



The Short Story Anthology and the Politics of Gender

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

Faculty of Arts and Humanities
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University of Stirling

January 2020

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Word count: 70.218

ABSTRACT

Aleix Tura Vecino: The Short Story Anthology and the Politics of Gender
(Under the supervision of Dr Adrian Hunter)

This thesis studies the cultural function that the short story anthology has fulfilled and continues to fulfil in relation to discourses of gender developed in the last forty or so years. Its central claim is that the unique formal properties of the genre have allowed it not only to respond to or represent changing ideas of gender identity and politics over this period of time, but also, more importantly, to influence and shape these ideas. Through a focus on some of the most culturally relevant women-only short story anthologies published since the 1980s until now, thus, this thesis argues for a reevaluation of the centrality of this literary form in the articulation of questions of gender-formation and of feminist politics. It proposes and demonstrates that the short story anthology is a key genre through which women have been and continue to be variously able to imagine and reflect on who they are both in terms of individual and collective identity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One of the most valuable insights I have gathered from completing this thesis is the inescapable collaborative nature of projects of these dimensions. Many people have been involved in and have made possible this work.

I should like to express my warmest thanks, first, to my supervisor, Dr Adrian Hunter, whose care for and support of the project from the first time we spoke and through the last four years has been instrumental in bringing it to life. I am especially grateful to him for the unwavering confidence that he has shown both in my thesis and in me, as well as for the many readings, thoughtful comments and consistent optimism he has kindly provided at all times. A word of thanks is due, too, to my secondary supervisor, Dr Scott Hames, who has cheerfully and generously given me his time and advice whenever I required it.

Early and reduced versions of Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis have appeared in *Short Fiction in Theory and Practice* and the *Journal of the Short Story in English*, respectively. I want to thank editors Dr Ailsa Cox and Dr Elke D’hoker, as well as the anonymous reviewers, whose insightful comments helped to give final shape to these sections of my project.

In the course of my research, I have benefited immensely from being surrounded by wonderful people who have not only enriched my project but, more importantly, sustained me during the most challenging parts of its completion. It is impossible for me to name them all in the space of this acknowledgements section, and I can only hope that should they read these lines they will feel duly alluded. I should like to explicitly thank, however, Dr Duncan Hotchkiss and Helena Agustí Gómez both of which cared enough to not just listen to my tribulations about the thesis but to occasionally read and offer their comments on my writing. I also would like to express my gratitude to Alexandros, Ruth, and my partner Shonagh all of whom have variously looked after my health and wellbeing at times when it has been difficult for me to do so. Finally, a word of thanks must be spared for friends far away who despite the physical distance between us have made an effort to remain close and accompanied me without fail through these years of research: Georgina, Oriol, Montse, Aida and Alfredo.

My principal debt, however, is to my family, who has demonstrated a poignantly firm belief in my abilities, even as it has cost them money, and for this I owe them

all, more than anyone else, a great deal. Without the unconditional love and support of my parents, who stoically accepted my undertaking this project far away from home and provided help whenever and in whatever form it was needed this thesis would have not been carried through at all. Likewise, I am deeply grateful to my younger brother, Biel, who has always granted me his understanding, help and love, and grown up to be not only a most caring sibling but also a dear friend.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	5
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	7
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	9
Introduction — Stories, Anthologies and Women.....	11
The (short story) anthology in culture.....	13
The (short story) anthology in criticism.....	21
Formal generalities about the anthology and methodology	25
The focus on women-only short story anthologies and thesis outline	33
Chapter 1 — Women in General: “Literary” Women-only Short Story Anthologies and the Modernist Paradigm	39
Case study: Hermione Lee’s <i>The Secret Self</i>	46
Feminine nostalgia and academic prestige.....	60
Chapter 2 — Ec-centric Women: Angela Carter, the Virago Short Story Anthologies and Poststructuralism.....	67
Case study: Angela Carter’s <i>Wayward Girls and Wicked Women</i>	71
The Virago anthologies and “minor” literature.....	82
Chapter 3 — “Writerly Designs”: Segmentivity in Intersectional Women-only Short Story Anthologies	93
Intersectional feminism and the short story anthology	95
Case study: Mary Helen Washington’s <i>Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds</i> and Margaret Reynolds’ <i>The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories</i>	102
The short story anthology and segmentivity	115
Chapter 4 — Emotional Ties: The Women-only Short Story Anthology and the Economies of Affect	121
Case Study: Victoria Hislop’s <i>The Story: Love, Loss and the Lives of Women</i> ...	125
The short story anthology and Postcriticism.....	142

Conclusions — Imagined Communities of Women, “Dialogic Formalism,” and Futures	147
Imagined communities of women	147
“Dialogic formalism”	151
Futures	153
Works Cited	163

Introduction — Short Stories, Anthologies, and Women

In her book *Women and Men Speaking* Cheris Kramarae records a small anecdote that took place in one of the women's group seminars she organized to collect qualitative data for her study. She writes:

One woman talked about a common occurrence in her life . . . She and her husband, both working full-time outside the home, usually arrive home at about the same time. She would like him to share the dinner-making responsibilities but the job always falls upon her. Occasionally he says, 'I would be glad to make dinner. But you do it so much better than I.' She was pleased to receive this compliment but as she found herself in the kitchen each time she realized that he was using a verbal strategy for which she had no word and thus had more difficulty identifying and bringing to his awareness. She told people at the seminar, 'I had to tell you the whole story to explain how he was using flattery to keep me in my female place' (7-8).

For Kramarae, the anecdote is exemplary. She uses it to draw attention to the fact that, in general, women attending her classes "discussed shared experiences for which there are no labels, and lists were drawn up of the things, relationships, and experiences for which there are no labels" (7). In her landmark study *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Toril Moi reproduces this fragment of Kramarae's book. She similarly argues there that the anonymous woman's "desire for a 'label' was based on a wish to fix meaning and use that closure as a means of aggression: as an authoritative statement to which there could be no reply" (159).

However, Moi also finds something discomfoting about both the woman's and Kramarae's protest: "There is obviously everything right and nothing wrong in hitting back at the oppressor," she contends, "though one might question how far one should use his own weapons. Definitions can certainly be constructive. But —and this is the point overlooked by such arguments— they can also be constraining" (159). Moi's remark is followed by a discussion of French feminism's rejection of labels and names as "betraying a phallogocentric drive to stabilize, organize and rationalize our conceptual universe" (159). At the same time, though, she is also implicitly making a case for the importance and value of the narrative opposite of labels and names —stories— for women. Her remark suggests a recognition that stories, however "imperfect" as social tools or weapons, hold a central position in the

communication of women's experience. Not only this, but that a certain special relationship exists between the reality of being a woman and story. It conveys, by extension, that stories might in fact be seen to play a key role in the configuration of their identity both as individuals and as a social group.

In its broadest sense, my thesis is interested precisely in studying the connection between stories and identity. It focuses on gender and, in particular, for reasons that this introduction outlines later on, on women's identity, asking in what ways have stories—their creation, their reception, but especially their collection and juxtaposition—contributed to changing ideas of female identity at the turn of the 21st century. In order to address this task, my objects of study here are short story anthologies. The short story anthology is a critically overlooked literary genre which has been, however, instrumental in codifying the interplay of the story form and identity over the last forty or so years. Since the 1980s, short story anthologies which organise their contents around identity labels have proliferated in the British and American literary markets. Yet, a conceptualisation of the cultural work these publications have carried, and continue to carry, in relation to the questions of identity-formation remains to be developed. The largest hypothesis of my thesis is that women-only short story anthologies are key participants in the development and shaping of ideas of gender identity. I argue that the special form of these texts—their composite and combinatory structure—affords them unique capacities to contribute and shape discussions of gender-formation present in academic practice, and in culture more generally, since the 1980s.

As I go on to show, my research operates within and contributes to a number of fields of study: Short Fiction and English Studies, as well Gender and Identity Studies, and Publishing Studies and Book History. However, although fundamentally interdisciplinary, my thesis is most firmly anchored in the emerging and still significantly under-theorised field of Anthology Studies,¹ whose remit and main

¹ Still a relatively new term to describe a critical field, “Anthology Studies” is first proposed in the 2004 collection of essays edited by Jeffrey R. Di Leo *On Anthologies* (6), a volume emerging from the publication of an issue on the genre in *simplokē* (Vol. 8, No. 1-2). It has since then been endorsed by a number of academics such as Patricia Anne Odber de Baueta, Margarida Vale de Gato and Maria de Lurdes Morgado Sampaio, authors of the multi-volume study *The Anthology in Portugal*,

contributions are outlined in what follows. This is because I consider the way in which this study expands our ways of thinking about anthologies to be the research's most impactful aspect. Situated at the heart of literary culture, criticism has paid remarkably little attention not just to short story anthologies, as I said above, but to anthologies in general. As a result, the vocabulary to reflect upon and talk about the form is noticeably poor. By studying the interrelation of the short story anthology with politics of gender, this thesis constitutes, before all its other contributions, a significant step forward towards the development of a conceptual repository to consider the anthology and the cultural work it carries out.

The (short story) anthology in culture

Anthologies can be seen from multiple and interlinked standpoints to enjoy a prominent position in literary culture. In one of the few monographs dedicated exclusively to the study of the form, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel*, Leah Price distinguishes the anthology from all other genres for its inevitability. She explains that anthologies emerge in culture as a response to the problem of information overload. Their existence is bound up with the practical need of selecting, synthesising, and editing data present through history, especially after the popularisation of print. In this sense, she remarks, "Not even their most devastating critics have been able to explain how a culture without anthologies would function" (5). The form is privileged on account of its indispensability. Simultaneously, the limiting and selective functions in which the genre is essentially invested have traditionally attached it to cultural roles which further enhance its centrality in the literary landscape. Most noticeably, the anthology is characteristically associated with the enterprise of canon-formation. Both Price's study and Barbara Benedict's *Making the Modern Reader*, another key text in the discipline, notice the historical investment of the anthology in the definition and shaping of literary canons and traditions. Benedict argues that the selective processes underlying the working of

published between 2007 and 2013, or Chris Koenig-Woodyard who, in his book chapter in the 2015 *Teaching Transatlanticism*, "Anthologising and Teaching Transatlantic Romanticism" embeds the discipline within the larger field of "university studies" (57).

anthologies are historically connected to literary consensus, fashion and taste (28-9). Since the defeat of perpetual copyright in Britain in 1774, as the anthology has been able to access the whole corpus of English literature, the genre has been associated with and promoted as the recipient of the best available literature in the tradition.² Moreover, Benedict explains that the anthology's capacity to strip a text of its historical and political context, to de-historicise and de-politicise it, in other words, and present it as "'timeless', immortal, or . . . eternally contemporary" (7), has further enabled a habitual intertwining of the genre with the idea of universal literary value, which works to stress the form's standardising character: "Anthologies . . . form a vital link in the transformation of particular poems from the novelties of the day to staple features in the English canon" (17) In this sense, as Price puts it, "literary history [has become] the anthologists' job," (67) and the anthology "the canon's most concrete material manifestation" (5).

The anthology's attachment to the question of the canon and literary worth differentiate the form from other composite literary genres, particularly the miscellany, with which it historically shared many traits.³ At the same time, it also instigated, significantly, the adoption of anthologies by academic institutions. Up to this day, anthologies hold a central status in the literature classroom, with texts such as *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* functioning as manuals for many university courses.⁴ As Jefferey R. Di Leo suggests, "anthologies are a pervasive and dominant part of academic culture" (6). Indeed, more than a major force behind the definition of literary tradition, the anthology is also behind its transmission through the education system. The institutionalisation of the genre, added to the anthology's tendency to steal from, reproduce and build on its predecessors (Benedict 17), importantly works to establish what authors and texts are worth reading. Not only

² For a detailed, yet succinct, account of this process, see Trevor Ross's *The Making of the English Literary Canon* (220-231).

³ For a discussion of the similarities and differences between anthologies and miscellanies see Benedict (3-4).

⁴ The choice of "manual" over "handbook," or "textbook" in this particular context wants to bring attention to the interweaving of the practical use of the anthology in the classroom with its repair-like or maintenance-oriented functions in regard to the literary canon.

this, but such workings also determine the form in which these texts and authors are received by different generations. Through time, the reproduction of certain kinds of texts and their presentation in anthologies institutes specific manifestations of literature as paradigmatic. What criticism often refers to as “anthology-pieces,” have since long been a major influence in establishing literary standards and in shaping the form of literature at large. In *Tradition and the Individual Poem*, Anne Ferry usefully surveys some of the mechanisms through which the anthology has endorsed different kinds of poem as the norm historically. She demonstrates, for instance, how the insistent anthologising of Elizabeth Bishop’s “The Fish” in 20th century anthologies has standardized in recent years a particular brand of “narrative poem . . . which accommodates a familiar, popular story-telling form to a radically new and unconventional kind of poem” (189). Similarly, throughout her book Price shows how different literary genres of the 18th and 19th century, such as the gothic or the epistolary novel, were shaped by anthologies in that their form was partly determined by their wish to have parts included in these texts. She further claims that, actually, up to the 20th century a good piece of literature was synonymous with the “widely anthologized” (70).⁵

We can also look at this from a different angle. Besides seeing the anthology as establishing what kind of texts constitute the rule, we might too think about the anthology as a text which is particularly hospitable to specific kinds of literature. In fact, the anthology is often seen as an instrumental genre ensuring the commercial survival of certain literary forms, such as lyrical poetry. As Ferry, for instance, writes: “These days it is guaranteed . . . that the phrase *anthology of poetry* would be understood as the ordinary way of referring to a certain familiar kind of book where many readers of poetry first and perhaps most of the time meet poems” (1). And Price further suggests: “In Britain today anthologies count among the only volumes of poetry that stand even a chance at mass-market success” (2). This is significant for my aims here because something similar has been noticed regarding the relationship between the anthology and short fiction. Shifting attention to the literary culture on the other side of the Atlantic, Andrew Levy’s *The Culture and Commerce of the*

⁵ Significantly, Price uses a *textbook* to illustrate this point: Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren’s influential *Understanding Fiction* (1943), “which promises to include only ‘stories which are popular and widely anthologized’” (Price 70).

American Short Story argues that the short story is a genre less unified by formal characteristics than by the “markets” in which it thrives: short stories “appear in the same magazines, they appeal to the same readership, they fill the same classrooms, they occupy the same cultural turf” (4). A special symbiosis exists, Levy’s book suggests, between short fiction and the anthology. On the one hand, this is of course provoked by the formal compatibility of the genres: “Size alone has sufficed to ensure anthologies’ displacement of the novel by the theoretically less canonical genre of the short story” (Price 5). But Levy signals towards two different, yet interlinked, phenomena which have in recent years critically enhanced the productivity of the partnership between these two forms, the short story and the anthology.

The first of these phenomena is commercial and pedagogical. The short story anthology has developed, not unlike anthologies more broadly, into a fundamental teaching resource of its own. In particular, Levy signals that the short story anthology has attained a remarkable prominence as the study of literature has become in recent years, more and more “intertwined with the practice” (78). What is being referred to here is the rise of creative writing programmes in US (and British) universities over the last sixty or so years, a subject which is rapidly gaining topicality within both English and Publishing Studies.⁶ The proliferation of these courses has boosted the status of the short story in the literary market. Mark McGurl’s study of American post-war fiction in relation to creative writing, *The Program Era*, remarks that the “short story form . . . is, for a number of overlapping reasons, the privileged genre of the creative writing programmes” (339) These overlapping reasons include, prominently, a special amenability of the short form to teaching regimes: on the one hand “the short story enables the student to study a sequence of aesthetic ‘units’ . . . rather than mere excerpts of larger forms, it enables the writing student to engage in

⁶ Some of the recent key publications on the subject are, for example, D.G. Myers’ *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing since 1880*; Rebecca O’Rourke’s *Creative Writing: Education, Culture and Community*; Michelene Wandor’s *The Author Is Not Dead, Merely Somewhere Else: Creative Writing Reconceived*; Mark McGurl’s *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*; and Ailsa Cox’s “The Institution of Creative Writing,” all of which have been published in the last twenty or so years.

the corrective repetitions we call ‘training’” (McGurl 144); on the other hand, the form “is, or at least it seems, doable in the context of a busy schedule of classes” (McGurl 339). As a consequence of this, short story anthologies—in a way which might be seen to replicate the uses of some general literature anthologies like the *Norton* or the *Broadview Anthology of British Literature* in English degrees—work as handbooks in many of these courses. This has a great impact not only in disseminating short fiction and securing its commercial viability, but in endowing prestige and appeal to the short story and short story anthology genre. As McGurl suggests, using an anecdote involving John Barth, the triangulation between the short form, the anthology and creative writing is a particularly productive one which has pulled these forms to the centre of literary culture: “Candidly explaining his uncharacteristic swerve into short fiction in *Lost in the Funhouse*,” McGurl writes, “Barth would note that he ‘wanted to be in those anthologies’ which he himself, as a teacher, frequently used in the classroom” (191).

A second way in which Levy proposes that the special partnership between the short story and the anthology has been strengthened is in connection to the rise of identity politics. Levy draws attention to the fact that the imbrication between short fiction and the anthology form has been capitalised, beyond its more practical uses, for what we could call its representational or metaphorical power, especially in the context of the United States. Many have thought of the short story anthology, he writes, “as an opportunity to display the ‘diversity of American life’” (43); they have seen “the anthology itself” as a “microcosm, the kindest possible vision of the American melting pot” (43). This idea is echoed and furthered by Kasia Boddy in her book chapter “‘Variety in Unity, Unity in Variety,’” where she makes a case for the formal adequacy of the short story anthology to the representation of cultural pluralism in the US. Short story anthologies propose a textual space, she argues, where firstly

the boundaries of every particular would remain distinct; second, that, nevertheless, each one only had value if it contributed to a larger design; and third, that someone always had to make a choice about which to include or reject, and where to place them. (147)

In a way, both Levy’s and Boddy’s arguments depend here on the fact that in America the short story is the form most closely associated with the idea of a

national literature.⁷ In this configuration, it is easier to see why short story anthologies, rather than anthologies of other kinds of literature, are thought to mirror the shape and character of American society. And yet, in a globalised cultural economy where the US holds an undeniable centrality, this has worked towards a privileging of the short story anthology as textual reflection of increasingly plural and diverse societies in general. As Paul March-Russell has suggested, literary anthologies have served as key texts “recording the impact” of global social diversification brought about by “historical movements such as modern feminism, Gay Liberation and post-colonialism” (58).

In a closely related sense, the putative American ties of the short story (anthology) also worked towards enhancing its importance, from the point of view of its metaphorical capacities, by situating it at the heart of the first cultural debates regarding identity and representation. In general, the intersection of the anthology genre with identity politics constituted a major battlefield for the cultural wars that sparked in the US in the 1980s. As Price puts it, “the canon wars of the 1980s were fought over anthologies’ tables of contents” (2). John Guillory similarly argues that over the same period of time in America the anthologist’s work evolved into its present reputation as conflating the selection of literary “valuable” texts and the attempt of “representing the consensus of some community, either dominant or subordinate” (29). The importance of the short story anthology as an expression of American society grants the genre a key status in these discussions. It characterises it as a preeminent site of conflict in the cultural struggle in the States for appropriate social representation of minorities and dominant groups. This can be seen to have repercussions for the genre’s valuation and use in other similarly organised societies

⁷ Boddy engages with the work of the American philologist, Charles Alphonso Smith, to explain how early in the 20th century scholars in the US already had a clear sense of the short story being their country’s particular literary heritage: “It was not the novelists, [Smith] argued, but short-story writers who had ‘enabled the different sections [of the nation] to know each other’ and thus helped to ‘bridge the chasm made by the Civil War’” (“Variety” 146). Many others have also remarked upon the American appropriation of the short story as a national literature, from Frank O’Connor (41) to, most recently, Timothy Clark (7), whether to endorse or put in doubt the validity of the association.

like that of the UK, where the publication of identity-marked, or -themed, short story anthologies in that same period of time reveals the genre's similar participation and function in the cultural climate of the country.⁸

These two phenomena I have outlined —the imbrication of short story anthologies with creative writing and identity politics— do not, of course, exist and develop independently of one another. On the contrary, the boundary between them is noticeably fluid. This is so in the sense that the emergence of these main disciplines motivating the increasing cultural relevance of short story anthologies is remarkably interlinked historically. As Michelene Wandor argues, “The preconditions for [creative writing’s] arrival in higher education . . . were set by the social and political transformations after the Second World War” (79), particularly as social movements increasingly promoted everybody’s right “to have a ‘voice,’ to write their experiences in imaginative and discursive forms” (83). McGurl has conceptualised further the centrality of the concept of “voice” in creative writing. He traces the process by which technique-centred creative writing programs (based upon the motto “show, don’t tell”) have been progressively replaced by programs which situate the idea of “finding your own voice” at the core of their development. “For Wayne C. Booth,” McGurl writes, the concept of voice “designated the ‘authentic self-expression of identity that is integral to and inevitable in any act of novelistic communication” (232). In different words, a shift of focus is located whereby “identity” is set at the heart of creative writing in the place of craft. The movement is characterised, McGurl finally argues, by the programmes’ wish to incorporate those increasingly visible and affluent minorities who more and more sought to assert their presence in culture by expressing themselves creatively.

