Daphne Du Maurier, focuses on the macabre and the horrific. For her, middle-class marriage is gothic because it enforces intimacy between often incompatible people. In the apparently safe space of domestic intimacy, horror lurks. In 'The Apple Tree', told – as often the case with Du Maurier, in a pleasing confusing of genders – from the husband's point of view, she narrates the story of a widower who is haunted by his dead wife in the unlikely dryad form of misshapen apple tree. He sees the shape of her abject, dejected body in the boughs and trunk of the tree: 'How often had he seen Midge [his wife] stand like this, dejected.'³⁶ In one miraculous season, the tree puts forth an astonishing harvest of fruit, which the widower rejects as inedible, but which other people happily eat and enjoy. The remarkable fruiting of the tree seems as if it is a post-mortem offering from a loving but despised wife, but viewed through her husband's jaundiced eyes, it is a repulsive offering: 'The tree was tortured by fruit,' we are told; it was 'groaning under the weight of it.'³⁷ He rejects the apples, displaced symbol of his wife's rejected potential fertility and he rejects the tree which he has cut down, just as he had rejected his wife's life of service to him when she was alive. In revenge, the tree kills him – he catches his foot in its dismembered branches when returning home one evening and dies in his garden of hypothermia in its suffocating embrace, married even beyond the point of till death us do part. This is also a bloody silly way to die (the quotation is from Du Maurier's masterly weird tale, 'Don't look now!'), but – both Lessing and Du Maurier seem to imply, marriages like these are also a bloody silly way to live.

In the final chapter of their magisterial study of the woman writer's place in the twentieth century, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar revisit the fairy story with which, fifteen years earlier, they had begun their first historical consideration of the female tradition, the story of Little Snow White. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, they had read this story, retold by the Brothers Grimm, as exemplifying a particular narrative structure in which woman is pitted against woman in the vain attempt to meet lasting male approval.³⁸ In the story of Snow White, the wicked queen wishes to assert the only power that she has – that of her sexual attractiveness. When that power is threatened by the adolescent sexuality of her step-daughter, she takes drastic steps to take the girl out of the picture by commissioning her murder. Her punishment for her unnatural step-maternity is to discover that her power will wane anyway because she is ageing (in her culture a woman's value is entirely bound up with her sexual attractiveness), and that her step-daughter will always survive to usurp her. She finally dances herself to death at Snow White's wedding in red-hot iron shoes. They end this discussion with the question of what the future will hold for Snow White. 'When her Prince becomes a King and she becomes a Queen, what will her life be like?'³⁹ Is she doomed to relive the story of her mother (dying in childbirth) or her stepmother (ravaged by jealousy and the impotence of middle age)?

When they revisit this story, Gilbert and Gubar imagine a range of possible alternative endings to this traditional story, including a radical lesbian utopia for the Queen and her step-daughter, a sexless companionate marriage for Snow White to her handsome prince, and a post-structuralist fantasy in which all the characters are happy to admit that they are merely signs and masks, not people at all. In all of this playful re-creation of a well-known and well-worn fiction their purpose is to raise an important set of questions about where both feminist

criticism and feminist writing might go next: ‘how is a woman to achieve personhood in the pleasure palaces of art and the artful palaces of pleasure?’⁴⁰ In their choice of a fairy story like ‘Snow White’ as the pre-text for their discussion – in both the beginning and the end of two very important works of feminist criticism – they signal the persistence of the fairy-story’s power over women as both readers and writers, and their potential complicity with the narrative it offers of rescue from danger and an ending in a marriage that will last happily ever after. The fairy story genre is closely associated with compliant femininity, both in the role models it offers to the girls who read it, and in the maternal situation of its transmission, told as it traditionally is, by *Mother Goose*. For Gilbert and Gubar, this kind of narrative is ripe for retelling in new forms, with new endings and a wider outlook for its heroines. In their critical discussion of Snow White’s story, they were already aware that women writers were messing with this narrative form, and borrowing its traditional authority to tell some very different stories.