A consequence of all this is not merely the rising cultural significance of the short story anthology as a literary form, but the proliferation of the more particular sub-set of texts, identity-themed short story anthologies, in which this thesis is particularly interested. Since the 1980s, a large number of short story anthologies founded upon and organized around specific identity labels start making their appearance in the

⁸ Among many others, in 1979, for example *One Foot on the Mountain: An Anthology of British Feminist Poetry* was first published; the anthology *British Women Writers*, was published in 1989; and in 1991, *Black Writers in Britain* appeared.

catalogues of large and small publishing houses and pervading the literary market. Mary Claire Blais and Richard Teleky's *Oxford Book of French-Canadian Short Stories*, Hermione Lee's *The Secret Self: Short Stories by Women*, Rudolfo A. Anaya's *Cuentos Chicanos: A Short Story Anthology*, John Savage's *The Best Gay Short Stories*, Marion McLeod and Lydia Wevers' *Women's Work: Contemporary Short Stories by New Zealand Women*, Alma Gómez, Cherrie Moraga and Mariana Romo-Carmona's *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*, Moira Burgess and Hamish Whyte's *Streets of Stone: An Anthology of Glasgow Short Stories*, Janet Madden-Simpson's *Woman's Part: An Anthology of Short Fiction by and about Irish Women 1890-1960*, and Jan Bradshaw and Mary Hemming's *Girl Next Door: Lesbian Feminist Stories*, to name a few, were all published between 1983 and 1985. The flourishing production of these kinds of texts responded, no doubt, to a demand instigated by the intertwined cultural climates I just outlined. And yet, their appearance and multiplication need to be embedded too in the broader, more pervasive context of the changes in ideas of identity taking place around the same time.

Identity-themed short story anthologies in general, and gender-themed short story anthologies in particular, convolved significantly with the lively development of, and shift between, theories of identity occurring at the turn of 21st century. Although it is seldom noticed or remarked, the rest of this thesis shows that they existed and thrived as companion texts to structuralist, poststructuralist, intersectional and other debates around questions of identity-formation. In this sense, their preponderance in the literary market can only be partially explained by their instrumentality to creative writing and identity politics. That alone would, indeed, fail to account for some of the most important cultural work carried out by these texts, as these anthologies did not only respond but, I would argue, contributed importantly to the development of theoretical discussions of identity. Producing an account of what are exactly these contributions and the form they take lies at the heart of my research and is important in two different ways. First, it adds meaningfully to story about the cultural relevance of the (short story) anthology this section has outlined, situating it as a particularly significant literary genre of the 20th and 21st centuries. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it substantiates our ways of thinking about what anthologies are and do. The examination of the way in which short story anthologies and theories of identity are interanimated opens up spaces to rethink and complicate the role these texts can

play in culture as well as broaden our scope as to the capacities and possibilities afforded by the form.

The (short story) anthology in criticism

Despite their preponderance in our culture, short story anthologies and anthologies in general have seldom been the focus of critical enquiry. It is only in recent years that the form has started to attract some attention, but the bulk of academic works dedicated, totally or partially, to its study—a large part of which were mentioned in the last section—remains meagre. So much so, actually, that it is customary for works studying the anthology to set out by remarking upon the characteristically slender corpus of available studies that they can build on. Benedict, for example, opens her monograph by pointing out that anthologies “have received virtually no critical attention until recently” (3). Likewise, Price argues at the beginning of her book that “although literary critics spend at least as much time quoting out of context as do literary anthologists, the profession that teaches anthologies has provided few theories of the genre” (2). Di Leo introduces his collection of essays complaining that anthologies “have not yet been given sustained analysis by cultural critics” (6). And in a recent article exploring the role of anthologies in Indian literature, Naleem Srivastava comparably claims that “[t]he study of the anthology as a genre in its own right is a relatively new development in literary studies, and its structural features are only now being more thoroughly analysed, despite its central importance for teaching” (151).

Srivastava’s point here is particularly interesting as it opens up a space to intimate why the anthology form might have failed to awaken critical interest in the past as well as why it might be starting to succeed at it now. Her claim implies the existence of a relationship between the production of criticism about the genre and the development of a productive methodology. It suggests that the failure to see and approach the anthology as a “genre in its own right” might be deemed responsible for the shortage of scholarly work addressing it. Conversely, she points to the capacity to attend to the anthology’s “formal structures” as the cause of the upsurge in critical attention received by the form. She is not alone in sensing this. Her argument, in fact, draws on Price’s more strongly theorised contention that if we are to develop successful and exciting academic work on the anthology, we need to stop seeing it as

a mere “container” for other genres (3). She argues that such a perspective confines the critic to an assessment of what the anthology includes or excludes, blinding them to the more creative work these texts can and do carry out:

a criticism which reduces anthologies to their evaluative function can do little more than catalogue binary oppositions: including or excluding particular texts, over- or under-representing a given category of authors, acknowledging or ignoring new writing . . . Where poets and critics interested in the content of anthologies have tended (with good reason) to attack their resistance to change, those few who examine their form . . . have argued on the contrary for the liberating potential of the combinatory structure that allows anthologies (in Benedict’s words) to ‘pull language out of legal frameworks and decentralize literary culture . . . by their subversive deferral of a central authority.’ (3)

The evaluative critical tendency that Price identifies here is one that is still very present in approaches to the anthology, especially when studied from the perspective of pedagogy and from certain trends in Cultural Studies. In the previous section I referred to Chris Koenig-Woodyard’s recent article “Anthologising and Teaching Transatlantic Literature,” which embodies this critical practice. Valerie Lee’s 2010 short piece “Anthologising and Theorising Black Women Studies” similarly constitutes a celebration of anthologies that have been valuable to her in exploring and teaching the discipline. Yet, because of the closeness to my particular area of interest, I choose to engage with Margaret Ezell’s treatment of the form in her book *Writing Women’s History*. Though valuable in its theorisation of the project of elaborating a literary history for women, Ezell’s book is remarkable too in its ingenuous conceptualisation of anthologies of women writing. Describing them as “[t]he flagships of the drive to establish a working, workable body of literature which represents women’s writings in English throughout history,” she goes on to provide some generalisations about the genre:

An anthology by nature is primarily a popular or a teaching text: It is designed for readers who lack familiarity with the subject matter. It is the introduction, however, to more than themselves. Anthologies as a form help to create and confirm canons: Their selections signal to the reader what the critical community consider to be worthy of study and also the dominant critical framework in which texts are to be read. (40)

This markedly undynamic picture of the genre both oversimplifies the work it performs in our culture and, as Srivastava and Price suggest, short-circuits the possibility of elaborating complex and exciting critical accounts of the form. On the one hand, it is these rather unrefined explorations of the form that critics like William Germano seem to have in mind when they point to the fact that “[t]he term [anthology] is . . . regarded with some disdain [in critical circles], as if the anthology were in itself a middlebrow enterprise, crafted to eliminate the difficult or the provocative” (131). Sarah Lawall has similarly argued that anthologies are “often seen not as the passionate exchange of eager voices that Goethe envisaged but as an academic construction with a manual-like facade [*sic*] of authority that chills inquiry and critical speculation” (47). On the other hand, I would argue that a different tendency, that which addresses the anthology to give an overview or provide a chronology of their publication within a specific time frame or field, has contributed too to making the anthology look like a rather superficial or sterile object of study. Certain brands of Cultural Studies have here too played an important part in the production of these pieces of criticism. Again, to provide an example close to the interests of this thesis, we can take Karen L. Kilcup’s article “Embodied Pedagogies: Femininity, Diversity, and Community in Anthologies of Women’s Writing, 1836-2009,” which subordinates the account of what work different anthologies of women’s writing are performing and how do they do so, to the enterprise of situating them in a time line. It is also significant for the aims of this research that some recent pieces on the anthology in *Short Fiction Studies* have displayed a similar attitude. Specifically, Linda Prescott and Elke D’hoker have recently written articles on the genre for *the Cambridge History of the Short Story in English* and *The Edinburgh Companion to the Short Story in English* respectively that approach it in this generalist manner, probably prompted by the character of the publications in which they appear. These kinds of works, needless to say, are important. They provide necessary charts of the genre and its evolution to history. At the same time, their realisation does little to conceptualise the anthology form and to bring forth its most critically productive qualities.

Not just this, but these sorts of critical pieces —both those engaging with rather unsophisticated accounts of the genre and those opting for surveying the production of anthologies in specific areas or time periods— make it difficult to develop theories of the form that work towards non-valuative or formal and functional conclusions.

Critical works that, like Srivastava's, are set to depart from these trends, can be said to struggle to produce new and different arguments. Indeed, Srivastava's article ends up admitting that it has offered a "brief overview of anthologies of modern South Asian writing" (161) and advances the conclusion that anthologies might be seen to be "as much innovators as conservators of the canon and, in many cases, they offer to their readers writing that makes a decisive intervention in society and culture" (162). Comparably, a 2000 article by Steven Holden on the role of short story anthologies in Australia promises to "uncover some of [the] . . . constitutive practices that occur in Australian short story anthologies" (279); yet, towards the end of the piece his discussion proves to have done little more than showing how existing anthologies "constrain what is possible, what can be described, constituted and consecrated" in later ones (293).

"I prefer to see anthologies," writes Lawall, who until recently was the general editor of *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, "as a theoretically interesting form whose potential for opening up discourse has yet to be sufficiently explored" (11). But the enterprise of, precisely, theorising the anthology in this way has proven and is proving a challenging one. Out of the different disciplines that have attempted the study of the genre, only Book History, if any, seems to have been able to attain successful results in that respect. Indicative of this is the fact that the field is the one that has produced most monographs on the form. Benedict, Ferry and Price's works are almost the only three single-authored book-length arguments with the anthology at its centre existing today. The three texts essay, *mutatis mutandis*, a rewrite of literary history which situates the anthology and its particularities, both as a text and as a material object, as a main actor in the process. Benedict's study explores the extent to which the anthology has determined modern reading practices. Ferry's book constitutes an examination, as I have suggested, of the ways in which the anthologising of poetry has fundamentally affected its modes of production and reception. And Price's work similarly strives to account for the influence that the anthology form has had in shaping the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel. In undertaking these enterprises, these studies advance views of the anthology as a complex artefact whose form plays as much a role in determining the text's meaning and its function in a specific literary culture as their contents do. Even though she has only explored the anthology in the book chapter mentioned previously and in an article entitled "Edward J. O'Brien Prize Stories and the 'National Soul,'" Boddy's

studies of the genre might be appropriately placed alongside these monographs I mention in its approach. Focusing on the short story anthology, she examines the extent to which the genre and its form have both shaped and codified America's national literary tradition. The findings arrived at in these scholarly works—with which I engage more closely in the following section and which, often, are in dialogue (Price's study builds importantly upon the theories of Benedict and Ferry)—constitute the theoretical base upon which my thesis is founded. It is in the line of their more multifaceted and creative view of the genre that my argument explores the interaction between short story anthologies and theoretical discourses or questions of gender-formation. By appropriating some of these findings and using them from a different angle my study also aims to expand the remit of this trend of investigation motivating compelling views of the anthology genre.

Formal generalities about the anthology and methodology

To study the anthology as “a genre in its own right” means to pay and bring attention to the form's combinatory structure as well as to the possibilities which emerge and are exploited by the multiple, polyphonic aesthetics of the genre. Many of these characteristics are encoded in the genre's name. Coming from the Greek *anthologeîn*, “meaning a garland of flowers” (Baldick), and metonymically, a collection, gathering or bouquet, the word “anthology” evokes an image of conflated variety and unity, to borrow Boddy's phrasing, which underlies the character of the form's plural composition. Likewise, the image also suggests some of the basic workings at play in the curation of anthologies which are important to take into account. To start with, the name captures the capacity of the genre to re-contextualise its contents. As I mentioned above, Benedict explains how a key operation that anthologies perform is their removal of pieces of literature from their original environment and rearrangement in the space of the collection. She connects this process of simultaneous de- and re-contextualising to the genre's ability to universalise literary texts and its subsequent incidence in canon-formation enterprises. Yet, another consequence of this undertaking is the fact that, though made up from pre-existing materials, the anthology creates a new and self-contained textual environment. It recycles its materials in a way that disconnects them from their original place and purpose, and attributes to them a new functionality within the new confines of the

collection. It is in this sense that Ferry has remarked that “the anthologist’s role is not to compile but to compose” (46). Studying an anthology, thus, is less about tracing the provenance of the different works it includes than about understanding the way in which these materials are being re-purposed in the new environment and describing the new constellation of meaning they form in combination with the other texts.

Benedict usefully proposes the combination of two theoretical frameworks which might successfully allow for a focus on and description of the anthology as this new textual space I have just described. Firstly, she advances Bakhtin’s notions of “heteroglossia” and “dialogisation” as productive concepts to begin examining the anthology’s multi-vocalic arena. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin describes “heteroglossia” as the “system of ‘languages’” that characterises novelistic creation: “Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters,” he writes, are “those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel” (262-3). He moves on to propose, then, “dialogisation” as a concept to characterise the “links and interrelationships between utterances and languages” that the “novel orchestrates,” and defines the operation as “the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics” of the genre (263). Yet, in her study of early modern anthologies in Britain, Benedict forcibly makes a case for the characterisation of these texts as forerunners of the novel’s dialogic structure: “Foreshadowing the novel, these compendia permit . . . the articulation of opposing cultural traditions and voices within one context” (73). Indeed, I would add that in many senses the anthology still displays a more purely heteroglossic and dialogic realisation to that of the novel to the extent that its incorporation of different and competing languages and the dialogue between them is more visibly established in the articulation of this literary form.

The second theoretical framework Benedict’s study puts forward is the Derridean non-concept⁹ of “*différance*.” Meaning both “to differ” and “to defer” at the same time, Derrida’s neographism works to describe a multiplicity of operations, rooted in linguistics and phenomenology, finally related to the production of textual meaning. In his introduction to Derrida’s thought, Nicholas Royle explains that *différance* might perhaps be best understood as an “open-ended chain of ‘non-synonymous

⁹ As Derrida himself repeatedly postulates in his 1968 essay “*Différance*,” “*différance* is neither a word nor a concept” (3).

substitutions.” (83). In such a chain, or list, the meaning of the whole is forever determined by, and thus subordinated to, the meaning of each of the items that conform them and the relationship they establish between them, and it can change with the addition of any one new item. Simultaneously, none of the items that make up the list can be said to have meaning in and on itself. Their meaning is likewise established by their connection to their context, that is, to the elements surrounding it. In this way, meaning is seen on the one hand to depend on the specific relations (the difference) between the items of this imagined and potentially endless list. On the other, meaning is unfixed, it is endlessly deferred as the openness of the system implies that every addition, any modification, is always susceptible to alter the signification of each of the items or the whole. For Benedict, the often-emphasized textual variety that characterises the anthology “inscribes *différance* in the Derridean sense” (12). It provokes “a dislocation of meaning that traces value in the dynamic comparison, contrast, and differentiation between similar or opposing forms and messages” (12).

One thing both these frameworks have in common is the focus they put on the relational, on the interplay between particles of the same or different order, as the site (which is not a site at all) of meaning. By suggesting that significance lies not in the elements of a text but on the set of relationships these elements —at the sentence, discursive or structural level— establish between them, they short-circuit the possibility of locating centres of authority in any of them. The author, the words actually written, one of the specific discourses in the work, or the reader, are all displaced as foci of meaning of a given textual space. Thus, the two frameworks suggest a sort of subversion. They open up a space to think about the meaning of texts as something perpetually unfixed and susceptible, consequently, to constant change and reversal. It is significant, in this respect, that both “heteroglossia” and “dialogism” on the one hand, and “*différance*” on the other, lie at the heart of Bakhtin’s theory of carnivalesque subversion in the novel and of Derrida’s subversive process of deconstruction, respectively.¹⁰ In appropriating these frameworks for the study of the anthology, however, Benedict is not trying to make a

¹⁰ For a discussion of the connection between “heteroglossia,” “dialogism” and the “carnival” see Sue Vice (50-1); for a theorisation of the relationship between “*différance*” and “deconstruction, see Barry Stocker (172-80).

case for an inherently subversive characterisation of the literary genre. She is aware that more often than not the anthology has worked to establish and reify the cultural status quo, rather than confront it.¹¹ Her aim, instead, is to draw attention to the subversive potential that is codified in the anthology form. The way in which, as Price puts it, the anthology genre might be seen as an essentially ambiguous or ambivalent one: “at once a voice of authority and a challenge to prevailing models of authorship” (3). In doing so, she importantly moves away from a monolithic view of the genre the value and significance of which is to be established and assessed by merely looking at what texts and authors are included or excluded. Her account works to prevent scholars interested in the anthology from becoming little more than experts in tables of contents. Alternatively, she portrays the anthology form as a network of relationships and tensions that need to be attended to and interpreted in order to understand both the meaning of a text and the cultural work it carries out.

This account presents some striking similarities with the work that Susan Stewart has carried out in relation to collections of objects more broadly. In her book *On Longing* she does not just correspondingly describe the collection as being interested in “not the restoration of context of origin but rather the creation of a new context” (151). She also remarks upon the way in which “each element within the collection is representative and works in combination toward the creation of [this] new whole” (153), and argues that, accordingly, to interrogate and describe the relationships that exist between these different components, small and big, is to speak of the collection’s meaning:

To ask which principles of organization are used in articulating the collection is to begin to discern what the collection is about. It is not sufficient to say that the collection is organized according to time, space, or internal qualities of the objects themselves, for each of these parameters is divided in a dialectic of inside and outside, public and private, meaning and exchange value. (154)

¹¹ “Whether these historical anthologies define an English literary tradition that demonstrated Whiggish national improvement or Tory national degeneracy, they uniformly presented the history of English literature as a patriotic and moral commodity, and the cultivated reader of this tradition as the one who can perceive this identity while admiring these differences” (Benedict 166).

I propose that another way to usefully theorise this further for the aims of my thesis is to think about the anthology in general, and the short story anthology in particular, as a form whose realisation is marked by the interplay between two different and opposing forces, one centripetal and one centrifugal. The genre's centripetal force is inherent to the anthology insofar as it constitutes a material unit. Usually arriving to the reader in the form of a single bound book, anthologies present themselves as texts which are multiple yet cohesive and coherent in their totality. Despite their multifarious articulation, they often strive to appear as unified messages, as units of meaning. In this sense, the centripetal force might be understood as the thrust of the genre to integrate the plurality of its contents. It is to be found in all those particles and strategies of the text —not always the same ones— working to contain and amalgamate meaning. Concurrently, each of the elements constituting an anthology —stories, in the present case— might be thought to embody the contrary energy. They represent and enact a centrifugal force in the anthology in the sense that every one of them constitutes a text with their own and independent meaning. Their push to precisely assert and realise this individuality can be seen to work as a resistance to be merged into the larger narrative of the anthology. It is at odds with, and shoves them to break free from, the coherence and cohesiveness imposed by the anthology. In this configuration, the way in which an anthology manages or negotiates the relationship between these forces underlies the message that the work conveys. It is by studying the individual units that constitute an anthology, the connections existing between them and their relationship to the whole, therefore, that we are to account for the meaning and function that an anthology has.

As we shall see, an understanding of the short story anthology in these terms is key to generating an account of how the form has engaged with the politics of identity and conceptualizations of gender, more specifically, over the last forty or so years. Not the less so because the relationship between the short story and identity, both of a social individual and of a group, has often been conceptualised using similar if not the same terms. Speaking about the rise of the short form in America, Robert L. Ramsey already proposes in the introductory essay to his 1921 *Short Stories of America*, for example, that the short story and short story collections might be able to mediate “the centrifugal tendency of sectionalism and the centripetal force of national unity” (6) due to its existence between what he defines as

“Regionalism” and “Americanism” (6). Something different is implied in Frank O’Connor’s landmark study of the short story, where he notoriously attempts to characterise the form in relation to the identity of “submerged population” groups (18). And yet, his account of the ways in which the short story genre attaches itself to “loneliness,” its insistence to “remain by its very nature remote from the community—romantic, individualistic, and intransigent” (21), might be aptly read as putting the stress on the centrifugal thrust of short stories and the way they stand in awkward relationship with the centripetal narratives of society and community. Finally, even recent accounts of identity-formation that see stories as fundamental elements in the configuration of our personalities can be seen to subscribe to a similar model: people tend to “create ‘little stories’ in shifting roles and situations that generate a large repertoire of self-conceptions,” Gary S. Gregg writes in a recent article on the subject. However, at the same time,

people *also* author ‘big stories’ about their life histories and worldviews that give them relatively stable identities they carry from one situation to the next . . . How relational self-conceptions constructed in little stories relate to identities fashioned in big stories emerges as a major research question. (21)

However, I find that such a paradigm is by no means exhaustive of either how the short story anthologies that I look at in this thesis work or of the incidence of stories in the configuration of identity. In fact, as I explain in the next section, I draw importantly on the metaphor of centrifugal and centripetal forces to describe the work anthologies do in the first two chapters of the thesis. In them, these notions prove useful to describe fundamental operations the anthologies carry out in relation to their conceptualisation of ideas of gender. Yet, the following two chapters depart from this frame to generate new conceptual accounts of the work that women-only short story anthologies can and do perform in culture and regarding gender identity. This move responds, first, to a wish to be perceptive and answer to the complexity of my object of study. Short story anthologies are versatile literary objects and their engagement with discourses of gender takes multiple forms and nuances that the imposition of a general theory to describe them risks homogenising or even obliterating. Second, this particular way of proceeding wants to contribute, too, to the sophistication of ways of thinking about the anthology that, as I have described, characterizes the most productive approaches to the literary genre within the new wave enquiry devoted to it.

If we remember, earlier in the introduction I remarked how one of the aspects promoting the cultural centrality of short story anthologies is their ability to stand as textual representations of plural and complex social tissues. In one of her articles on the form, Boddy provides us with a list of terms and concepts that, like the short story anthology, are commonly used analogically to describe the complex unicity of American society. “Quilting,” she writes, was “one of many metaphors for connecting parts used in this period to express . . . [the nation’s] ‘cultural pluralism’ (‘Variety in Unity’ 147). “Another popular metaphor . . . was that of the hyphen” in composite identities such as “Jewish-American” or “Italian-American,” she continues, where “the liminal space of the ‘-’” brings together the specific with the general, the part with the whole (147). Finally, “The ‘symphonic nation’ was [another] of many analogies in circulation” and she remarks that the intellectual “Randolph Bourne spoke of a national ‘tapestry’ woven from ‘many threads and colours’” as an alternative to the widespread image, “of overwhelming Anglo-Saxon flavour,” of the “melting-pot” (147). Boddy situates the short story anthology alongside these images as adding to the constitution of a repository of similes evoking the idea and composition of the American nation. She does not note, however, that this expandable list of images is susceptible, too, to be used and has been used to describe the poetics and function of short story anthologies as a literary genre.

In fact, images of “tapestry,” “patchwork,” or, more significantly, the “quilt” enjoy a certain prominence in the particular area of study I am interested in. On the one hand, the associations of these objects with “text”¹² render them particularly appropriate to elaborate on the ways in which short story anthologies relate to, or are representative of, the social fabric. At the same time, because of their predominantly domestic and, by extension, gendered associations, these metaphors have become particularly pervasive in the terrain of both women’s short story collections and anthologies. This has been developed, most notably, by Elaine Showalter, who at the beginning of her article “Piecing and Writing” announces: “I want to ask whether the strongly marked American women’s tradition of piecing, patchwork, and quilting has consequences for the structures, genres, themes and meanings of American women’s writing” (223). Her paper develops an argument whereby quilting becomes

¹² As Roland Barthes reminds us, “etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric” (60).

associated with the production of short stories by female writers (229). More specifically, she suggests that “[d]uring the same period [that] album quilts . . . were a standard genre of female craft,” women writers started not only to write short stories, but to collect them, in a quilt album-like manner, in collections (230). She evokes the image of the women-only anthology of short stories by engaging with a nineteenth-century anonymous essay which performs the reading of a quilt: “To the ‘uninterested observer,’ the narrator [of the essay] declares, [the quilt] looks like a ‘miscellaneous collection of odds bits and ends,’ but to me ‘it is a precious reliquary of past treasure’” (230). The comparison is not only suggestive, but apt, given special force by the coincidence in historical coordinates of quilting and the development women’s short story writing. And yet, as any other metaphor used to define an object of study, it is also limited. Whilst it appropriately conjures —much like the metaphor that gives name to the genre, “anthology”— many of the form’s characteristics and workings, it too runs the risk of blinding us to other aspects or functions of the genre by creating too close an association between, in I. A. Richards terms, the tenor and the vehicle.

In a recent article on short fiction theory, Timothy Clark argues something comparable in relation to the overreliance on visual metaphors of short story criticism. He suggests that the discipline’s insistence in approaching the formal qualities of the genre in terms of “seeing,” “flashes,” or “epiphanies” might lie behind its apparent difficulty to come up with and produce fresh and exciting approaches to the form: “The visual bias in short story theory is so strong that it raises the question of how much it may be a form of denial” (10-1), where its incapacity to realise the limitations of this procedure is what is negated. In his piece, Clark develops a counter-theory to this main current of short fiction criticism in order to expand the field’s possibilities. Specifically, he postulates “blindness” as a more productive notion than “seeing” to study the short story: “how far would ‘not being able to see’ be a better model for a phenomenology of reading a short story than ‘seeing’ is?” (11). In a similar way, this thesis wants to flag up the critical limitations of, particularly, textile metaphors to approach women-only short story anthologies. Yet, unlike Clark, I do not propose to replace such conceptual analogy by another, more accurate one. I would argue, in fact, that Clark’s effort to propose “blindness” as a “better model for a phenomenology of reading a short story” is counterproductive in two interrelated senses: not only is his proposal a reproduction

of the very epistemological model he is denouncing as limiting and sterilising; his substitution of “blindness” for “seeing” actually reinstates, moreover, the preponderance of visual metaphors (whether related to vision or its lack) in the field, rather than move us away from them.

Rather, I remain suspicious throughout of overarching metaphors as strategies to address the way in which short story anthologies engage with questions of gender-formation. This does not mean, of course, that I reject metaphorical substitution and analogy as ways of conceptualising and generating criticism. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson established in their landmark study *Metaphors We Live By*, “[o]ur ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (3). It means that the aim of this research is not to arrive at an appropriate general metaphor that captures the aesthetics and cultural work of women-only short story anthologies. Instead it draws on different metaphors, such as the one concerning centrifugal and centripetal forces exposed here—but also others relating to segmentations or economy—to explain at different points relevant to the functioning to the literary genre in question.

The focus on women-only short story anthologies and thesis outline

The texts that this thesis concentrates on, as I have mentioned, are anthologies of short stories organised around notions of gender. More specifically it addresses anthologies of short stories that have been exclusively written by women. The decision to approach gender identity as female identity is tied, first, to the nature of the materials that I study. As Ruth Robbins has recently noticed, when it comes to short story anthologies gender categories are women’s categories: “there are no collections,” she remarks, “entitled *The Masculine Short Story* or *Short Fictions by Men*” (294), something that she explains by suggesting that “men have no gendered interests,” meaning “that they are the norm against which femininity is measured” (294). Her point is, to put it differently, that anthologies of short stories by men do not exist because they are not needed, since masculine identity has overwhelmingly dominated (and, in many cases, continues to dominate) non-themed or general anthologies of the genre. (I take up this issue again in the conclusions of my thesis, where I consider further different ways in which this study might have been sliced.)

Besides this, there are several other justifications, I would argue, for the specific focus on women-only short story anthologies, both theoretical and practical.

Regarding the latter, since at least dozens, though probably hundreds, of identity-themed anthologies have appeared in the literary market in the last forty or so years, the category of gender usefully restricts my selection of primary materials. It defines a more or less manageable body of work to look at with an adequate amount of detail from which it is possible, then, to draw generalisations which might apply to a broader corpus of texts. More importantly, in relation to the theoretical justifications for this approach, the angle from which I articulate my research builds on a key discussion at the intersection of Short Fiction and Identity Studies regarding the interrelation between gender and genre. As I remarked at the start of this introduction, stories might be thought to play a particularly important role in women's experience. The consideration of a special kind of imbrication between the (short) story form and women's identity is something which has not only been noticed by both short fiction and feminist criticism, but a subject of enquiry that has gained traction in recent years, especially as Short Fiction Studies has moved away from the pre-eminently formalistic attitudes pervasive in the field during the 1980s and 1990s.¹³ O'Connor's characterisation of the short form as belonging to "submerged populations" both already implied and significantly omitted the genre's connection to the idea of womanhood, as Mary Eagleton remarks in her key essay "Gender and Genre" (62). Succeeded by a slim and sporadic bulk of criticism,¹⁴ it is only in the last decade or so that the debate has been importantly re-kindled by studies of the subject such as Ellen Burton Harrington's 2008 *Scribbling Women and the Short Story Form*, Clare Drewery's 2011 *Modernist Short Fiction by Women*, Emma Young and James Bailey's 2015 collection of essays *British Women Short Story Writers*, and Emma Young's 2018 *Contemporary Feminism and Women's*

¹³ Key studies of this strand of criticism include Clare Hanson's *Short Stories and Short Fictions*; the collection of essays edited by Susan Lohafer's *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*; or Charles E. May's *The New Short Story Theories*.

¹⁴ For instance, Boddy's 1996 book chapter "Women Writers and the Short Story"; Janet Beer's 1997 *Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Studies in Short Fiction*; or Julie Brown's 2000 collection of essays *American Women Short Story Writers*.

Short Stories. This study contributes to this emergent wave of interest. Yet, it does not do so by trying to argue for or against a special link between the short form and women's identity. Rather, it draws attention to and studies how the anthology—only tangentially considered in these studies—has understood, codified and used this relationship.

To do this, my study proceeds to examine closely the form and function of women-only short story anthologies. Each of the four chapters into which the thesis is organised revolves around the close study of one or two of these texts. In this sense, my thesis does not put the stress on the big picture of the development of the genre that it is interested in. Instead, it concentrates on the analysis of the workings of specific anthologies, the possibilities the genre offers, and how these are exploited in relation to different and changing discourses of gender. There are several reasons for taking this approach. First and foremost, it is only through the close engagement with specific texts that a rich understanding of the interanimation of the short story anthology and theories of gender-formation can be attained. As I argued above, the enterprise of situating and commenting on the totality of women-only short story anthologies produced over that period of time inevitably comes at the cost of conceptual complexity in the study. It would mean the elaboration of a work that adds in scope to the existing—however few—critical materials on the genre but would hardly contribute to deepen the study of the field. As I have been suggesting throughout this introduction, the study of short story anthologies and of the anthology more generally needs the opposite sort of job. Namely, one that will contribute to our knowledge of how short story anthologies work and the roles they are able to fulfil in relation to these workings.

Having said this, it is not that my thesis rejects engaging with and accounting for the cultural history in which the anthologies it focuses on are produced. The way in which their study is addressed in relation to questions of gender-formation alone prompts the contextualisation of these texts in a specific history of ideas. Moreover, the selection of case studies has been carefully crafted in order to tackle texts whose cultural centrality and representativeness grants me the chance to explicitly generalise my findings to other women-only short story anthologies that can be seen to work in similar ways and thus outline a map of the genre. On this note, some unpacking of what I mean exactly by cultural centrality and representativeness is due. In her recent article on the form, D'hoker has remarked how a “distinction is

sometimes drawn by critics between ‘commercial’ and ‘literary’ anthologies, the first ‘published for the purpose of entertainment,’ the second composed with aesthetic rather than commercial ambitions” (110). Although she goes on to appropriately complicate this distinction, the comment speaks of a duality in the publication history of these kinds of texts. Namely, the fact that some anthologies constitute prompt and often opportunistic incursions into the market, whilst other projects attempt to become momentous and lasting interventions in the field, whether commercially successful or not. Typically, anthologies of new writing and genre or popular fiction fall within the former of these groups, whilst collections with a historical or pedagogical scope fall within the latter. The anthologies that I have selected for study are all preeminent examples of the second of these groups in the sense that they are all texts either intended to become or that simply have become landmarks and agenda-setting works amongst their kind. They are short story anthologies that occupy a prominent positions in the corpus in terms of, first, having established themselves as models for specific kinds of women-only short story anthologies; second, having attained centrality in criticism of the form; and third, holding a significant position in the marketplace in the sense that, whilst not all of them have necessarily been best-sellers, most have been exceptionally durable commercially. It could be said, thus, borrowing Ferry’s formulation, that this thesis is designed with “an eye to the centre” (7). It is concerned with those works that it sees as constituting the spinal cord of the genre.

This is particularly evident in chapters 1 and 2, where I concentrate on the analysis of Hermione Lee’s multi-volume anthology *The Secret Self* and Angela Carter’s collection *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*, respectively. These two texts are not only the two most significant women-only anthologies to appear in culture according to all the different parameters I have outlined. Significantly, they also are paradigmatic examples of the two main and opposing trends which women-short story anthologies tend to follow in relation to their particular engagement with issues of gender, as my chapters show. To be more specific, these two anthologies differ radically in their response and contribution to questions of essentialism and women’s identity. They formally embody two poles in the representation of an essential female identity and show, in doing so, the flexibility and versatility of the anthology form to approach and interact with different discourses of gender. Not just this, but my chapters also argue that these and the bulk of anthologies modelled in varying

degrees after them are to be considered as a key participants in the development of such lines of thought. In this way, a main aim of these (as well as the other) chapters is the situation of short story anthologies at the core, rather than at the periphery, of the changes in conceptualisations of gender of the last four decades. Consequently, the analysis of these texts will work importantly to give a sense of the broader body of women-only short story anthologies published since the 1980s. It describes the way in which an important number of women-only short story anthologies are realised in connection to the axis established by Lee's and Carter's texts.

Chapters 3 and 4 have a different approach. They move away from the essentialist vs non-essentialist debate which permeates the study of anthologies and gender in the first two chapters to identify and explore other functions that the anthology form is able to fulfil and has fulfilled in relation to women's identity. More specifically, the study of anthologies in these two chapters is oriented towards the question, key in feminist thought, of how to craft political unities without relying on essentializing accounts of identity. The chapters analyse two different ways in which the short story anthology contributes to this issue. Particularly, chapter 3 looks into ethnically and sexually marked women-only short story anthologies and identifies how the subgroup has produced significant anthologies which have exploited the intersectional approach of their texts alongside the formal properties of the genre to intimate theorisations in that direction of women's identity as a social group. It focuses on the combined study of Mary Helen Washington's *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds* and Margaret Reynolds' *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* as the two examples that most significantly use their articulation not simply to represent certain atomised identities, but to feed into the debate of how to build coalitions amongst women understood as a radically heterogeneous identity. Chapter 4, on the other hand, puts the focus on women-only short story anthologies where the centrality of women's identity is displaced by thematic and, more precisely, emotional labels which determine their organisation. It studies Victoria Hislop's monumental *The Story* as the most significant example of these sort of texts. Through focus on Hislop's collection, the chapter argues that these anthologies use the genre's capacity to exploit affective properties of short fiction to produce unified yet non-essentialist accounts of female identity.

By developing these arguments, each of the chapters also adds importantly to current discussions in the broader study of short fiction and of literature more

generally. Each weighs in with debates around the interweaving of short fiction and modernism; expands some of the current discussions around the consideration of the short story genre as “minor” literature; substantiates understanding of how short story sequences and cycles might be read; and participates in the topical and lively discussions around the “postcritical” turn in Literary Studies. It is important to remark, lastly, that my thesis does not evaluate in any way the appropriateness of specific kinds of anthologies to represent and address issues of gender identity. Nor does it in any way think about short story anthologies as a means to suggest the appropriateness of strategies for women’s social and political struggles. The study, as I have remarked, is a theorisation of the form, its cultural work and, by extension, of some of the ways in which women’s identity and stories might be and have been interwoven in culturally significant ways. Having established this, in the conclusive chapter of the thesis is a space where, besides summarizing my findings and considering different ways in which this study might have been approached as well as inevitable gaps in my account, I think about the implications of my examination to broader scholarly and cultural fields. The thesis outlines, thus, considerations on what might be the future for the study of short story anthologies and anthologies more generally as well as for their production, and in what ways attending to the anthology in the way that I do here might impact Cultural and Literary Studies.

Chapter 1 — Women in General: “Literary” Women-only Short Story Anthologies and the Modernist Paradigm

In the 1970s and early 1980s, despite the fact that a good number of women-only short story anthologies had already appeared in the literary market, the existence of these publications remained somewhat marginal in wider culture. The available texts were a rather heterogeneous collection of works constituted, largely, by anthologies published in small presses that were often associated with feminist activist groups. Moreover, their availability did not, in general, last very long, with texts frequently struggling to move into second or third editions. So much so, in fact, that their history, though recent, has become difficult to trace. The few critical pieces attempting to chart this specific textual environment all show substantial variation in the maps that they produce. Karen C. Kilcup’s overview of anthologies of women’s writing from the 19th to the 21st century only lists Mary Helen Washington’s *Black Eyed Susans and Midnight Birds: Stories by and about Black Women* as a women-only short story anthology of the period (327).¹⁵ Clare Hanson identifies Ann Hunter’s 1982 anthology for the UK-based Sheba Feminist Press, *Everyday Matters: New Short Stories by Women*, as an early example of the form (4). Yet, in her recent work on contemporary women short story writers, Emma Young writes: “The first important example of a fictional anthology to emerge out of the Women’s Liberation Movement was *Tales I Tell My Mother: A Collection of Feminist Short Stories*” (16), first published by Boston’s non-profit press South End in 1978. A previous collection to either of these texts exists, however. Pat Rotter’s *Bitches and Sad Ladies: An Anthology of Fiction by and about Women* first appeared in the US in 1975. And to move outside the US-UK axis, the Australian Sybylla Co-operative Press published

¹⁵ Kilcup’s listing is actually inaccurate. Washington’s 1975 anthology, which is the one Kilcup refers to, was in fact titled *Black-Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women*. *Midnight Birds: Stories by Contemporary Black Women Writers* is a second volume of this anthology first published five years later, in 1980s. And the double volume Kilcup refers to, *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds*, consisted in a compilation of the two previous anthologies in a single book published in 1990. Chapter 3, which studies intersectional anthologies, will look more closely at Washington’s latter collection, in which the two previous titles are amalgamated.

Frictions: An Anthology of Fiction by Women, edited by Anna Gibbs and Alison Tilson, in the same year that *Everyday Matters* first appeared in the market.

These and other short story anthologies of the period do not form a unified group. Whilst they share, as I suggest, a certain marginal position in the literary culture of their time they can hardly be thought of as a coherent or cohesive body of works. Their form and the way in which they were conceived varies significantly from one example to the other. Thus, whilst *Bitches and Sad Ladies* compiles stories from relatively established authors from the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, *Everyday Matters* is made up exclusively of stories by new writers. *Frictions*, conversely, combined the contributions selected from a pool of submissions by authors involved in the publishing co-operative. And *Tales I Tell My Mother* interweaves stories with personal and critical reflections especially written by authors Zoe Fairbairn, Sara Maitland, Valerie Milner, Michèle Roberts and Michelene Wandor. At most, there is in these works a more or less constant accentuation of the political value of their contents, even if they do so in noticeably different ways and to varying degrees. Ann Hunter, for example, ascribes worth to her selection by remarking upon the non-conformist properties of the texts: the stories included here “resist the story we were all told from the earliest days —the story which told us how we feel and what we want and who we are” (ix). On the other hand, one contemporaneous reviewer notes that the texts included in *Tales I Tell My Mother* were written to be used “for discussion,” their settings have the goal of promoting “consciousness-raising” and of reflecting “the history of the woman’s movement” (Iorraine 19). And in *Frictions*, Gibbs and Tilson announce that whilst “[n]ot all the writing in this book presents itself overtly as feminist . . . [feminism] was crucial to our *selection* of writing, to our reading of several hundred manuscripts sent to us, and our perception of their relationship to each other” (2).