In the title short story of Margaret Atwood’s *Bluebeard’s Egg* (1988), a vaguely dissatisfied wife, Sally, married (the irony is very pointed) to a heart specialist, attends evening classes in creative writing. In one class the tutor requires the students to respond to the oral tradition of the folk-tale, and narrates a version of the classic tale of male brutality in marriage – ‘Bluebeard’. The student assignment for that week is to rewrite the story in a modern setting, with contemporary concerns at its heart. The version of ‘Bluebeard’ with which they have been presented, however, is a reconstructed version of an oral tale, not the literary fairy story versions that were remade for eighteenth and nineteenth-century children. This story is ‘much earlier than Perrault’s sentimental rewriting of it. In Perrault ... the girl has to be rescued by her brothers; but in the earlier version, things were quite otherwise.’⁴¹ Following the rule of three, two sisters are taken in turn by Bluebeard, and when they are discovered to have been disobedient by the blood that has appeared on the egg he had

required them to guard, they are dismembered and their body parts stored in his secret room. The third sister, using her intelligence, puts the egg away safely before she explores, discovers the secret room, re-members her sisters, and they all escape. This is a tiny part of the story 'Bluebeard's Egg', which, as the narrative unfolds shows us what a modern version of that particular story might consist of. Sally, the wife, is a third wife. Earlier wives have not been murdered but divorced, and Sally, to her intense irritation and self-interested curiosity has no idea about what causes the marital breakdowns, or how she might in turn avoid the same fate. She plays hard at managing domesticity, cooking cordon bleu food and bringing up her husband's children, fearing always that the dissatisfaction she feels with her marriage is her fault, not her husband's. At the story's climax, she realises that it is possible that her husband is a philanderer: the scene is reminiscent of that in Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss', where a wife suddenly recognises her husband's infidelity, doubly painful because the object of his new affection is her best friend. All the while this happening, she is pondering how she will write her version of 'Bluebeard's Egg', transposed to modern Toronto and narrated from a single point of view: 'They couldn't use the Universal Narrator ... they had to choose a point of view. It could be the point of view of anyone ... in the story, but they were limited to one only.'⁴² The story in front of us is possibly the story that Sally will eventually write, told from her own point of view, partially aware of both the distortions and the limitations of her standpoint. The universal narrator, often associated with the oral forms of ballad and fairy tale, assumes an omniscience that is the performance of social authority. If you tell the tale from a different, single point of view, and focalise through the eyes of the victim/heroine, the meaning of the story is changed. And if you transpose it to present times, the dubious assumptions of a patriarchal culture are laid bare for diagnosis and possible later reparation. Sally never quite gets to that more emancipatory conclusion. Her endpoint is the terror that

her marriage might end, but Atwood has given her readers enough to go on to imagine better endings.

In another example, Jane Gardam's 'The Pangs of Love' (1983), a stropky teenage mermaid, sick of the story of her older sister whose unrequited passion for a human prince had been immortalised in a story by Hans Christian Andersen, decides to find out for herself, on a purely rational basis, whether romantic love is all it is cracked up to be in the stories and the poems and the models of feminine behaviour that are taught by her mother and sisters. She finds the prince who had deserted her sister for a human bride, and, although he is good looking and 'not at all bad in the bath',⁴³ she concludes that love, if it means romantic self-sacrifice and feminine passivity in the face of desire, is simply not worth getting into a lather about. She has better things to do with her time: 'I've proved what I suspected. I'm free now – free of the terrible pangs of love which put women in bondage, and I shall dedicate my life to freeing and instructing other women and saving them from humiliation.'⁴⁴ Retelling the story with a different end, Gardam's narrative implies, has the potential to change the conditions for women in the real world. Generic conventions can be a trap which alternative narratives can spring.

If marriage is sometimes – often – the source of women's suffering in short fiction, there is one genre above all for which it is meant to be the desired endpoint: the fairy tale. This is a genre that is strongly associated with femininity and closely aligned to the relationships between mothers and children. In the words of Marina Warner:

Children ... who play around the women gossiping are learning the rules of the group; fairy-tales train them in attitudes and aspirations. This can be a conservative influence: the old can oppress the young with their prohibitions and prejudices as well as enlighten them. But the tale-bearing will in either case pass on vital information

about the values and beliefs of the community in which they are growing up ...