Despite the heterogeneity of these works, this sparse collection of texts was constituted as a unified and important whole against which, from the second half of the 1970s, a different kind of women-only short story anthologies began to emerge and define itself. Often referred to in criticism or by the anthologists themselves as “literary” or “general” anthologies, these texts are ambitious editorial projects (they tend to comprise more than one volume) carried out in established publishing houses set to survey or historicise women’s contribution to the short story genre. Characteristically, the introductions of these collections amalgamate under the label

“feminist anthologies” the bulk of works I have outlined above, at the same time as they differentiate themselves from it in terms, fundamentally, of their selective criterion. Susan Cahill’s two-volume anthology *Women & Fiction*, for instance, published between 1975 and 1978 by an imprint of the successful New American Library,¹⁶ is one of the earliest examples of this kind of publication. In her introduction to the first of these anthologies, Cahill does not repudiate the feminist value of her work, but she argues against a straightforward association between her collection and feminism: “To label any of the writers ‘feminist’ would be to force that writer into an easy category” (xiii), she writes. And later in her essay she goes on to specify that “[n]o story has been included because it either illustrates or disputes a currently popular theory about Women. Vision and great craft have been the criteria of selection” (xvi), a statement that she quotes in her introduction to the second volume of the anthology (xi-xii). Hermione Lee’s *The Secret Self*, another two-volume anthology which, first appearing in 1985, is closely modelled after Cahill’s, is even more explicit in this respect. In her preface to the first volume of the collection, Lee remarks that “[t]here are now numerous feminist anthologies of short stories” which “appropriate the form as the special property of women writers” (ix) and whose pages are “bristling with manifestoes” rather than short fiction (xvi). In that her work resists both of these articulations, Lee claims, “this is not a feminist selection” (Lee, *Self 1* xvi). Instead, she describes her anthology as one including “one story by the writers who seem to me the very finest artists of the genre” (*Self 2* ix). Or else, as she puts it in the omnibus edition of the collection which appeared in 1995, as a “big, ‘solid’ collection of stories . . . by some of the best women writers of the genre” (xiv).

¹⁶ Thomas L. Bonn has amply proven the success of the New American Library (NAL). As he writes in his introduction to *Heavy Traffic & High Culture: New American Library as Literary Gatekeeper in the Paperback Revolution*:

NAL stood out from other softcover imprints because of the quality and diversity of both its fiction and nonfiction series. Claiming to have become the largest softcover publisher in the world, the company sponsored in the fifties and early sixties what, to many minds, was the best list in the American book industry. (1-2)

The strategy of assimilating under the label of “feminist anthologies” the variety of collections that do not follow the same aims as “literary” anthologies is widespread. Other important works which, published at a later date, continue to adopt it include the series of women-only anthologies that Susan Hill edited for Penguin between 1991 and 1997,¹⁷ and Patricia Craig’s 1994 *Oxford Book of Modern Women’s Stories*, which adds a different line of complaint:

Feminist anthologies, of which a fair number have appeared over the last ten years have tended to be grouped around a single theme, such as mothers and daughters, or something along the lines of Angela Carter’s *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*. This is fine but a bit constricting.

Many of the attacks that these texts directed at so-called “feminist” anthologies, though, are as fabricated as their grouping of these works under a single and supposedly unified category. Indeed, many of the collections were not thematic. Even when their titles pointed to a specific subject matter, this hardly ever worked to establish selective restrictions based on a specific topic, but rather functioned as commercial catchphrases or as attempts to capture the character, more than the theme, of the collection.¹⁸ More importantly, there were as many “feminist” anthologies which proposed a relationship between the short form and women’s identity or experience, as Lee intimates, as those which resisted the association. Hanson, for instance, sees in *Everyday Matters*’ thrust to present its contents to the reader as counterpoints to the dominant patriarchal narrative the privileging of the short story genre in relation to the feminine: “the short story is the preferred form for those women writers who . . . see things differently from men” and display “a sense

¹⁷ *The Penguin Book of Modern Women’s Short Stories* (1991), *Contemporary Women’s Short Stories* (1995) and *The Second Penguin Book of Modern Women’s Short Stories* (1997).

¹⁸ The issue of Carter’s use of a “themed” title in her anthology, which was published in 1986, is in fact a complex one. As this thesis shows, especially in Chapters 2 and 4, “themed” anthologies do not really constitute a coherent or cohesive group of texts and the engagement with different themes works towards the fulfilment of different functions. It is part of the endeavour of this thesis to refine and, to a large extent, complicate, the classification of women-only short story anthologies into stable categories.

of alienation from dominant culture and ideology which may be frightening in its intensity” (5). Conversely, Gibbs and Tilson speak of their wish to allow, in *Frictions*, “for different kinds of writing and different points of view” to precisely avoid establishing an equation between gender and genre.

More than an attempt to accurately characterise “feminist” anthologies, these accounts tend to reveal instead what “literary” women-only short story anthologies strive to present themselves as. Namely, they are given out as texts offering a broad, representative and ideologically unmarked selection of the best short stories by women writers. “Literary excellence,” understood as a transparent, meritocratic and apolitical value, is invariably put forward as the only parameter underlying the curation of the texts. We have already seen Cahill’s and Lee’s anthologies appeal to aesthetic greatness in order to justify their selections. Similarly, in her *Second Penguin Book of Modern Women’s Short Stories*, Hill states: “In compiling this third collection of short stories by women writers my chief criterion, as before, has been literary excellence” (ix). And Craig notes in the introduction to her anthology that the stories she has selected “[a]re all here because they seem to me to be among the very best examples of their kind” (xv); all of them, she continues, “would earn their place in *any* collection of short stories. They all, or nearly all, achieve a classic expression of the subject or the mood, or the emotion they have set out to encompass” (xv). By adopting this approach, these anthologies largely detach themselves from enterprises of social justice; or else, to be more precise, a sublimation of the category of the “literary” takes place here whereby these texts restrict their socio-political remit to the aesthetic sphere. The anthologies’ focus is to compete with and challenge the phallogocentric endorsement of the short story tradition which they see as prevalent at the time of their publication. In other words, the general goals of consciousness-raising and political engagement I identified in some of the anthologies these texts define themselves against are here replaced by and confined to the wish to reshape the literary landscape. In Craig’s words, the aim of these anthologies is to “redress the balance” between the consideration of male and female practitioners of the short form (ix); they are “attempts to bring about an adjustment of emphasis in literary matters” (ix).

In this first chapter I am interested in examining further “literary” women-only short story anthologies. Though hardly the first anthologies of short fiction by women to appear in the market, as I have shown, these texts have established

themselves as central in the corpus of works that makes out the genre, and women's literature more broadly. Their scope in terms of the number of texts they compile — often approaching or going beyond the fifty pieces— as well as of the diversity of the audience they are able to reach, have ensured their preponderance both in the market and in criticism. On the one hand, the majority of these texts have undergone multiple reprints and reeditions, prolonging their editorial life up to the 21st century.¹⁹ On the other, they are also texts which, alongside some of the anthologies published by Virago Press which I tackle in the next chapter, feature prominently in scholars' accounts of or engagement with the form. Paul March-Russell refers to the triad of anthologies by Lee, Hill and Craig as constituting the “mainstream” of the genre (59). Similarly, Emma Young and James Bailey's short survey of the most important women-only short story anthologies is dominated by Lee's and Hill's publications (8), as is Elke D'hoker's in her recent chapter on short story anthologies more generally conceived (114).

In general, critics have tended to see these texts, unproblematically, as cultural artefacts invested in the “revaluing and rediscovery of women's writing as a distinct category” (Liggins, Mauander and Robbins 222). Yet, here I want to scrutinise and, indeed, problematise the assumptions upon which these works are built. Taking the cue from Terry Eagleton's ideas that a “sense of the literary” is always “historically specific” (*Theory* 8), and inseparable from questions of “structure of values,” “power-structures” (*Theory* 8), or “political hegemony” (*Aesthetic* 3), I argue that these anthologies' understanding of “literary excellence” is dominated by an undeclared subscription to modernism's cultural ideology. That is to say, a modernist bias underlies their realisation whereby the woman's story is typified by modernist manifestations of the form. As a result, these anthologies codify gender identity in an essentialist way; they establish an equation between the modernist short story written by women and the most valuable or authentic experience of womanhood. Far from essaying an attack on the anthologies' conceptualisation of female identity, I propose that realising this ideological bias calls for a complication of the cultural function

¹⁹ Hill's *Penguin Book of Modern Women's Short Stories* has undergone fourteen reprints, the last one of which was in 2005; Cahill's *Women & Fiction* last reprint was in 2002; and both volumes of *The Secret Self* saw various reeditions in the 1980s and 1990s up to 1999.

played by these texts. Their realisation, I will suggest, aligns them with and makes them participants in contemporaneous debates around questions of gender-formation. More specifically, it situates them within theoretical discussions where a connection between the feminine identity and essentialism is mediated by its associations with modernist avant-garde forms of writing. At the same time, I propose that the modernist bias of these texts has also been instrumental to establish their critical and cultural centrality, making them key actors in the institutionalisation of the women's short story and women's literature more generally.

To do this, I first use *The Secret Self* as an exemplary case study in order to show how the anthologies are able to institute an overarching modernist narrative. Lee's anthology might be thought to constitute the paradigm of "literary" women-only short story anthologies. Consisting of two volumes and an omnibus edition which adds a few new pieces to previous selections, the text is not just the largest project of its kind but since the publication of its second volume in 1987 it has established itself as a model for these kinds of works, as Patricia Craig suggests when she attempts to justify the need for her own collection: "Good general anthologies, such as Hermione Lee's two volumes *The Secret Self 1* and *2* do exist, but my aim is to indicate in a single volume the extent of women's contribution to the short-story form" (ix). Moreover, Lee's anthology already holds a prominent position in critical discussions of gender and genre. This does not just stress the centrality of the collection but allows me to build on and add meaningfully to existing discussions. Most notably, *The Secret Self* is central to Mary Eagleton's landmark essay "Gender and Genre" in which she already criticises Lee's anthology for her simultaneous rejection of a special connection between female identity and the short story form and a subtle reaffirmation of "specifically female way[s] of writing" in her introduction (66). Eagleton does not flesh out, however, how Lee's reimagining of a relationship between gender identity and short fiction is brought about, or what cultural implications it may have. In what follows I study the intertwined fate of stories by Katherine Mansfield, Elizabeth Bowen and Virginia Woolf in the anthology, paying attention to their arrangement, position and glossing, alongside Lee's claims on women and the short story, to demonstrate how a modernist bias founds the realisation of the collection. After showing how my findings can be generalised, *mutatis mutandis*, to the workings of other similarly conceived "literary" anthologies

mentioned in this section, I move on to, finally, reassess the cultural function of these works in the light of the gender politics they embody.

Case study: Hermione Lee's *The Secret Self*

Katherine Mansfield occupies a privileged position in Lee's anthology. It is a story by the New Zealand author, "The Daughters of the Late Colonel", that is set as the opening piece of the first and the omnibus volume of *The Secret Self*. Moreover, in *The Secret Self 2* Mansfield's "The Man Without Temperament" is set as the second text of the collection, making her one of the very few writers to appear in all the three anthologies.²⁰ Originally published in the *London Mercury* in 1921 and reprinted a few months later in the author's final collection, *The Garden Party*, "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" tells the story of two middle-aged sisters during the week following the demise of their father. Unmarried, still not just living in the family home but also sharing the room where they grew up as children, the narrative follows their efforts and ultimate failure to realise their full-grown, individual identities. Many have noticed that the story is exemplary of Mansfield's engagement with and development of the modernist short story form. Articulated through twelve short, numbered fragments which build the story up by continuously advancing and retreating in time, the form and concerns of the text have been aligned with the two other pieces that are routinely seen as epitomes of the author's art, namely, "Prelude" and "At the Bay."²¹ In her comparative study *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, Angela Smith draws on precisely this trio of stories, "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," "At the Bay" and "Prelude," to define Mansfield's modernism as one characterised by an interest in margins and borders as both "dangerous" sites and "places of revelation" (225). Indeed, the realisation of "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" is founded upon the interlinking of at least two

²⁰ The other ones are Elizabeth Bowen, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor and Alice Munro.

²¹ "The form of the story used for 'At the Bay' is the same as that for 'Prelude' and 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'; Ian Gordon has defined it as the twelve-cell story, 'multi-cellular like living tissue', in that it has an organic shape, rather than that it contains self-enclosed limits" (Smith 175).

liminal spaces to enact the search for the expression of individualised identity that their protagonists pursue: first, the threshold locus between girlhood and womanhood where the sisters are situated; and second, the positioning of the father figure in-between absence and presence, right after his death, in his daughters' perception of things.²² In her recent study of Mansfield and the modernist marketplace, Jenny McDonnell echoes Smith's argument prior to claiming that "Prelude," "At the Bay" and "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" display the kind of "technical innovation on which [the author's] reputation as an important practitioner of the modernist short story continues to rest" (149). Finally, Sydney Janet Kaplan groups these three texts together with "The Garden Party" to suggest that they constitute "the culmination . . . of [Mansfield's] personal aesthetic theory" (167).

I would argue that the topicality of this piece in relation to Mansfield's approach to modernism illuminates the role it plays in the general design of *The Secret Self*. By situating this text as the first story of *The Secret Self 1* and the omnibus edition, the anthology imbues it, and the modernist short form it exemplifies, with a model-like quality. As Barbara Benedict has explained, since the origins of the form, the organisation of anthologies "induces aesthetic comparisons" (74), using positioning to highlight certain pieces or establishing them as prototypes. In particular, she argues in relation to poetry anthologies of the 17th century, that "the most reputable poem" was typically set as the opener of the collections both "establishing the critical credentials of the volume" and setting the piece as paradigmatic (74). The same operation is at play in Lee's collection. This hypothesis is sustained, firstly, by the decision to include "The Man Without Temperament" as the second story of *The Secret Self 2*, and to reprint both texts in the omnibus edition. Though less central to Mansfield's personal canon and, therefore, to the exemplariness of the female modernist short story, "The Man Without Temperament" has been noted to partake in the same aesthetic sensibility as "The Daughters of the Late Colonel." Helen Rystrand has recently pointed out that, like "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," Mansfield's portrait of a couple's life in a French hotel to restore the ill wives' health

²² The first sentence uttered by one of the sisters in the text, Constantia's question to Josephine: "Do you think father would mind if we gave his top-hat to the porter?" (1) already demonstrates both of these *limens*. It shows both the sisters' incapacity to make their own decisions and the ghostly presence of their father in the text.

revolves around an unrealised “moment of emancipation” (137). She goes on to describe “The Man Without Temperament” as a text built around a strikingly similar skeleton to that of “The Daughters of the Late Colonel”: “Jinnie’s illness functions as an unnatural arrhythmic force in hers and especially Robert’s lives,” Rystrand writes, “it has removed them from the everyday world, and they dwell instead in the uncannily liminal space of the foreign hotel” (137). In this way, the inclusion of “The Man Without Temperament” works to reinforce the centrality of Mansfield’s better-known piece and, more importantly, of the modernist qualities it embodies.

Secondly, and more significantly, my point is further supported by the paratextual apparatus of the anthology. In the introduction to *The Secret Self 1*, for instance, Lee refers to “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” alongside Elizabeth Bowen’s “Her Table Spread” as one of the “stories written by women which I most admire” (xii). Likewise, in the omnibus edition, Mansfield’s piece is brought up in conjunction with Woolf’s “Solid Objects” as a paradigmatic example of a story that is able to compress, in a very short space, “the narrative of a whole life-time” (ix-x). In both cases, these statements work to condition the reader’s experience of Mansfield’s text. By calling attention to its superior talents in the eyes of the editor, they attach to the story a mark of merit which grants it a preponderance in the anthology. The strategy is made further effective by the fact that Lee’s anthology takes its title precisely from Mansfield’s personal writing. The phrase “the secret self” is lifted from a letter the New Zealand author wrote to her friend, the painter Dorothy Brett, in the same year, meaningfully, that “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” was first published. In the letter, Mansfield is speaking about the new collection of stories she is writing:

The title is *At the Bay*. That is the name of the very long story in it, a continuation of ‘Prelude’ . . . I have tried to make it as familiar to “you” as it is to me. You know the marigolds? You know those pools in the rocks? You know the mousetrap on the wash house window sill? And, too, one tries to go deep—to speak about the secret self we all have. (278)²³

²³ *At the Bay* was never published under that title, but became *The Garden Party and Other Stories*, and the collection included both “At the Bay” and “Daughters of the Late Colonel.” In fact, a few days before writing to Brett, Mansfield had written a letter to the literary agent J. B. Pinker describing “At the Bay” as “a long story now in the style of *The Daughters of the Late Colonel* [sic]” (273). “The Daughters of the

Besides containing the anthology's title this last, split sentence is also used as the epigraph of the anthology and is printed on both the title page of all the volumes of the collection and on the back cover of *The Secret Self 1* and *2*. In the introductions, Lee justifies these decisions by arguing that, despite believing it useless to "pursue a separatist aesthetic theory of the twentieth-century women's short story," Mansfield's remark made her "perceive a link between the very different stories in the . . . anthology" (*Self 2 ix*). "A consistent quality," she continues, consisting in the setting up of a "conflict" or "clash" between different realities (*The Secret Self: A Century xii*) which produces "the disclosure of a private, alternative imaginative vision in some ways alien to the 'normal' socialised world, but, as Mansfield implies, made recognizable and authentic" (*Self 2 ix*).

Mansfield is thus made to dominate the most immediately visible sites of the text. By utilising her writing to give a title, epigraph, and rationale to the anthology, apart from unusual weight and visibility given to her stories, she is established as *The Secret Self's* central, authoritative voice. Furthermore, the operation also demonstrates that Lee's generalisations on short stories written by women emerge directly from the New Zealand author's reflections on the kind of story that "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" embodies. As Claire Drewery usefully shows, for female modernist short story writers, liminality "is not just a pervasive theme; it expresses the condition of short fiction as a genre and a range of threshold states on which their stories typically focus" (3). She explains, in words that echo Lee's terms, that modernist short fiction by women pivots around "state[s] of signifying change . . . that renders all who experience [them] temporarily outside strictures of social convention and the norms of measured space and time" (1). Subsequently, she goes on to establish a link between these transitional loci and the expression of true and

Late Colonel" indeed engages largely with the same language of "depth," "secret" and "identity" that Mansfield applies to "At the Bay." See, for instance, the last fragment of the story, where, as the sisters gradually take in their father's death and recognise the possibility to express their own personality, Constantia contemplates a statue of Buddha, which stands over the mantelpiece, and reflects: "[He] seemed today to be more than smiling. He knew something; he had a secret. 'I know something that you don't know,' said the Buddha. Oh, what was it, what could it be? And yet she has always felt there was . . . something' (16).

hidden identities: “Incursions into the liminal state,” she writes, “invariably reveal profound conflicts of identity” (12). In this way, we can see that Lee’s engagement with Mansfield works towards the universalisation of the definition of women’s modernist short fiction. However, this is not the only strategy at play towards that end in *The Secret Self*.

Elizabeth Bowen and her stories featured in the collection, “Her Table Spread” and “The Happy Autumn Fields” are also put to work towards the institution of the overarching narrative that equates women’s short stories with modernist manifestations of the genre. First appearing in *The Broadsheet Press*, in 1930, under the title “A Conversation Piece,” “Her Table Spread” is set in an Irish castle overlooking an estuary and tells of the romantic rendezvous between the heiress of the place and her suitor, an Englishman, haunted by the phantasmagorical presence of an English destroyer on the waters by the fortress. As I remarked above, Lee’s prefatory essay to *The Secret Self I* considers “Her Table Spread” jointly with “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” in terms of literary quality. Not only this, but picking up on the characterisation of the Irish heiress in the text, she also sees a parallel between Bowen’s and Mansfield’s stories in terms of subject matter. The heiress is portrayed early in the text as suffering from some unspecified developmental disability which hinders her capacity to behave appropriately. As Bowen describes her: “at twenty five, of statuesque development, still detained in childhood” (68). This allows Lee to claim that the two texts are therefore about the life of characters who “have not properly grown up, and whose secret selves are ill-adapted to the grown-up world they are supposed to belong to” (*Self I* xii).

A similar comparison is staged between “The Man Without Temperament” and “The Happy Autumn Fields.” Lee’s description of the texts in her introduction to *The Secret Self 2* is marked by an accentuation of their partaking in the same concerns. In this case, the stories’ simultaneous depiction of “more than one life,” and the characters’ use of this duplicity as a “vulnerable escape route” (xii) is remarked upon as an important area of contact between the two pieces. Regarding Mansfield’s story, Lee points at “the stoical husband’s memories of England while abroad with his invalid wife” (xii) as this parallel reality which allows the protagonist to momentarily flee his immediate circumstances. In “The Happy Autumn Fields,” first published in 1944, Bowen interweaves the reality of war-time London and that of an Anglo-Irish family of the 19th century through the character of Mary, a semi-unconscious woman

lying in a bomb-damaged house who is hallucinatorily transported to the past. “[T]he lost, rich, slow-moving innocent world of Victorian Anglo-Ireland,” Lee writes apropos of Bowen’s text, works as an “illusion of safety” in which Mary takes refuge from her immediate, dangerous surroundings (xiii).

The parallels established here between Bowen and Mansfield via their featured stories are furthered by the fact that the Irish author is also importantly used as a voice of authority in the anthology’s introductions. Her critical writing on the short story form—which she produced more abundantly and systematically than Mansfield—is frequently quoted to assist in the articulation and substantiation of *The Secret Self’s* ideas on genre. In the instances when this is done, moreover, Bowen’s partnership with Mansfield is significantly strengthened through the selection of passages in which Bowen either praises her predecessor or expresses ideas about the short form that chime with those of Mansfield. For instance, the opening paragraph of *The Secret Self 1* reads:

Elizabeth Bowen said of her own work that ‘each new story (if it is of any value) will make a whole fresh set of demands: no preceding story can be of any help.’ Writing admiringly about Katherine Mansfield, she draws attention to the radical, adventurous qualities of her stories: ‘Her sense of the possibilities of the story was bounded by no hard-and-fast horizons . . . Perception and language could not be kept too fresh, too alert, too fluid. Each story entailed a beginning right from the start, unknown demands, new risks, unforeseeable developments’ (viii).

Later on in this same essay, turning to Bowen’s postscript to *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*, Lee draws attention to the fact that the Anglo-Irish author saw her stories as “private fantas[ies] and hallucination[s]” which served as “a form of ‘resistance’ to the abnormal conditions of war” (xi). The perspective, Lee goes on to argue, “point[s] to the shared idea” encapsulated in Mansfield’s notion of “the secret self”: that women’s stories enact a “conflict between secret visions and unwelcome realities” leading to the exploration of questions of identity (xi). And both in *The Secret Self 2* and the omnibus edition, this same argument is advanced in slightly different terms. Lee suggests that another way of thinking about the way in which the stories are founded on the contrast “between ‘secret selves’ and the outside world” (*The Secret Self: A Century* xii) might be rethought through Bowen’s assertion, found in her 1959 introduction to her *Collected Stories*, that the short story allows for

“what is crazy about humanity” (qtd. in *The Secret Self: A Century* xii). Lee writes: “In many of the stories I have chosen, ‘what is crazy about humanity’ . . . co-exists with the ‘real’ world” (*The Secret Self: A Century* xii).

Thus, the extended alliance that *The Secret Self* institutes between these writers has two different effects. On the one hand, it works to highlight Bowen’s presence in the collection as an associate of Mansfield and her work. On the other, the operation is key in expanding the remit of Lee’s definitions of women’s short fiction as she derives them from the stories and reflections of the New Zealand author. As the bulk of criticism on Bowen’s art has consistently noticed, this writer’s oeuvre constitutes as much a departure from as a continuation of modernist modes of writing. Adrian Hunter has remarked in relation to this that “[s]ituating Bowen vis-à-vis the literary-historical moment of modernism . . . is no simple matter” (113). And in her landmark study, *The Shadow Across the Page*, Maud Ellman gives as a reason for this the fact that, typically, “Bowen avoided movements and manifestoes” and that, as a consequence, “her writing has tended to elude the standard taxonomies of modern writing” (16). Both these critics notice that many of Bowen’s texts are built around principles of generic hybridisation, which has tended to prompt their alignment with postmodernist sensibilities. As Ellman puts it, “[g]enerically, [Bowen’s] work blends popular and highbrow literary forms, exploiting the resources of the thriller, drawing room comedy, and novel of ideas” (x). Indeed, Bowen herself already showed an awareness of this when, in 1937, she compiled *The Faber Book of Modern Short Stories*. In her introduction to the anthology, she argues for the exhaustion of, and the need to move away from, the plotless, mood-based Chekhovian story which had dominated the English variant of the genre over the last decades, and which Bowen saw most critically exemplified, precisely, in the works of Mansfield. Instead, she proposes there the cultivation of a more plotted and resolutely conclusive kind of story which she sees as more appropriate for her literary and historical coordinates (9-12).

However, these traits are obliterated in the harmonious interaction between Bowen and Mansfield that *The Secret Self* presents us with. A process of homogenisation takes place in which Bowen’s ideas and texts are re-contextualised and assimilated to the modernist frame that we have seen Mansfield setting. Lee’s reading of both “Her Table Spread” and “The Happy Autumn Fields” makes this operation evident. In the case of the former text, the anthologist’s choice of placing

the interpretative stress on the girl/woman limen which the heiress inhabits displaces the centrality of other elements of the story which sit in tension with typically modernist realisations of the form. Most notably, the ominous atmosphere that pervades the text, generated mainly by the spectral presence of the English battleship, connects the text with traditions of the Gothic and the ghost story genres²⁴. In fact, the supernatural element in the piece has been frequently underscored by critics and, in general, instrumentally used to advance symbolic interpretations of the text which veer from the one that *The Secret Self* proposes. More specifically, there has been a tendency to read “Her Table Spread” as an allegory for national power relationships, believing it to dramatize metaphorically Britain’s colonial efforts in Ireland. In this reading, the presence of the battleship functions as a spectral reminder of the social and violent dimensions of the Englishman suitor’s attempts to seduce the castle’s heiress. This level of significance is made fairly explicit early on in the text when, upon first remarking the destroyer, the narrator comments: “Invasions from water would henceforth be social, perhaps amorous” (68). The fact that the text seems to be a favourite for Irish nationality-themed anthologies reflects the importance of this reading: both William Trevor’s *Oxford Book of Irish Short Stories* and Colm Tóibín’s *Penguin Book of Irish Fiction* represent Bowen through this piece. In her introductory essay, Lee shows an awareness of this approach to the text, but relegates it as a secondary interpretation: “It is part of the story’s brilliance that this can also stand, without intrusiveness, for a study in Anglo-Irish relations” (*Self I* xii).

Something similar takes place in the case of Lee’s treatment of “The Happy Autumn Fields.” As I have mentioned, the dualistic design of the piece is remarked upon as an aspect which brings forth the story’s resemblance to “The Man Without Temperament.” Yet, whereas Mansfield’s text interweaves the reality of its protagonist with the memory of his previous life, in Bowen’s story the combination of the two worlds articulated in the text is not mediated by conscience. The life to which Mary is transported in her hallucinations bears no ties to her past existence,

²⁴ James F. Wurtz points out that Bowen “is frequently placed in the tradition of the Anglo-Irish Gothic, following Le Fanu in particular. In the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, W.J. McCormack describes Bowen as a Gothic writer whose Protestant identity rendered her ambivalently Irish” (120).

but rather, it is suggested, to the existence of the place, the house, she occupies: “I suppose, then, that I am descended from Sarah,” deduces Mary at the end of the story, but her partner Travis is quick to correct her: “No . . . that would be impossible . . . From all negative evidence Sarah, like Henrietta, remained unmarried” (141). In this way, Mary’s transportation to Victorian times can only be accounted for by understanding and calling attention to Bowen’s engagement with the supernatural in the piece. Lee’s eschewal to do this speaks to the way in which her assimilation to Mansfield relies on the elimination of Bowen’s least modernist characteristics and her engagement with a multiplicity of generic traditions.

I propose that through this homogenising strategy *The Secret Self* seeks to imbue a transhistorical quality, first, to the model story embodied by “The Man Without Temperament” and, especially, “The Daughters of the Late Colonel,” and second, to the ideas about the short story genre that these texts conduct. Whilst the realisation of Mansfield’s pieces, as I have shown, is grounded in specifically modernist conceptualisations of the short story form, the assimilating treatment of “Her Table Spread” and “The Happy Autumn Fields” works to obscure this fact. By highlighting the similarities of these pieces, the anthology uproots the historical specificity which determines the realisation of Mansfield’s works. Or, to put it differently, we could say that the strategy works to extend the historical validity, and consequently the centrality, of the modernist paradigm. The simultaneous promotion of Bowen’s voice together with the partial, slanted reading of her ideas and fiction, which allow for her unproblematic association with Mansfield, have the effect of granting a ubiquitous and representative quality to the model of the modernist short story. They function towards establishing the illusion that Mansfield’s theory and practice of short fiction holds a universal character and, in doing so, advance the view that this specific manifestation of the form is archetypal of the “woman’s story.”

In the light of this, Lee’s utilisation of Woolf’s piece “Solid Objects,” included only in the omnibus edition of *The Secret Self* might be seen to acquire special significance. “Solid Objects” is one of the few texts exclusive to the omnibus edition of the anthology, appearing there in substitution of “Lappin and Lapinova,” Woolf’s story featured in *The Secret Self 2*. In her introduction to the 1995 volume, Lee starts off by producing a remarkably lengthy glossing of Woolf’s short story which leads to a comparison between the main character of the text and her as the editor of the anthology in question. The attention given to Woolf’s work here logically feeds into

the bias that, as I argue, characterises the overarching narrative of the anthology. As a core agent in the shaping of the modernist short story and modernist aesthetics more generally, calling attention to Woolf here is to be read alongside the epitomising of “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” and “The Man Without Temperament,” and the homogenisation of “Her Table Spread” and “The Happy Autumn Fields” as adding to the establishment of the modernist conceptualisation of women’s short story writing that dominates the collection. However, I want to pay more attention here to Lee’s juxtaposition of her own role as an anthologist and the protagonist of Woolf’s text as an operation which becomes revealing of the underlying mechanisms which, I have been suggesting, determine the articulation of *The Secret Self*. In “Solid Objects,” John is a prospective Member of Parliament who, upon coming across “a lump of glass” of unknown origin that resembles a “precious stone” (Woolf 41), starts developing an obsession for solid, interestingly shaped or looking objects, which inexplicably takes over his life and causes him to neglect his political career. In her introduction, Lee writes:

The stories I have collected for *The Secret Self* omnibus remind me of those ‘solid objects’ —odd, exceptional, alluring shapes which may or may not have hidden meaning, but which certainly have their own logic and their own singular form of existence, and which are well worth neglecting the ‘real’ world for. (ix)

By establishing this connection, I would argue, the overall partiality of Lee’s project is suggested.

In his article entitled “The Custom of Fiction: Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and the Modernist Short Story,” Adrian Hunter advances a reading of “Solid Objects” which proves illuminating in this respect. He comments on the elliptical, typically interrogative form of the piece whilst, at the same time, usefully taking issue with what the objects at the centre of the story actually represent. Far from trying to produce any definitive answer, what interests Hunter are the similarities that can be established between the status that these “solid objects” hold in the text and the status that Woolf ascribed to the modernist short story in her literary career. He notes that the objects John collects are “explicitly de-commoditised” (162); that is to say, it is impossible to trace their origin with any degree of precision, they lack any “exchange value” in and on themselves and are generally “considered worthless by society” (Hunter “Custom” 162). However, “John is able to bestow on them a

different sort of value,” Hunter goes on to argue, “based on their non-fungibility,” an operation which importantly allows the protagonist to set “himself against the dominant system of public commodification” (162). The article points out that Woolf’s relationship with the short form was founded on remarkably similar terms to the ones that determine John’s relationship with his objects in the text. “Modernism,” it argues, “was in many ways a group effort at ‘re-singularising’ literature, at devising a different order of value by which to judge good writing” (167). And for Woolf in particular, the plotless, interrogative short story that she received from Chekhov was seen as the perfect instrument to attain that end. Hunter writes:

The ‘plotless’ short story provided for [the] fetishizing [of] form over function. It was not the readily consumable narrative product offering the vulgar thrills of story and sensation; rather, it demanded a new sort skilled [*sic*] reader capable of making finer discriminations and willing to value aesthetic recalcitrance and difficulty over the simple pleasures of consumption and reconciliation. (164)

Woolf, in other words, saw that “singularisation” was a quality inherent to the modernist short story, in much the same way that John perceives a singularity inherent to the objects that both fascinate and consume him. The text, thus, allows for a reading which interprets it as Woolf’s reflection on the characteristics of the very kind of literature she was concomitantly producing.

Whilst I do not mean to suggest that in making her analogy with “Solid Objects” Lee is surreptitiously asserting the anthology’s bias, Hunter’s analysis provides for a reading of Lee’s comparison with John as a signal that *The Secret Self* holds an understanding of short fiction in terms of the modernist aesthetics of the genre. Lee’s imagining of the stories in the anthology as “shapes . . . which have their own logic and their own singular form of existence” (*The Secret Self: A Century* ix) points to a conception of the form which operates within a modernist paradigm. In this sense, the collection’s employment of “Solid Objects” can be seen to doubly support my argument. It is not only, as I remarked, that the extended glossing of the story furthers the promotion of modernist examples of the form by granting them a marked visibility within the text. At the same time, the commentary on the piece might be thought to simultaneously hint at the logic governing this dynamic. Namely, it speaks to the fact that the anthologist’s imagination of what a short story is and what it does is determined by or based upon modernist models. We could conceptualise this

further by engaging here with the description of the short story anthology as a text whose realisation is dominated by the interplay between centrifugal and centripetal forces which I advanced in the introduction of the thesis. According to my analysis of the way in which *The Secret Self* utilises Mansfield, Bowen and Woolf, I propose that we can aptly describe the modernist short story as the key element functioning to enhance the centripetal force of the anthology. In providing the set of characteristics that are generalised to typify women short stories generally, Lee's engagement with the modernist short story works to subdue the centrifugal thrust of the individual stories included in the collection, preventing an individualised and completely distinctive interpretation of each of the texts. Instead, it provides a model to read the different pieces under the same interpretative key. It institutes an overarching narrative which permits and encourages a reading of the stories as participants in a specific form of writing and artistic sensibility. In doing so, the modernist short story consequently generates a sense of coherence and cohesiveness to Lee's anthology.

The Secret Self might be the "literary" women-only short story anthology in which the modernist bias is most visible or pronounced. Yet, the constellation of anthologies which, as I identified above, Lee's collection exemplifies also displays this same conceptualisation, though they do so in varying degrees and following somewhat different strategies. I have already suggested that Lee's anthology is closely modelled after Cahill's anthology *Women and Fiction*. The overlap between the two texts is patent in the selection of authors that make out both collections. Though none of the texts featured in Cahill's anthology is repeated in *The Secret Self*, the collections share more than twenty-five authors, making it evident that they chart very similar ground. Positioning of these authors in the anthology might also be seen to contribute to the establishment of modernist short fiction as the collection's norm, with the American proto-modernists and modernists such as Kate Chopin, Edith Wharton or Willa Cather setting the tone at the onset of the anthology²⁵. More significantly, though, Cahill's introduction draws fundamentally on Woolf to

²⁵ A certain nationalistic leaning, probably prompted by marketing aims, operates here, whereby Cahill's anthology, first published in America, might be seen to strive to situate the origins and norm of the women's short story form in the US at the turn of the 20th century. Likewise, we might read Lee's anthology as trying to characterise the form as originally developed in Britain.

articulate the collection's rationale and its ideas on the short story in a comparable fashion to that of Lee's utilisation of Mansfield. Her thoughts on fiction — specifically, that women were “better equipped for writing fiction than poetry” (Cahill *Fiction I* xi)— are linked to the title of the anthology and they serve as the vantage point from which Cahill assesses women's literary production from the past and present. At the same time, they also provide the base together with the significant engagement with James Joyce's ideas and practice, to characterise the stories included in the anthology. Cahill tries to describe the character of the pieces included in her work by suggesting that they all display “what Pauline Kael, writing of Joyce, has called ‘a love of the supreme juices of everyday life’” (*Fiction I* xv). The anthologist then goes on to remark that “[t]his catholic sense of the extraordinariness of the ordinary is felt in some of the finest stories in this book” (xv). By doing this, Cahill is thus proposing that the best stories in her collection are marked by a focus on the everyday and revelatory experiences within it which, like the notions of liminality and search for a hidden identity we saw in Lee, have been long identified as key aspects of modernist writing. As Bryony Randall has noticed, “[t]he ‘question of how to live’” is central to modernism and it “is often answered in modernist literature, at least in traditional critical accounts thereof, in terms of searching for the exceptional moment, the transcendent or the epiphanic” in everyday experience (6).

This last point is significant. It allows us to see that whilst some of the “literary” anthologies I address here might not present us with or grant prominence to immediately obvious modernist selections of texts, they still subscribe to and display a modernist sensibility in their understanding of the short form. Their idea of what constitutes an aesthetically valuable short story is, even when the stories they choose fall outside the historic-geographical coordinates of the literary movement, pre-eminently modernist. This is particularly the case of Hill's *Penguin Book of Modern Women's Short Stories* and *Penguin Book of Contemporary Women's Short Stories*. Both these anthologies feature texts written exclusively in the second half of the twentieth century —presumably to avoid coinciding too much with the similarly conceived anthologies that predate them. Yet, in a way which echoes, especially, Cahill's remarks below, Hill writes in her prefatory essay to the first of these collections:

The stories I have chosen are not overtly political nor geographically wide-ranging; they do not deal with ‘global concerns’ . . . They are quiet, small-scale, intimate stories—a tone which suits them best. They are about everyday but not trivial matters, about the business of being human and about the concerns of the human heart. (x)

Later on, Hill goes on to specify: “Most importantly, [these stories] move the reader to give a cry of recognition and understanding” (xii). Something of the like is staged in the *Penguin Book of Contemporary Women’s Short Stories*, where the texts are more succinctly described in the same direction as being both “ordinary and life-changing” (xi), with their capacity to provide a special kind of “understanding” being again highlighted (xii). It is also remarkable in this sense that despite not including her in the collection, Hill’s introduction here still mentions Mansfield and labels her “the greatest practitioner of the form in English language” (x). This ghostly presence of Mansfield materialises in Hill’s last anthology for Penguin, where her story “A Doll’s House” is included. Yet, the articulation of *The Second Penguin Book of Modern Women’s Short Stories* departs from its predecessors in that it combines texts of well-known authors with new and commissioned writing. The result, though, continues to be establishing of modernist manifestations of the short story as the centre of women’s short fiction writing as the premise Hill claims to have followed to select the newly produced pieces was to choose stories that were “good enough to sit alongside some of the major names of the twentieth century—Katherine Mansfield, Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty” (ix).

Indeed, by the time that Craig’s *Oxford Book of Modern Women’s Stories* was published in 1994 the equation between the “woman’s story” and modernist short fiction had been well cemented by the bulk of “literary” anthologies populating the market since the second half of the 1970s. So much so, that even though the bias persists in Craig’s collection, the editor shows both an awareness of the paradigm guiding the anthologies like the one she is curating and claims that some of the decisions she has taken in the selection and arrangement of texts respond to a wish to mitigate the strength of this association. Craig posits, like Hill, that her selection of stories deals principally with the “realities of the day” (xiii) and draws much of her ideas to characterise the form from Sean O’Faoláin’s study *The Short Story*, which engages with texts from Chekhov, Maupassant, or Hemingway to define the genre. Likewise, the authors and texts she includes as well as the order in which they are

presented follows closely—in fact, combines—that of *Women & Fiction* and *The Secret Self*. However, Craig also uses her foreword to the texts to indicate: “The literary tastes of any anthologist are bound to proclaim themselves all over the collection, and it should be plain that mine run in the line of traditionalism” (xiv). The statement, I would argue, points to the fact that Craig’s aesthetic values are aligned with those of the practitioners which originated the form—which, according to her anthology, consist of Cather, Wharton and Mansfield amongst a few others—and their followers. In a similar vein, she also highlights the fact that she has included a few ghost stories in her anthology to try and make space for modes of writing which these kinds of texts do not usually feature. Apropos of Edith Wharton’s “Afterward,” for example, she writes: the story

is likely to be confined to those anthologies that bring together exercises in the supernatural. However, just as no one would think of excluding Poe from a short-story collection on the grounds that he produced only ‘sensation’ or embryo detective fiction, the fact that ‘Afterward’ is a ghost story shouldn’t debar it from inclusion here. It is simply among the best short pieces that Edith Wharton wrote. (x)

Craig’s decision to include “Afterward” and her justification produces two different effects at once. First, it displays an effort to if not escape at least recognise and open the paradigm that dominates the articulation of “literary” women-only short story anthologies. Simultaneously, her explication works to recognise, precisely, that the articulation of the bulk of anthologies I have been analysing is determined by a specific and narrow understanding of short fiction founded upon a pre-eminently modernist theorisation of the genre.