Stories ... chart the terrain.⁴⁵

But the form in which we mostly encounter fairy tales is actually a literary rather than an oral tradition, and, although the fashion for writing down oral tales, from the seventeenth century onwards, was begun by women (Madame de Sévigny is the key name), the authors whose stories chart the current terrain were largely men – Perrault and Anderson, name-checked in Atwood and Gardam’s stories, and the Brothers Grimm – and were writing in and for very specific contexts. The effect of this on the classic fairy tale is that it fixes a fluid oral tradition to reflect those historical moment’s concerns, a fixity that the oral tradition does not share. As Walter J. Ong has pointed out, oral stories are adaptable to new circumstances because they are focused on the present needs of subsistence economies.⁴⁶ The stories change as the context does. In subsistence economies, the economic advantages of marriage probably outweighed the potential emotional disadvantages – better to marry than to starve; the ubiquitous perfidy of stepmothers from the tales possibly had its basis in fact: it is a credible outcome of early parental and the subsequent remarriage of the surviving partner. Those considerations no longer hold quite true in the west, but the persistence of the tropes of the fairy-tale fictions in contemporary culture presents readers with conservative versions of femininity (girls need to be rescued by good-looking men, girls are passive in the face of danger, a girl’s value is her beauty, a girl’s aspiration is for advantageous marriage), that are ripe for rewriting.

There are many examples of feminist rewritings of the fairy tale to better reflect contemporary concerns, the most sustained of which is Angela Carter’s collection, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). In the narratives that make up this slim volume, Carter toys with generic incongruity, returning to the genre some of the earthy vulgarity that was edited from

the record in the tidying up exercises of some of the early written versions. She puts the pussy back into 'Puss-in-Boots' in her version, for instance, in a ribald mixture of Chaucer and Rabelais in which lust rather than romance is the motivating force for couples to come together. She brings to the surface the perversity of Bluebeard ('The Bloody Chamber'), and, as with Atwood's version, the girl is not rescued by a man, but this time by her pistol-packing mama. Carter's concern is with mutually satisfying sexual relations, based on mutual desires and the equality of desiring subjects, including their social equality. Those who seek to dominate are monstrous and sometimes punished, sometimes victorious. There are no lessons about the propriety of female passivity; but nor are virtue and vice necessarily rewarded and punished in the time-honoured fashion. The lessons are more nuanced because they take into account what Merja Makinen describes as 'active, sensual, desiring and unruly' female sexuality,⁴⁷ which sometimes means, as in the 'The Bloody Chamber', that the victim of masculine sadism is complicit to some degree in her own victimisation, even almost desires it. In that story, the unnamed protagonist and narrator, for instance, is 'aghast to feel [herself] stirring' with desire when she sees her naked body through the eyes of her monstrous husband:

And I began to shudder, like a racehorse before a race, yet also with a kind of fear, for I felt both a strange, impersonal arousal at the thought of love and at the same time a repugnance I could not stifle for his white, heavy flesh that had too much in common with the ... arum lilies that filled my bedroom ... those undertakers' lilies, with the heavy pollen that powders your fingers ... The lilies that I always associate with him; that are white. And stain you.⁴⁸

This example shows some of the ways in which this narrative disrupts genre. In the first instance it is written in the first person, where the traditional tale has the authority of impersonal extra-diegetic and omniscient narration. Several other stories share this feature, giving voice to the girl, who tells us how it actually feels to be the heroine of the fairy story – and it's not nearly as comfortable as the tradition would have us believe. The association of monstrous masculinity with the lily, more usually the symbol of pure femininity, is also important. That traditional metaphor is cast adrift from its referential mooring if it is transferred to a man, and if a fuller set of the signifier's meanings are brought to the surface. Rather than pure, this lily is fleshy, it is very highly scented with a sensual, cloying sweet smell, and it stains the unwary who touch it, a comment which is both literal and metaphorical. Its whiteness is not attractive but repellent, leprous even. Alongside the disgust that she expresses, the narrator also expresses curiosity and a compromised desire to experience the sex act. But this is 'impersonal' – it is not about love for a particular man at all but about desire without predetermined object. The story is also concerned with predatory, flesh-consuming masculinity. Finally, because the Duke is a sadist, the connections between sex and death are always writ large in his expressions of desire: lilies are funeral flowers, not bridal ones in this story. The girl-narrator is his prey – a race horse, even a lamb chop elsewhere in the story, in contrast with his powerful carnivorous desires, which are imaged in recurrent metaphors that associate him with lions or tigers.⁴⁹