Feminine nostalgia and academic prestige

Establishing the bias that underlies the realisation of “literary” women-only short story anthologies allows us to consider the full extent and nuances of the cultural work that these texts carried and continue to carry out. In particular, it creates a space from which to examine the ideation of womanhood these anthologies codify in a way that allows us to conceptualise their gender politics. One way in which we can start to do this is by situating these works within contemporaneous debates around the relationship between modernism and women’s identity. In their critical study of

women's writing in the twentieth century, *No Man's Land*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar characterise feminist criticism from the 1980s as marked by discussions around the possibilities, strategies and limitations of representing the feminine and the female subject. In the preface to the third volume of their project, they identify two different trends of thought—one constituted by French feminist critics and their followers and the other by its detractors—which stand in opposition regarding the role that modernist experimental writing played in this particular question:

On the one hand, thinkers from Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous to Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Alice Jardine, and Marianne DeKoven have celebrated the subversive linguistic *jouissance* that they see as having been facilitated by the 'revolution in poetic language,' the fragmentation of traditional forms, and the decentring of the 'subject' which they associate with modernist experimentation. For these students of the new, the 'feminine' is virtually identical with the anarchic impulse that fuels the disruptive innovations of the avant garde, whether that avant garde includes James Joyce or Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams or Virginia Woolf. On the other hand, such thinkers as Susan Suleiman, Cheryl Walker, Suzanne Clarke, and Shari Benstock have implicitly endorsed our own view that, first, there is a distinction between the projects of male and female modernists and, second, that the feminine should not necessarily be conflated with the so-called avant garde since the rhetoric of innovation—for instance, Ezra Pound's 'Make it new'—may, as we have shown, camouflage regressive or nostalgic sexual ideologies even while it inscribes a rebellion against what Walter Jackson Bate has called the 'burden of the past.' (xiv)

More recently, critics such as Rita Felski and Nicholas Daly have developed further the analysis of these lines of thought. Picking up on the idea of the "nostalgic," Felski argues that the straightforward association between avant garde writing and the feminine should be contextualised as part of the efforts taking place in the late twentieth century to restore a sense of unity and interconnectedness upon the signifier "woman." At a time when, due to the pressures brought about by the sexual revolution and the rapid development of postcolonial thought, "woman" was ceasing to be conceived as a unified and unifying category, Felski explains, there emerges a sense of longing for earlier stages of feminist thought. In this sense, she argues that the adoption of modernist conceptualisations of "woman" as radically

“other,” ever-shifting and ultimately unknowable subject paradoxically work to revive “the feminine as emblematic of a nonalienated, nonfragmented identity” (37). From a perspective more inflected by the development of literary history, Daly has meaningfully—and critically—expanded on this argument by focusing on the mechanisms through which the identification of the feminine with modernist modes of writing has been instituted. Aligning his position with that of the critics suspecting the assumptions made by French feminism and its followers, he remarks that the equivalence between modernist avant garde modes of writing and female identity not only has the effect of obliterating difference amongst women, but its essentialist character is instituted by reproducing some of the workings whereby, precisely, the modernist enterprise originally wrote women off. He argues that modernism’s own sense of integrity was first established through a campaign of dismissal aimed at both preceding and competing traditions, particularly an “increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture” which finds in popular and genre fiction its clearest literary manifestation (119). Not just this but, as Daly further notes, gendered strategies played a prominent role in the fulfilment of this process: “modernism consistently genders mass culture, locating [it] in a feminine dream-world,” and deeming inferior “women’s culture” in general (119). Subsequently, the appropriation of modernism to define or typify the feminine operates analogously to exclude or silence alternative forms of feminine expression. By adopting modernist writing as the most valuable or authentic form of expression of womanhood, other kinds of writing practised by women are inevitably cast as not womanly or not womanly enough.²⁶

I suggest that we need to insert and think about the realisation of “literary” short story anthologies in the light of this discussion. Doing so prompts us to see that the overarching narrative that these texts institute has a direct impact on the gender politics of the collections. Their resistance to generic promiscuity translates into a narrow association between gender and the short story genre that signals, to borrow Felski’s formulation, a nostalgic belief in essentialist conceptualisations of womanhood. Realising this inevitably problematises the function that these texts

²⁶ For a discussion of the importance of popular art forms in communicating women’s experience and their neglect up until recently in feminist scholarship see Christine Gledhill’s article “Pleasurable Negotiations,” or else my brief discussion of it in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

perform in culture. As I noted above, both editors and critics of these anthologies routinely describe them as agents invested in the project of countering and reshaping the phallogocentric short story canon. Yet, whilst the anthologies do in fact function to enhance the position of the woman's short story in the literary landscape, they too theorise gender in a way that leaves intact a sense of the avant garde which can be seen to reproduce some of the silencing and oppressive workings of patriarchy. In doing this, moreover, these texts can be seen to re-inscribe, paradoxically, one of the key qualities they identify in the "feminist" anthologies they set out to distance themselves from, namely, the reductionist hypothesis that the short story genre is in some way the special property of women. The association between gender and genre is here reworked into an essentialist equation between feminine identity and the modernist short story form.²⁷

Another way, however, in which we can consider the gender politics of the anthologies in question is by putting the realisation of these texts in relation to the special imbrication that modernism has established with Academia and the cultural prestige it has conquered as a result. In her landmark study *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880-1922*, Ann Ardis starts out from the premise that modernism has, throughout the twentieth century, come to be regarded as "*the aesthetic of modernity*" (7), and embarks on the study of the mechanisms whereby a relatively small, localised literary movement has attained this status. In her introductory remarks, she argues that understanding this phenomenon requires us, importantly, to think of modernism not so much as a historically determined cultural movement, but, following the lead of Raymond Williams, as a

‘machinery of selective tradition’: the long and complex process by means of which the work of an international set of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century artists in self-imposed exile from bourgeois culture has been ‘comfortab[ly] integrat[ed]’ into the academy, into museum culture, and into an international capitalist economy of art. (5)

²⁷ Steven Holden has shown that operations like this are not just far from uncommon, but actually typical strategies performed by anthologists in the introduction to their collections: “the ‘anthology introduction’ or apologia [is] a genre which positions the anthology both as one example in the tradition of anthologies and as the latest, necessary and often groundbreakingly oppositional addition to this tradition” (279).

Ardis concludes, first, that modernist writing was to a large extent especially geared to provoke this integration in its “defense . . . of a pristine and sacralised high art” (175) which it proclaimed to embody. At the same time, the process was decisively facilitated by the coincidence of the moment of high modernism and the professionalisation of English Studies, which promoted, in a way which has proved remarkably lasting, “modernist ‘masterworks’ as objects of critical study” (176). The short story played no small part in these developments. As Hunter has recently argued, the modernist short story might be most appropriately understood as a project designed to both revolutionise and distinguish the genre as well as to institute this particular variety of the form as its purest example, operations through which it contributed importantly to the establishment of modernism’s centrality in English Studies (“Rise” 215-17).

This opens an interesting space to reframe the ideas about “literary” women-only short story anthologies I have advanced thus far in a couple of ways. The first one is to see the anthologies in question as literary objects contributing to the maintenance of modernism’s status in academic culture. In this formulation, the theorization of gender identity they advance would read as a by-product of their complicity with the literary establishment and its reification. The second involves, conversely, seeing the anthologies’ promotion of modernism as a necessary tactic to infiltrate the circuits of literary prestige. In a contemporaneous review of one of the “feminist” anthologies I addressed at the beginning of the chapter, *Bitches and Sad Ladies*, Lois Marchino starts out by briefly referring to an anecdote of pertinent academic flavour: “When I suggested to a friend that she consider *Bitches and Sad Ladies* for a course in contemporary women writers,” Marchino writes, “she sighed, ‘I’d never get it past my curriculum committee with a title like that’ (51). “Literary” anthologies, as I explained, constituted the first corpus of texts of their kind to attain a lasting cultural weight. Undoubtedly, their capacity to do so partly rested, precisely, on their success entering the academic system, to get past the “curriculum committee.” Indeed, some of these anthologies, most notably Cahill’s *Women and Fiction*, overtly advertise their amenability to teaching regimes in order to secure the fulfilment of this aim. In her introduction to the first volume of the anthology, Cahill writes: “Those who would use this book in an educational setting will find it eminently teachable” (xvi). And in her prefatory essay to *Women and Fiction 2* she repeats the point: “For teachers who use this book as part of a course there are clusters of stories that can be

considered together, their points of view compared and contrasted for the heightened perspective that such an approach can yield” (xiii). Nevertheless, I would argue that it is fundamentally their subscription to the modernist aesthetic of the short story form that worked to secure the academic and cultural relevance of these texts. If, as Ardis suggests, modernism and the Academy show a special co-operation which extends throughout the twentieth century, by the end of the 1970s the results of this symbiosis must have been firmly established. It is in this sense that the modernist bias of *The Secret Self* and other similar texts might be rethought as a necessary inflection to ensure their participation in the most prestigious cultural spheres.

A different, less conservative, view of the essentialist notion of gender that these texts advance emerges when we look at the anthologies from this last angle. It renders their “nostalgic” conceptualisation of a unified sense of feminine identity somewhat “strategic,” in a markedly Spivakian sense. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in an interview carried out by Elizabeth Grosz in 1984, first outlined the basic lines of her milestone concept of “strategic essentialism” by saying:

“rather than define myself as specific rather than universal, I should see what in the universalizing discourse could be useful and then go on to see where that discourse meets its limits and its challenge within that field . . . In fact, I must say I am an essentialist from time to time” (11).

Though usually tied up with and framed by the discipline of postcolonialism, the concept of “strategic essentialism” has not just proved pre-eminently portable to the identity of minority or oppressed groups more broadly, but in fact originates in the context of feminist thought to the extent that Spivak, at this point in the interview, is talking about the “‘universal’ oppression of women under patriarchy” (10). This combined with the fact that the formulation coincides chronologically with the publication of the anthologies I have addressed stresses the usefulness of the notion. It does not simply add to the characterisation of the relationship that these texts establish with questions of gender-formation, but we must see it as part of the intellectual environment that these works are born out of and interact with. Taken together, the different debates I have invoked here do not serve to pass judgment on the anthologies in terms of their political usefulness, but permit us, first, to situate these works at the centre of feminism’s and gender theory’s addressing of the question of essentialism. At the same time, they shed light on the work that the short story anthology and the anthology more generally can do and has done. Finally, they

also provide new perspectives from which to investigate to what ends the interanimation of the short story form and modernism in the twentieth century might have been put to work.

In the following chapter, I move on to examine a set of anthologies that co-exist with the “literary” collections I examined in this chapter yet embody a diametrically opposed ethos in terms of their approach to gender politics and the representation of female identity, which they realise structurally. Namely, they exploit the formal properties of the genre to articulate a radically de-centralised conceptualisation of women which is in line with, and contributes to, poststructuralist ideas of gender identity. In this way, Chapter 2 will add to the present discussion in two different and interlinked ways. First, it draws attention to the way in which the flexibility and versatility of the anthology form has allowed it to participate not just in different, but contrasting conceptualisation of female identity. And second, it subsequently continues to highlight and systematise the centrality of the short story anthology in the development of theoretical questions of gender-formation.

Chapter 2 — Ec-centric Women: Angela Carter, the Virago Short Story Anthologies and Poststructuralism

By the beginning of the 1980s, Angela Carter was at the height of her literary career. The remarkable creative spell she had gone through during the previous decade — which led her to publish three novels, two collections of short stories, three children's books and a book of non-fiction— had established her as one of the most important authors working in Britain and in the English language more broadly. In 1983, she was elected member of the jury for the Booker Prize in the company of Fay Weldon (chair), Terence Kilmartin and Libby Purves. She had been approached, in that same year, by the director Neil Jordan to collaborate on a cinematographic adaptation of some of her stories for what would, in 1984, become the award-winning film *The Company of Wolves*. For most of the second half of the 1970s and the 1980s, she received and took several appointments to be writer in residence and teach in several universities not only in Britain, but also in the US and Australia. More than this, her figure and work were also starting to become immensely popular as objects of academic study. (As several critics and commentators like to remind us, the year after her death, in 1992, the number of proposals for doctoral research into Carter's work submitted to the British Academy was more than ten times bigger than those submitted to research any aspect of the literature of the whole of the 18th century).²⁸ On the one hand, this was partly due to the fact that the South American influences that marked Carter's particular brand of fiction since the early 1970s—in particular, Magical Realism— were suddenly becoming fashionable in the Academy, as Edmund Gordon tells us (392). On the other, the undeniable centrality that Carter and her work had attained in contemporaneous feminist discussions, prompted mainly by the publication in 1979 of both Carter's subversive re-imagining of traditional folk-tales, *The Bloody Chamber*, and her polemic around the works of Marquis de Sade and the issue of pornography, *The Sadeian Woman*, also determined the increased attention to her writing.

²⁸ See, for example, Edmund Gordon's biography of Carter (xii) or Phillip Hensher's biographical note on the author at the end of the second volume of his *Penguin Book of the British Short Story*.

In a 2012 appraisal of *The Bloody Chamber*, Marina Warner proposes to read Carter's landmark collection of stories and her provocative essay as a "diptych": "*The Sadeian Woman* . . . provides a valuable gloss on themes in *The Bloody Chamber*," she writes, and "the same readers who are shocked by [Carter's] acclaim of Sade's 'moral pornography' are enthralled by the way her stories . . . also quest for emancipatory erotics, beyond subjugation, beyond prejudice." This makes sense not only because the works might be thought to read each other and were published almost simultaneously, but because they also mark a before and after in Carter's relationship with feminist politics. As Anna Watz has noted, Carter's rise to fame in the 1970s and 1980s convolved with a shift in her ideas on gender politics. Where her previous work had been pre-eminently concerned with establishing women's difference from men and staging a fierce critique of the conditions of patriarchy, it now was becoming increasingly concerned, as these two publications begin to exemplify, with strategies of performance whereby not only women might be empowered, but the binaries structuring gender identity and its power relations might be collapsed altogether (Watz 163-4).²⁹ Performativity, in truth, has been a key term used frequently to engage with Carter's representation of gender in the second half of her career and its thrust to challenge stable categories such as "man" or "woman" which attempt to denote some sort of natural or essential identity. Joanna Travenna has signalled, in relation to this, the extent to which studies of "the presentation of gender identity in Angela Carter's fiction [frequently draw] on the 'performativity' theories of Judith Butler" (267). She points to the ease with which Butler's characterisation of gender appears to accommodate the "overt theatricality" and "linguistic self-consciousness" that distinguishes an important number of Carter's female characters, particularly in her post-1970s work (267).

Even though these claims have now become routine in Carter's criticism,³⁰ accounts of the author's later work and the development of her new feminist politics

²⁹ In fact, the seeds of this shift can be found in several of Carter's works from the 1970s. Sarah Gamble has identified Carter's story "Flesh and the Mirror," published in *Fireworks* in 1974, as the earliest text where this concern is preponderant (*Literary* 113-4).

³⁰ Besides Travenna, see, for example, Sarah Gamble's *Angela Carter: A Literary Life* (113-4) and Linden Peach's *Angela Carter* (146-7)

have largely failed to pay attention to the fact that, in these same years, Carter also became a leading anthologist of women's short fiction for Virago Press. Carter's move to what was to become her home press until the end of her life took place with the publication of *The Sadeian Woman* —Virago's first ever non-fiction book— and saw the author progressively reinventing herself as a collector and editor of short fiction and tales by women, a fact seldom noticed by critics. Indeed, lack of attention to Carter's anthology work is striking for a number of reasons: firstly, because from 1980 until 1992, when the author died of lung cancer, Carter engaged with the short story anthology more than with any other genre. She produced three anthologies — *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* in 1986, and the two *Virago Books of Fairy Tales* in 1990 and 1992, respectively— whilst writing “only” two novels, two short story collections and a children's book. Moreover, Carter's short story anthologies constitute some of the most commercially successful examples of the form. Though published in the 1980s and early 1990s, all her anthologies are still in print, demonstrating an unusual longevity for examples of a genre that, as I remarked in the Introduction, has often benefited from making fleeting and topical interventions in a given cultural climate. Most importantly, though, the academic neglect of her anthologies is surprising because of the long-established interest of Carter's work in intertextual strategies and, even more significantly, with the technique of *bricolage*. As several critics have noticed,³¹ Carter herself made this explicit in an interview with John Haffenden where she explained: “I have always used a very wide number of references because [I tend] to regard all of Western Europe as a great scrap-yard from which you can assemble all sorts of new vehicles” (92). Gérard Genette has defined *bricolage* as the usage

of materials and tools that, unlike those of the engineer, for example, were not intended for the task at hand. The rule of *bricolage* is ‘always to make do with whatever is available’ and to use in a new structure the remains of previous constructions or destructions. (*Figures 3*)

It is startling, in the light of this, that Carter's expression in a form which most literally embodies the principle of this method has been so generally overlooked. Or else, that in the few instances when it has been approached critics have been

³¹ See, for instance, Watz, Huberman and Munford.

insufficiently alert, or not calibrated, to recognising the particularities of the anthology form.³²

In part, this chapter sets out to correct this by analysing the form and function of Carter's anthology *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*. It argues that Carter exploits the form of the anthology not just to assert women's contribution to the short story genre, but also, and more significantly, to engage with and advance her ideas on questions of gender-formation. Carter's women-only short story anthology is constituted, I show, as an opposite to *The Secret Self* and the other "literary" anthologies I analysed in Chapter 1 in terms of the way that it codifies women's identity. In *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*, I argue that Carter takes advantage of the heterogeneous and polyphonic nature of the anthology form to challenge, precisely, the notion of an essential female identity. Instead, she presents us with a fundamentally ec-centric idea of womanhood which might be seen, in several ways, as akin to the poststructuralist shift in conceptualisations of gender and of identity more broadly. By articulating this analysis, I am able to situate the anthology (as well as Carter's *Books of Fairy Tales*) as key works in the development of Carter's narrative art and gender politics. At the same time, the short story anthology also helps us to put into focus Carter's engagement with and contribution to the intellectual context around issues of identity in 1980s Britain and the English-speaking world more generally. However, in drawing attention to Carter's collection in this way I do not simply intend to fill in a gap in the author's criticism. Doing so is, actually, just a subsidiary function of this chapter, whose argument, as we shall see, contributes to this critical project only tangentially. In the second section of this chapter, I am less interested in connecting *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* with the rest of the author's literary production than in establishing its close ties with a

³² In her essay "'A Room of One's Own or a Bloody Chamber': Angela Carter and Political Correctness," Hermione Lee touches upon the anthology to remark merely on the tone of Carter's introduction (315); Scott A. Dimovitz refers to the collection only to the extent that it provides useful information to interpret Carter's story "The Loves of Lady Purple" (146); similarly, in her essay "Something Sacred: Angela Carter, Jean-Luc Godard and the Sixties," Sarah Gamble uses the introduction to the anthology to inform Carter's engagement with the type of the *femme fatale* in her oeuvre as an author, to give a few examples.

number of short story anthologies published around the same time and in the same publishing house. *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* was the first of a series of anthologies published by Virago in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I propose that these collections, which include short story anthologies edited by Shena Mackay, Elaine Showalter or Georgina Hammick among others, might be seen as a whole in the sense that they all present remarkably similar articulations and that, in consequence, they advance similar ideas as regards gender identity and perform a comparable cultural function. Taken together, thus, I argue that this corpus of works conforms a textual ecosystem which characterises the women-only short story anthology as a genre which has been deeply invested in capturing and disseminating changing ideas on women and the feminine taking place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. More than this, I suggest that in many ways they can be seen to not just reflect but to play an active role in the institution of these changes. Towards the end of the chapter, thus, I advance a revaluation of these texts as key participants in the development of poststructuralist ideas of gender.

Case study: Angela Carter's *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*

In his recently published biography *The Invention of Angela Carter*, Edmund Gordon briefly traces some of the publishing history of *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*. More specifically, he documents Carter's qualms and musings, over the final selection of short stories that would make up the anthology through the letters she exchanged with Sarah Baxter, the publicity manager of Virago at the time. In one of these letters, which Gordon quotes at length, Carter offers some alternatives to her original choice of texts just in case "some of these e.g. the Isak Dinesen or the Mavis Gallant, prove too expensive" (qtd. Gordon 355). Amongst the names of the possible substitutes are those of Vernon Lee and, significantly, of Katherine Mansfield, the inclusion of which seemed to trouble Carter as much as it excited her: "I am tempted to slip in a Katherine Mansfield," she writes, "as she, too, is blissfully out of copyright besides being very, very good, but I don't want to cross lines with Hermione Lee's *The Secret Self* . . . That's why I'm not including a story by myself"

(qtd. Gordon 355).³³ The letter, dated in 1985, could only have been written and sent a few months after the publication of the first volume of Lee's anthology. Yet, Carter's hesitation is here already telling, on the one hand, of her realisation that Mansfield was a key figure, as I have argued, determining the shape and character of *The Secret Self*; and on the other, of Carter's wish, already present in these early stages of her project, of creating a different kind of anthology to that begun by Lee. As Gordon goes on to explain, though, Virago did not share the writer-turned-editor's concerns and the New Zealand author ended up featuring in the anthology's final list of contents (as did, incidentally, one of Carter's own stories, as I specify below). Despite this, the way in which Carter engages with Mansfield and utilises her chosen story, "The Young Girl," starts to reveal the kind of difference that she was seeking to establish with Lee's anthology, as well as the distinct form that *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* takes.

In contrast to Mansfield's most emblematic pieces — "Prelude," "At the Bay," and "The Daughters of the Late Colonel"— "The Young Girl" is a very short piece, nearly a caricature, written in 1921 and set in Monte Carlo. The story outlines the character of an unnamed teenager as seen through the eyes of her childminder, an anonymous woman who takes care of her and her brother Hennie whilst their mother accompanies her friend to the casino. Besides the relatively minor status of the text in the body of Mansfield's work³⁴, which deems it an unusual choice for the anthology, Carter appears further interested, in her introduction to the collection, to stress the oddness of "The Young Girl" also within the selection of texts that make up *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*. She remarks upon the fact that despite the title given to the anthology few, if any, of the women featured in the texts are or have the potential to be "really evil," except perhaps Mansfield's "horrid adolescent," who Carter describes as "selfish, vain, rude to her mother, uncivil to strangers, beastly to her little brother" (ix). This description of the story is immediately followed by a bracketed remark in which Carter seeks to dissociate Mansfield's character as an

³³ Indeed, the first volume of *The Secret Self* included Carter's short story "Peter and the Wolf."

³⁴ In her *Journal*, Mansfield refers to the story as a "slight sketch" (221), and in a letter to John Middleton Murry sent in October 1920 she calls the text "one of my queer hallucinations" (66).

author from that of her protagonist in the text. It does so by identifying the writer, instead, with the candid narrator of the story. She writes:

Mansfield herself, who was an adventuress in a mild way and boasted the reputation of a wayward girl in her own lifetime, emerges here as narrator as a woman of such transparent good faith that small boys instinctively trust her to stand them expensive ice-creams. (ix)

This particular glossing of “The Young Girl” works to short-circuit the possibilities of reading either Mansfield’s text or her authorial presence as exemplary. The former observation regarding the character of the text’s protagonist casts “The Young Girl” as unrepresentative of the bulk of stories included in the anthology. The latter aims to prevent a reading of either the piece or its writer as epitomising the themes which are set to organise the collection. The characterisation of the text as one featuring a potentially “*really* evil” woman is undermined by the characterisation of the narrator and its connection to the writer. The de-centring of Mansfield that these strategies enact is further reinforced by Carter’s positioning of the story within the collection. Its appearance as the sixth piece of the anthology functions against its standing out amongst the other stories.

In this way, Carter’s engagement with Mansfield and her story stands in stark contrast with Lee’s employment of the author and her texts in *The Secret Self*. However, the utilisation of “The Young Girl” is further significant as it reflects the fundamental principles that underlie the design and realisation of *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*. More specifically, it signals the anthology’s generalised and active resistance to instituting a recognisable centre. Early on in her introduction, Carter examines the title that she has given to her collection. She wonders what it means, exactly, to be a “wayward girl” or a “wicked women” in order to show, subsequently, that these phrases actually provide a somewhat awkward rationale for the set of stories that make up her work. In her discussion, she advances the thesis that “on the whole, morality as regards woman has nothing to do with ethics; it means sexual morality and nothing but sexual morality” (x). She then goes on to explain:

To be a wayward girl usually has something to do with pre-marital sex; to be a wicked woman has something to do with adultery. This means it is far easier for a woman to lead a blameless life than it is for a man; all she has to do is to avoid sexual intercourse like the plague. What hypocrisy! (x)

Carter's linking of women's morality with sex here implicitly indicts the patriarchal mindset as the origin of the connection. The commentary serves to characterise the paradigmatic definition of "wayward girls" and "wicked women" as one established from a patriarchal set of beliefs. As a reaction to this, Carter announces that she has refused to include stories in her collection which adhere to this specific model: "I have been careful to select bad girls who are not sexual profligates" (x). The one exception she allows to this rule is constituted by her own contribution to the collection, "The Loves of Lady Purple," which features as its main character a marionette personifying the *femme fatale* stereotype. The choice, however, is carefully calculated: in remarking upon the story, Carter admits to her heroine being "sexually profligate in a thoroughly reprehensible manner" (x), yet she also makes clear that the peculiar ontological status of the protagonist—her being a puppet—works to support the editor's subversive project.³⁵ Indeed, the only woman featured in these stories who is a "sexual profligate" is not only *not* a woman, but significantly a product of the puppet-master's, and therefore a man's, imagination. As Carter puts it: "She is a puppet, and a man made her, and made up her entire biography" (x).

Through this way of proceeding, thus, Carter is carrying out two different operations at once. On the one hand, the title she gives to the anthology, and her commentary on the reader's expectations that are attached to it, functions to locate and fix the hypothetical centre of the collection. The suggestion is that stories about women with a reckless sexual behaviour constitute the archetypal manifestation of the overarching theme that the phrases "wayward girls" and "wicked women" set for the text. On the other hand, she voids the anthology of precisely that centre through the selection of stories she decides to include in it. In resisting the incorporation of pieces which fulfil the "sexual profligates" paradigm, and featuring instead only stories which consistently downplay the reader's expectations by addressing the theme from surprising angles, Carter prevents the actual realisation of a centre. In other words, we could say that the centre of the anthology is defined as lacking; or else, to put it yet another way, that Carter constructs an ec-centric anthology. The ec-

³⁵ Though originally subtitled "*An Anthology of Stories*," *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* was rebranded as "*An Anthology of Subversive Stories*" when in 1989 it was reprinted by Penguin.

centric, as the *OED* defines it, does not refer to that which has no centre but, rather, to that which disagrees with the centre, has “little in common” with it, or else has its “point[s] of support . . . otherwise than centrally placed.” Figuratively, the concept also denotes that which is “anomalous,” “unusual,” “odd” (“eccentric, adj.”). The double manoeuvre which characterises the articulation of *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*, I argue, is to be understood in precisely these terms. In its simultaneous definition and nullification of centre, Carter does not simply challenge the supposed axis of the collection; by the same stroke, she prevents us from identifying any of the featured texts as typical or exemplary of the subject matter upon which the anthology is built. Instead, the design of the collection—its construction around an unrealised and contested core—indicates that the selection of stories has been prompted by their particular and unusual approach to the theme. It draws attention, to put it differently, to the singularity of each of the pieces included in the collection.

The rest of Carter’s introduction is invested in foregrounding precisely this aspect of the anthology. In general, her glossing of the featured texts draws attention to the distinctive qualities in each of them, underlining what makes each story unique and distinguishable from the rest of the pieces included and, often, from the bulk of women’s short story writing altogether. We have already seen how this operation is carried out in the cases of Mansfield’s story and of Carter’s own text included in the collection, where commentary on the texts emerged from the distinct qualities that each of them embodied. Another example of this can be found when Carter brings attention to the opening story of the anthology. Elizabeth Jolley’s “The Last Crop,” a humorous tale of the underclass focused on a girl and her mother’s struggles and tricks to get by, is described as one of the few texts featuring “female con-men in fiction” (xi), putting the accent thus upon a quality which marks the text’s uniqueness rather than its connections with the rest of the works in the anthology. In a similar fashion, Carter remarks upon George Egerton’s nightmarish narrative of marriage in Victorian times, “Wedlock,” apropos of how the text reverses “in the oddest way,” expectations about crime and punishment: “In a rather horrible way,” Carter writes, “[Mrs Jones’] crime is not her punishment but the instrument of her reward” (x). And in addressing Bessie Head’s portrayal of female independence and prostitution, “Life,” Carter is quick to highlight that if its protagonist is deemed “wicked” it is “not because she distributes sexual favours” but because, unlike any of the other characters in the collection, “she charges money for them” (xi). In this

manner, the explanations systematically emphasise those features which singularise the pieces included in the collection. Simultaneously, and as a consequence of this, they also work to inscribe difference—in a Derridean sense: they disperse and defer final and fixed meaning, as I explained in the introduction—to the whole of the collection. They characterise the environment of the anthology, that is to say, as fundamentally marked by internal conflict and heterogeneity: the “stories are told in an enormous variety of ways,” Carter writes, “and come from all over the world” (xi). Indeed, the geographical and historical background of the selected authors and texts contributes to highlight the complexity of the work. The collection presents, without arranging them in any chronological or topographical order, a total of eighteen stories written over a period of just over a hundred years and by authors from eleven different nationalities, producing as a result a strikingly shifting textual space in the juxtaposition of texts from very different time-space coordinates³⁶.

This configuration is reinforced by the anthology’s exploitation of the formal qualities of the short story genre. The ec-centric way in which *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* can be seen to approach its overarching theme is reproduced by an equally ec-centric approach to the short story as a literary form. More specifically, Carter’s anthology advances an idea of short fiction which eludes normative definitions of the genre. One of the longest texts included in the anthology, Ama Ata Aidoo’s “The Plums,” provides an appropriate starting point to consider this. This text about the development of a relationship between a female African student on a state-sponsored visit to Germany and a Bavarian mother and housewife is realised through the imbrication of two distinct narrative voices. On the one hand, it articulates a third-person, externally focalised narrator who advances the action of the story. On the other, a speaker internally focalised on the Ghanaian protagonist frequently interjects to convey, in the form of digressions, the main character’s thoughts and to enter into conversation with them. The swing from one voice to the other is signalled by a move from prose to verse in the text, as can be seen clearly, in its opening pages:

³⁶ Had Carter been able to fulfil her original plan for *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* and include stories by Christina Stead, Isaak Dinesen and Mavis Gallant (Gordon 354-5), the number of nationalities included in the collection would have been elevated to thirteen.

Sissie looked at the young mother and the thought came to her that

Here,
 Here on the edge of a pine forest in the
 Heartland of
 Bavaria. . .

.....

IT CANNOT BE NORMAL

for a young
 Housefrau to
 Like
 Two Indians
 Who work in
 Supermarkets.

This mixed construction is furthered by the fact that “The Plums” was not originally a short story but has been re-contextualised here as such: the piece first appeared as the second chapter of Aidoo’s 1977 experimental novel *Our Sister Killjoy: Or Reflections of a Black-Eyed Squint*. The ambivalent generic status and hybrid form of this text mirrors the attitude towards the short story that the anthology as a whole displays.

The collection includes an array of short narrative texts that stretch and test any normative definitions of the short story as a genre. Moreover, through clever juxtaposition and collocation of these different stories, Carter underlines the formal contrasts between them. For instance, Vernon Lee’s “Oke of Okehurst” is an Edwardian mystery tale which explores a woman’s obsession with inhabiting the lives of “a couple of ancestors of hers,” and the relationship they had with “a poet whom they had murdered” (292). The text, which is one of the few stories in the collection embracing the supernatural and, running for around fifty pages, also represents the clearest approximation to the novella genre in the anthology, is followed by Jamaica Kincaid’s lyrical micro fiction “Girl,” a two-page long monologue first published in 1978 which consists of a set of behavioural instructions that a mother directs to her daughter. The pieces do not just differ starkly in length as well as in the context where they were written, but also do so in terms of mode and style, with the poetic realism of “Girl” —“Wash the clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the colour clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothes-

line to dry” (326)— establishing a clear contrast with the fantastic mode of Lee’s piece. Two other contiguous stories, Suniti Namjoshi’s “Three Feminist Fables” and Colette’s “The Rainy Moon,” also differ dramatically in length —the latter piece being around forty-five pages longer than the former— and this formal contrast extends to their particular narrative voices, point of view and use of language. Namjoshi’s retellings of classic stories are narrated in a third-person objective voice who uses satire to bring forth the fables’ socio-political meaning. These are the final lines of the author’s take on “Bluebeard,” for instance, when the nobleman learns that his fifth wife did indeed obey him and restrained herself from entering the forbidden room: “This so incensed him that he killed her on the spot. At the trial he pleaded provocation” (86). Conversely, Colette’s auto-fiction of a woman-writer who, after many years, fortuitously revisits the apartment she occupied right after the breakdown of her marriage, is narrated in the first person and constitutes an exercise in developing, *à la Proust*,³⁷ a way of speaking about the psyche, memory and subjectivity: “My hidden past climbed the familiar stairs with me . . . rearranged furniture on its old plan, revived the colours of the ‘rainy moon’ and sharpened a weapon once used against myself” (114). Lastly, a similar effect is produced by the juxtaposition of Andrée Chedid’s “The Long Trial” and Carter’s “The Loves of Lady Purple,” where dissonance is generated at the level of narrative structure. Chedid’s story of a mother who brings the husbands and wives of her small village closer together by challenging religious authority articulates a single plot-line that progresses from the presentation of a disadvantageous situation to its successful resolution, in which a moral regarding the power of people’s unity is codified. This realisation, which aligns the text with the architecture and conventions of traditional storytelling, stands out against the intricate design of Carter’s contribution. “The Loves of Lady Purple” is built upon the interplay between an embedding story — about a puppet-master and his travelling show— and an embedded story —about his

³⁷ Proust is, in fact, explicitly evoked in “The Rainy Moon”:

the sudden apparition of a new, unpublished slice of the past is accompanied by a shock unlike anything else and which I cannot lucidly describe. Marcel Proust, gasping with asthma amid the bluish haze of fumigations and the shower of pages dropping from him one by one, pursued a bygone and completed time (92).

sexually promiscuous marionette—the limits of which are blurred when “the sleeping wood wake[ns]” (264). Beyond the interweaving of two narrative planes, the story’s ending, which shows the now living puppet’s inability to carve out a life for herself different from the one she has lived under the puppeteer’s control, also short-circuits the possibility of a progressive reading which intensifies the text’s difference with Chedid’s piece. In this way, the arrangement as much as the selection of texts in the anthology can be seen to frustrate attempts to identify a generic centre or norm for the short story. They problematise the location of a paradigmatic manifestation of the short form and highlight, instead, the formal particularity and individuality of each text, thus underscoring the anthology’s status as a highly fragmented textual space.

According to this analysis, the displacement of thematic and formal centres that, as I have shown, characterises *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* might be rethought as a strategy leading to the clear intensification of centrifugal forces in the anthology. Unlike the “literary” women-only short story anthologies I have previously studied, the realisation of Carter’s text systematically prevents the institution of an overarching narrative with the capacity to integrate its contents into a coherent whole. Instead, its configuration works to devolve meaning to each of the individual texts that constitute it and accentuate, precisely, the extent to which they differ from the other texts collected in the work. Just as we saw that the emphasizing of the centripetal force in *The Secret Self* and other similarly conceived collections determined the notion of gender identity that they codified, this articulation of *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* is also central to the concept of womanhood that the anthology presents us with. The ec-centric design of Carter’s collection underlies the anthology’s take on female identity. The connection stems, fundamentally, from the fact that stories included in the anthology are not just written by women but are also about them in the sense that mothers, daughters and sisters are invariably the main characters of the texts and often their narrators. Indeed, no story in the anthology has a man at its core. In this way, the selected texts constitute a display of samples of women’s writing as much as of images of female figures the character of which is inextricable from —because it is articulated by— the pieces featuring them. Accordingly, the way in which Carter’s anthology works to individualise its contents in terms of subject matter and form —through editorial selection, introduction and juxtaposition— extends into an individualisation of the women starring or voicing

the narratives. My commentary on “The Plums” already implied this. The use of verse that, as I showed, constitutes the most salient element distinguishing the piece from the rest of texts in the anthology works at the same time to singularise its main female character. Since versification is used to engage with and communicate the protagonist’s interiority, the story’s distinctive realisation expresses the distinctive form of the character’s consciousness. It singles her out from the rest of the female figures in the anthology. Comparably, I described how Carter’s glossing of “Wedlock” emphasises the extraordinary way in which the story subverts conventional approaches to crime and punishment. The rewarding feeling with which the text’s main character is imbued after murdering her three stepsons is remarked upon to distinguish Egerton’s narrative. In this consideration, it is patent that the main character’s idiosyncrasy is also brought to the fore together with that of the piece. Few other characters in the anthology commit crimes of remotely comparable magnitude, and not one of them finds solace, as Mrs Jones does, in their execution. We have similarly seen how Carter drew attention to the uniqueness of “The Last Crop” or “The Young Girl” by highlighting qualities which derive from the women starring the narratives: the atypical con-man status of the female protagonist in the case of the former text and the exceptional evilness of the central character in the case of the latter. Finally, the intricate formal realisation which I described as one of the key aspects individualising “The Loves of Lady Purple” in the collection is also enmeshed with the singularly ambiguous identity of the marionette-woman at the heart of the narrative. The puppet’s in-between existence as an inanimate and an animate being enables the interlinking of narrative planes which gives distinctive form to the text.

The fundamental heterogeneity of female characters depicted in the anthology is of a kind with the changes in the understanding and conceptualisation of gender identity brought about by the advent of poststructuralist thought into gender theory around the time that *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* was first published. In her recent analysis of this process, Harriet Bradley explains how in the second half of the 1980s feminism entered what she calls a “self-reflexive mode” whereby it became increasingly suspicious of its own essentialist assumptions about womanhood which rendered alternative forms of feminine identity invisible (65). Not only this, but, as Linda Alcoff remarked in a landmark intervention contemporaneous with this debate, women from ethnic and sexual marginal groups flagged the fact that the imposition

of a white, heterosexual and bourgeois version of womanhood as a model crucially reproduced the “fundamental mechanism[s] of power” through which sexism and imperialism operate (415)³⁸. In this context, poststructuralism’s ideas that “the world is only intelligible in discourse . . . [that] there is no unmediated experience,” and that, as a consequence, we have “no access to the raw reality of self and others” (Belsey 660), proves instrumental in allowing for a reconfiguration in understanding gender. In particular, it provides a theoretical framework that might be used to debunk the belief in a natural core to the subject (Alcoff 415), and to reveal identity groupings or labels such as “women” as constructions standing for radically fragmented, discontinuous and multifarious realities. It is, of course, Judith Butler’s formulation and further systematisation of this same idea that has become watershed in accounts of poststructuralist approaches to identity and to gender more specifically. In *Gender Trouble* she defines the concept of a stable gender as a fabricated “fiction” which comes to be regarded as authentic or natural through the repeated performance of certain “acts.” As she puts it in her seminal 1988 article “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” from which *Gender Trouble* primarily emerged:

gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts* . . . [that] constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (900)

The reaction to essentialism, Bradley further argues, gives way in the period to a shift from margin to centre of the different, non-normative experiences of womanhood. We could say that a move takes place, in other words, from general or universal understandings of womanhood to localised or individualised views of female identity. A new paradigm emerges marked by the tendency towards “splitting women into ever tinier and more distinct groups, and eventually to a kind of ‘hyperindividualism’” which gives rise to the emergence of multiple feminisms

³⁸ For a fleshing out of these criticisms see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism.”