The girl's desire takes place in a social context in which the Duke holds all the power. The narrator might have desires, but she is physically, socially and economically in his power unless something happens to disrupt that situation. In the case of 'The Bloody Chamber', that something is the violent incursion of a mother's love. In other stories, the disruption comes from the ingénue's refusal of sexual passivity and dependence in the bedroom or elsewhere, and the realisation of female desire by the male, be he wolf, lion or tiger. Where the

traditional literary retellings of folk tales by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century men had disguised some of their sexually violent potential, Carter's stories lay it bare, and sometimes allow the heroine to take a pleasure in it that has usually been denied to her.

. In the words of Margaret Atwood, writing about Carter's stories, 'to combat traditional myths about the nature of woman, [Carter] constructs other, more subversive ones.'⁵⁰ Part of the force of that subversion is that these new myths are not organised on binary lines of feminine passivity and masculine action. There are, though, quite significant limitations to Carter's vision – no concern with the problems that may attach to different ethnicities, no exploration of sexualities beyond the straight, for instance. Nonetheless, playing with the rules of genre and gender opens up intriguing possibilities for both.

In the Introduction to an anthology entitled *Love, Loss and the Lives of Women*, Victoria Hislop makes two important comments, one of which is uncontentious, and the other of which is probably wrong. The first is about the things that a short story can do which a novel cannot. Hislop is very astute about the fact that experiment – with plot, with character, with point of view – is one of the key points of the short-story form, and she gives the example Nicola Barker's 'Inside Information', a 'shiningly original story' which is told by an unborn child musing about whether or not its mother will be any good at the job. 'Personally,' Hislop writes, 'I love the slightly quirky in a short story, but I would probably not be so patient if I had to listen to the voice of a foetus over three hundred pages' (np).⁵¹ Experiment may well be the defining feature of the short story as genre, at least in its more 'literary' incarnations. Short fiction, by men and women, gives opportunities to try out new points of view. Later in the same introduction, though, Hislop suggests that 'many of the writers in this volume have the ability to leave their gender behind in their writing'. Well, maybe, but probably not. After all, they have been anthologised in this particular publication *because* they are women – there

may be no textual marker of their femininity, but the paratextual ones of their names and public personae cannot be ignored. Texts do not just appear without the mediation of a writer, or the contexts of publishers and markets, all of which are gendered. It is also still very hard to imagine an anthology with the title *Love, Loss and the Lives of Men*, which rather implies that gender continues to be genred, since these are ‘women’s topics, but also that gender continues to be primarily women’s work. Genres for people and genders for fiction are still very tangled up as textual formations. Understanding and paying attention to the implications of these knotty problems is one of the key ways in which attention to gender in relation to genre can offer useful insights into both the world and the words that describe it. And there is still much work to do, for men to examine their own genders and their own relationships with other genders more systematically and possibly more sympathetically, and for genders that are not purely binary to make new genres of their own.

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¹ Sigmund Freud, 'Femininity' in *The Essentials of Psychoanalysis* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), pp. 412-32, p. 413.

² John Frow, *Genre*, New Critical Idiom Series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 10

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⁴ Paul March-Russell, *The Short Story: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2009), p. 56.

⁵ To be fair to Oxford University Press, more recent anthologies do show a bit more even-handedness in their gender representation, For example A. S. Byatt's collection of *English Short Stories* from 2009 has 38 stories of which a rather more respectable 10 are by women. It is still not exactly an even playing field, despite Byatt's own gender. Douglas Dunn's *Scottish Short Stories* has 39 stories of which 9 are by women. And Philips Hensher's recent anthology, *The Penguin book of the British Short Story* (2015) contains 19 female-authored stories out of a total of 54.

⁶ Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story*, Intro. Russell Banks (New York: Melville House, 2004; 2007), pp. 18-19.

⁷ Mary Eagleton, 'Gender and Genre' in Clare Hanson (ed.), *Rereading the Short Story* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 55-68, p. 62.

⁸ Eagleton, 'Gender and Genre', p. 62.

⁹ Eagleton, 'Gender and Genre', p. 66.

¹⁰ Eagleton, 'Gender and Genre', p. 57.

¹¹ Eagleton, 'Gender and Genre', p. 62.

¹² Eagleton, 'Gender and Genre', p. 64.

¹³ Elaine Showalter (ed.) *Scribbling Women: Short Stories by 19th-Century American Women* (London: J.M. Dent, 1997), p. xxxvi.

¹⁴ Rebecca Bowler, 'Potboilers or "Glimpses" of Reality? The Cultural and the Material in the Modernist Short Story' in Emma Young and James Bailey (eds) *British Women Short Story Writers: The New Woman to Now* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2015), pp. 50-65, p. 50.

¹⁵ Eagleton, 'Gender and Genre', p. 59.

¹⁶ Eagleton, 'Gender and Genre', p. 65.

¹⁷ Sabine Coelsh-Foisner, 'Finding a Voice: Women Writing the Short Story (to 1945)' in Cheryl Alexander Malcolm and David Malcolm (eds) *A Companion to the British and Irish Short Story* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2008), pp. 96-113, p. 98.

¹⁸ Emma Young and James Bailey, Introduction to *British Women Short-Story Writers: The New Woman to Now* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2015), p. 10.

¹⁹ Lucia Berlin, 'Point of View' in *A Manual for Cleaning Women* (London: Picador, 2015), pp. 50-55, p. 50.

²⁰ Berlin, p. 55.

²¹ Carol A. Senf, Introduction to Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992, p. viii.

²² Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel* (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 44-5.

²³ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, [1935] 1990).

²⁴ George Egerton, *Keynotes and Discords*, Intro Martha Vicinus (London: Virago, 1982, p. 123).

²⁵ Egerton, p. 124.

²⁶ Egerton, p. 144.

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- ³¹ Katherine Mansfield, 'The Woman at the Store', *The Collected Stories*, Intro Ali Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2007), p. 508.
- ³² Mansfield, 'Woman at the Store', p. 551.
- ³³ Mansfield, 'Woman at the Store', p. 561.
- ³⁴ Doris Lessing, 'To Room Nineteen', in Malcolm Bradbury (ed.) *The Penguin Book of Modern British Short Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 150.
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- ³⁷ Du Maurier, 'Apple Tree', p. 144.
- ³⁸ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 36-42.
- ³⁹ Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, p. 42.
- ⁴⁰ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, Volume 3, *Letter from the Front* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 367.

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- ⁴¹ Margaret Atwood, 'Bluebeard's Egg' in *Bluebeard's Egg* (London: Virago, 1988), p. 154.
- ⁴² Atwood, 'Bluebeard', p. 154.
- ⁴³ Jane Gardam, 'The Pangs of Love' in *The Stories* (London: Abacus, 2014), p. 177.
- ⁴⁴ Gardam, p. 183.
- ⁴⁵ Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde* (London: Vintage. [1994], 2015), Kindle Edition, Kindle loc. 1139.
- ⁴⁶ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge: 1982), pp. 48-9.
- ⁴⁷ Merja Makinen, 'Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality', *Feminist Review*, 42, 1992, pp. 2-15, p. 9.
- ⁴⁸ Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (London: Vintage [1979] 2006), p. 11.
- ⁴⁹ The Duke has a 'leonine head' (p. 2); 'soles of velvet' and a 'dark mane' (p. 3); he sees his new wife as 'horse flesh' (p. 6); he dresses her as the semblance of a zebra in a black and white striped fur coat (p. 8); and she is 'as bare as a lamb chop' (p. 11) on her wedding night.
- ⁵⁰ Margaret Atwood, 'Running with Tigers' in Lorna Sage (ed.) *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter* (London: Virago, 1994), p. 122.
- ⁵¹ Victoria Hislop, Introduction to *The Story: Love, Loss and the Lives of Women: 100 Great Short Stories* (London: Head of Zeus, 2013), np.