(Bradley 79).³⁹ My analysis of *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* situates Carter's anthology as a text which does not simply reflect these changes in ideations of gender identity and its constitution but participates in their development. I have shown that the collection's ec-centric design works to advance a radically non-essentialist notion of women which is aligned with the poststructuralist turn in gender theory and the understanding of identity more broadly. Yet, intellectually contextualising the 1986 anthology by inserting it in this debate also allows us to see that in many ways *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* anticipated, in its realisation, some of the key ideas at the heart of this paradigm shift.

The Virago anthologies and “minor” literature

Although from the 1980s onwards Carter engaged with the novel to a lesser extent than she had done in the previous decade, the two works that she produced in that genre over this period of time —*Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children*— are often regarded as the pinnacle of the author's efforts in the form.⁴⁰ Frequently considered together in accounts of Carter's work —despite the fact that seven years separate the publication of the two titles— the texts have attracted critical attention, amongst other things, because they display a new interest in off-centred narratives as a mechanism used to destabilise social and cultural binaries, and the hierarchies that these binaries conceal. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, for example, Linda Hutcheon remarks how the “freak-circus framework” of *Nights in the Circus* is set, precisely, to contest “narrative centering” (61). It allows Carter, she argues, to construct a plot based on the population of this world by characters that straddle “the border between the imaginary/fantastic . . . and the realistic/historical” (61), epitomised by the “manly” half-swan half-woman protagonist, Fevvers. The novel creates a world, Hutcheon continues, where “there is only ex-centricity” allowing Fevvers and the rest of the characters that inhabit it to resist traditional ideas of identity and, more

³⁹ The philosopher of ethics Laura Palazzani offers a succinct and useful reformulation of this argument in advancing that, in poststructuralist configurations of gender, “the starting point . . . is the individual, not nature nor society” (42)

⁴⁰ See, for example, Sarah Gamble (*Front Line* 145-9); Christina Britzolakis (185-7); or Scott A. Dimovitz (175-81).

specifically, gender-formation. In his monograph on Carter, Linden Peach produces a comparable analysis of *Wise Children* and the twin showgirls that star the novel. Similar to Hutcheon's characterisation of the circus in Carter's penultimate novel, Peach sees the space of the theatre where most of *Wise Children* takes place as a site "marked by internal difference, antagonism and cultural tensions" (148). He argues that it is by dwelling on the stage that the protagonists Dora and Nora Chance are able to exchange their identities; they become one another as well as become other people and creatures in a way that destabilises their supposed "original" identity and exposes the constructedness of an essential, core self.

As I mentioned above, Carter's interest in what we could call the deconstruction of gender identity was not a sudden new development in her work as a writer. Whilst her post-1980 works undoubtedly established it as a central concern, its origins can be traced to the author's literary production of the mid-1970s. As Sarah Gamble argues, since the publication of *Fireworks* in 1974 Carter's work shows an increasing preoccupation with the "destruction of the single, unified subject" whereby "'Woman' becomes 'women' in all their infinite, often contradictory, variety" (*Front Line* 156). What constitutes an innovation, in line with Hutcheon and Peach's descriptions of the novels, is the discovery of narrative ec-centricity as an effective strategy to materialise this idea. In the light of this, and according to my analysis, we are prompted to reconsider Carter's *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*, and her engagement with the short story anthology more broadly, as part of a wider account about the development of new literary methods to convey her ideas on gender identity. Indeed, this argument is strengthened by the fact that Carter's conceptualisation of feminine identity in the text in question finds significant continuation in her next anthologies. In her introduction to her first *Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, Carter declares that her women-only collection revels in a heterogeneity that is set to foreground the multiplicity of, and differences between, the female figures it includes: "I haven't put this collection together from such heterogeneous sources to show that we are all sisters under the skin . . . I don't believe that, anyway. Sisters under the skin we might be, but that doesn't mean we've got much in common" (xiv). Like *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*, her prefatory essay also carries out, from the very first line, the work of cancelling out the presumed centre of the collection to this effect: "Although this is called a book of fairy tales, you will find very few actual fairies within the following pages" (xi). Something which is

reinforced by the inner structure of the book in seven parts which bear such disparate headings as “Brave, Bold and Wilful,” “Good Girls and Where it Gets Them” or “Moral Tales,” each containing, moreover, a varying number of texts ranging from three to eighteen.⁴¹

However, studying Carter’s contribution to the short story anthology within the confines of her literary oeuvre limits our view of the cultural incidence of these works, and of the women-only short story anthology more generally. In particular, it blinds us to the fact that Carter’s anthologies are not an isolated phenomenon in literary culture, but the most prominent examples of a network of short story anthologies which not only might be seen to work towards very similar ends but do so by following comparable strategies. To start with, the form of *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* can be linked to some of the “feminist” anthologies I addressed in the previous chapter. Both Ann Hunter’s *Everyday Matters*, and Anna Gibbs and Alison Tilson’s *Frictions* constitute precedents of Carter’s work to the extent that these collections are also concerned with exploiting the multi-voiced nature of the anthology to accentuate tensions and contradictions between the texts that they include. As Hunter informs us apropos of her anthology: “[T]hese stories have one thing in common: they do not sit comfortably” (ix). More explicitly, Gibbs and Tilson explain:

we wanted to allow for different kinds of writing and different points of view to comment on each other. Which is why the pieces we have chosen don’t necessarily sit easily in the same book . . . The danger of an anthology is that it homogenises what it contains between its covers, but we would like to think that the frictions in ours speak as loudly as the fictions. (3)

Although both Hunter’s, and Gibbs and Tilson’s texts are, ultimately, tellingly different anthologies to Carter’s—they are collections of new and especially commissioned writing—their articulation contextualises the realisation of *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* within an existing tradition that, however slender, is

⁴¹ Even though Carter died before she could preface and complete the notes to her second *Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, the structural articulation of this book was complete and it corresponds with that of her previous effort

interested in the possibilities to enact conflict that the short story anthology form affords, and the political significance that derives from doing so.⁴²

More importantly, Carter's anthology is closely connected to—and the forerunner of—a group of women-only short story anthologies published by Virago in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Indeed, the publication of *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* marked the start of a brief but intense burst of similarly conceived anthologies in the press's catalogue. In 1989, for example, Lisa St. Aubin de Terán edited for the publishing house *Indiscreet Journeys: Stories of Women on the Road*; in 1992, Georgina Hammick's *Virago Book of Love and Loss: Stories of the Heart* was first published; and in the following year, both Elaine Showalter's *Daughters of Decadence: Stories by Women Writers of the Fin de Siècle* and Shena Mackay's *Such Devoted Sisters: An Anthology of Stories* appeared in the market almost simultaneously. Although they do so in varying degrees and following slightly different strategies, all these texts might be associated with the articulation of Carter's collection in the sense that they also present us with ec-centric textual grounds which work to frustrate the possibility of locating essential conceptualisations of the feminine self. Mackay's anthology is the text which establishes the closest parallels with *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* in this respect. In her introduction to *Such Devoted Sisters*, Mackay emulates Carter by ironically apologising for not having included a story in the collection about what she considers to be the anthology's thematic core: there is one obvious categorical omission from what is a catholic selection but was intended to be a broader church," she writes, "there is, *mea culpa*, no story about nuns" (5). Further, Mackay also problematises the generic classification of her collection—its claim to be "*An Anthology of Stories*"—by including texts such as Christina Rossetti's narrative poem "Goblin Market," the opening chapters of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*, and a medley of passages from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and *Good Wives*. This generically promiscuous understanding of short fiction does not simply reproduce

⁴² In fact, as Barbara Benedict argues in *Making the Modern Reader*, the deployment of the genre which these collections exemplify can be traced back to "Restoration anthologies [which] allow[ed] competing, even oppositional, voices or discourses to be heard within the same printed arena" (10) and that, in doing so, might be thought to enact what she calls a "subversive deferral of central authority" (221).

but accentuates the one I have analysed in *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women*. Showalter's more historically focused *Daughters of Decadence* works in a similar way. "Decadence," in her collection, does not denote a specific subject matter but the late 19th-century literary movement which she defines as being not only a pre-eminently male-centred artistic project, but one explicitly established against feminine forms of expression: "the decadent artist was invariably male, and decadence, as a hyper-aesthetic movement, defined itself against the feminine and biological creativity of women" (x). Moreover, Showalter goes on to argue, drama and the novel were the privileged art forms of the fin de siècle (viii). Women writing short stories at the time, then, not only did not participate in the Decadent movement, but created outside and against it both thematically and formally. In this way, the texts that constitute her anthology do not revolve around the identified core but variously react and veer away from it.

St Aubin de Teran's and Hammick's anthologies use a somewhat different method towards the same end. Their ec-centricity depends less upon the cancelling out or voiding of a thematic centre than upon dispersing its meaning. In both cases, the collections are built around concepts whose capacity to be rendered unspecific is exploited by the editors. In the case of the former collection, *Indiscreet Journeys*, St Aubin de Terán sets out by admitting that whilst her original intention was to confection an anthology of great women travellers

the more I considered that genre of explorer, the more I realized that the same spirit of adventure was to be found not only in the parson's daughters who got away and walked around Africa or Egypt, but also in the ones who stayed at home. (xi)

The move allows her to shift the meaning of "road stories" in the anthology's subtitle from a thematic focus to an all-encompassing subject: "The road I chose became very much the road of life, and the ultimate qualification for inclusion was merely to have set foot on it" (xii). Similarly, Hammick's adoption of "love and loss" as a subject matter for her anthology quickly proves to be less a thematic restriction than a mechanism to maximise the remit of the collection and blur is supposed core. The editor opens her introduction, to this effect, by quoting Maupassant on the notion of "love": "It is a short word, but it contains all: it means the body, the soul, the life, the entire being . . . It is not a word; it is an inexpressible state" (vii). From this, Hammick goes on to argue that the notions of "love and loss" have a "resolutely

abstract” character, and that the fact that they are often “associated in our minds” enhances their “elusiveness and ambiguity” (vii). This understanding enables her to curate a collection which is not confined to “romantic love only, nor to stories in which love and loss is the overt subject matter” (vii). By enlarging and rendering indeterminate the concepts around which they are built these anthologies work analogously to Carter’s, Mackay’s and Showalter’s texts in that they make impossible their conceptualisation as a unified whole.⁴³

Like Carter’s work, these texts’ ec-centric architecture legitimises a fundamental heterogeneity in the contents that they feature, which, as I have shown, impacts directly on the notion of feminine identity they advance. The proliferation of these kinds of collections, thus, suggests that Carter’s text is part of a literary culture which saw in the form of the anthology an opportunity to express new ideas about gender. In her recent study *The Virago Story*, Catherine Riley provides an account of the publishing house’s changing attitudes towards their engagement with gender identity and feminism in the 1980s and 1990s that supports precisely this claim. She explains that, far from immune to the “fracturing of feminism as a political movement [which] occurred during the 1980s,” and which I have outlined above (64), Virago was deeply changed by it. The press endeavoured from an early stage to engage with the new sense of feminist thought as a “more complex, fragmented and often fraught” political project “that can be largely defined by its fractures rather than its shared focus” (64). Riley quotes Ursula Owen, a founder director of Virago, who acknowledged, in 1988, how representational issues as well as the wish to remain at the forefront of feminist thought and activism were key concerns of Virago throughout the 1980s (66-7). To fulfil these aims, the press directed its efforts, on the

⁴³ An apparent similarity exists between Hammick’s *Virago Book of Love and Loss* and the group of short story anthologies that are cast together and analysed in Chapter 4 (especially Victoria Hislop’s *The Story: Love, Loss and the Lives of Women*, around which the chapter centres). Yet, whilst Hammick’s engagement with emotional labels works primarily as a diffusive strategy, Hislop’s and other similar anthologies, as it will become clear, employ emotions as a connective device allowing for the integration of the collection’s multiple components. This is a decisive contrast affecting the work performed by the collections and prompting the consideration of Hammick’s text here.

one hand, towards the inclusion of titles in their catalogue from women of black and minority ethnic backgrounds as well as working-class and non-heterosexual. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Cage Bird Sings* was published in 1984, for instance, and the rights to reprint the works of Zora Neale Hurston or the novels of Radclyffe Hall were sought and acquired during this same period of time. On the other hand, both Owen and Carmen Callil —also a founding director of the press— admit having come to the realisation then that from early in the 1980s much of feminist thought was not being produced and distributed through conventional channels. Owen explains: “what happened in the early 1980s is that a lot of feminist ideas got written in the form of fiction” (qtd. in Riley 66). And Callil is said to similarly have thought that “reading [fiction] . . . was the most effective way of communicating ideas” (Riley 66). Riley notices how Virago responded to this in the decade going from 1983 to 1992 by notably downplaying the number of theoretical and socio-political titles it published promoting instead the publication of novels and other kinds of fictional works. As she puts it: “during its second decade Virago moved more into communicating its politics through fiction” (66). Riley's account does not consider the bulk of Virago's short story anthologies appearing within the time frame that she outlines. Yet, my analysis of the workings of the different anthologies published by the press inserts them in the critic's narrative of Virago's involvement with gender theory and feminist politics, and its development as a publishing house. Not only this but, I would argue, it confers on them a remarkable prominence in these projects in the sense that they constitute, as I have shown, a particularly effective and original employment of the capacities of a literary genre towards the engagement with and contribution to questions of gender-formation present in the broader socio-cultural context.

Indeed, the particular use of the anthology that these texts demonstrate complicates and, to a large extent, goes against some of the most traditional characterisations of the genre which have tended to see it as always complicit with structures of power and their reification. Instead of doing this, these anthologies' eccentric form exploits what Leah Price has defined as the genre's capacity to dissociate the material unit (the book) from the verbal unit (the text) by strengthening of the centrifugal forces of the collections. In doing this, they reveal what I referred to in the Introduction as “the liberating potential of [the anthology's] combinatory structure,” and its capacity to “challenge prevailing models of authorship” and

authority (Price 3). Realising this, moreover, allows for the productive connection of these examples of the woman-only short story with current debates in the field of Short Fiction Studies. In particular, I propose we can link the articulation and cultural function of these texts to topical discussions about gender and the short story as a form of “minor” literature. In their introduction to *British Women Short Story Writers*, Emma Young and James Bailey draw attention to the fact that one of the characteristic traits of short fiction as a literary form is its resistance to stable definitions (12). Such resistance, they argue, grants the genre a perpetual marginality which can be seen to reflect the experience of women in society. Simultaneously, this same displacement has enabled and continues to enable a space from which women can produce literature that not only does not subscribe to the “main,” male-dominated literary modes of the novel or lyrical poetry but challenges them. Their contentions echo both Clare Hanson’s and Mary Eagleton’s reasonings on this same subject developed in their essays in *Re-Reading the Short Story*. There, Hanson writes, for example, that “[t]he short story has been from its inception a particularly appropriate vehicle for the expression of an ex-centric alienated vision of women” (3). Expanding this idea, Eagleton in turn remarks:

[m]any critics of the short story have stressed that . . . it holds a marginal and ambiguous position in literary culture, and that it is peopled with characters who are in some way at odds with dominant culture . . . Although none of these critics actually mention women . . . we can see in the image they offer of the short story writer and character —non-hegemonic, peripheral, contradictory— a reflection of the position of women in patriarchal society. (62)

In his article on the fiction, and feminist and postcolonial politics of Alice Munro, “Story into History,” Adrian Hunter conceptualises this further by proposing that short fiction could be thought of in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “minor” literature. Summarily, this denotes a literature whose off-centeredness is deliberate and constitutes an alternative to, and critique of, “major” discourses and genres, and the hierarchies that determine their organisation (220-1). “Minor” literature embraces, thus, its “minor” status instead of aiming to become an example of “major” discourse at some point. In accordance with this, Hunter argues that the form has been susceptible to the “inscription of female alterity” (219). Yet, at the same time, he suggests that this makes the short story especially liable to express any kind of counter-narrative, not simply that of women in relation to patriarchy. To put

this in a way that speaks more directly to my argument, we could say that the “minor” character of the short form makes it especially suited to oppose any sort of centralised and centralising discourse. In the light of this, my analysis of the short story anthology can be put in dialogue with the concept of “minor” literature in Short Fiction Studies in two different, interconnected ways. First, the notion helps us conceive of the anthology form as a textual format that, according to what I have argued so far in these first two chapters, is able to mitigate but also to bring to the fore and exploit the “minor” qualities of the short story genre. The form’s potential to disperse authority in the way I have analysed here reinforces the specificity of each of its components and, more importantly, creates meaning out of their resistance to partake in a master-narrative. Simultaneously, I suggest that this reading of the short story anthology opens up a space in this discussion to consider what we could call the incidence of context in the “minor” character attributed to the short story form. More specifically, focus on the workings of *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* and other short story anthologies with an analogous architecture suggest that the “minor” quality I identified in their contents might come less from a natural, inherent capacity of the form than from the way that the form is put to work in the context where it appears. In this sense, the anthology can be thought to prompt us to consider the “minor” status of short fiction as a relational, rather than an essential quality. It suggests that “minor,” as a quality, resides not in the short story texts per se but in the relationships they establish and the ways in which they interact with larger body of work they are inserted in.

Having established the incidence and contributions of the short story anthology to the development of essential and poststructuralist ideations of womanhood, the following two chapters take a slightly different direction. They focus on the participation of the genre not so much in questions of definition but in questions of coalition. More specifically, they investigate the ways in which anthologies have been invested in the imagining of women’s collectivity in a manner that, precisely, manages to bypass the conundrums raised by the essentialist question in gender theory and feminist thought. In doing so they build on the idea of the short story anthology’s centrality to the development of gender politics, but also add a new dimension to the analysis developed thus far. The next chapter draws attention to ethnically and/or sexuality-marked women-only short story anthologies as texts which have undertaken precisely this task. It studies how the subgroup has produced

significant collections which exploit the intersectional approach of their texts alongside the formal properties of the genre to intimate theorisations of women as a non-essentialist but cohesive social group.

Chapter 3 — “Writerly Designs”: Segmentivity in Intersectional Women-only Short Story Anthologies

The preceding chapters have shown how the women-only short story anthology has been employed to articulate two opposing versions of female identity: an idea of womanhood as an essential, coherent and unified category, or else, conversely, as an atomised and fundamentally heterogeneous one. Generating these conceptualisations of female identity are the different ways in which the anthologies understand the short story form and their balancing of centripetal and centrifugal forces inherent to the genre’s multiple and combinatory nature. This analysis situates the short story anthology at the heart of ontological debates around the idea of essential identities pervasive in gender theory and feminist thought since at least the 1980s. In her 1996 book *Space, Time and Perversion*, Elizabeth Grosz identified “a major dispute between feminist theorists” (46), with one side arguing for the need and use of embracing a theory of fundamental “sexual difference” (54) between men and women in order to define and legitimise the female subject as well as a woman’s perspective of the world, and the other demanding a deconstruction of, precisely, unified and unifying definitions of womanhood in the face of the homogenising pitfalls of such projects. Chapters 3 and 4 build on the theorisation of the short story anthology as a key participant in the articulation of both of these positions whilst, at the same time, taking the discussion in a different direction. In particular, they explore different ways in which the women-only short story anthology has worked in conjunction with different strands of feminist thought to formulate possibilities of political association amongst women which do not rely on, or move beyond, the question of what women are.

The configuration of a politics which is not caught up in, or indeed hindered by, ontological questions regarding the nature of female identity has long preoccupied feminists and gender theorists, and remains a key concern in these disciplines today. As soon as debates around the issue of essentialism started to emerge, so did a number of critical voices concerned with the politically paralysing nature of the discussion.⁴⁴ In a recent article on the subject, Ann Heilmann writes that to this day

⁴⁴ For early accounts demanding and trying to create ways of moving past these discussions see Donna Haraway’s landmark “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Teresa de

“[e]ssentialism is a vexed issue for feminists” (79). On the one hand, “the difficulty involved in rallying a political movement around unstable and shifting signifiers” problematises the supposed radicalism of an anti-essentialist or poststructuralist theorisation of female identity; on the other, “universalist categories which lend unifying impulses and directional force to political action threaten to reaffirm biologically determinist paradigms” (Heilmann 79). This impasse has motivated the increasing importance, in feminist thought of the last thirty or so years, of establishing a fruitful

relationship between ‘Woman’ —a cultural and ideological composite Other constructed through diverse representational discourses (scientific, literary, judicial, linguistic, cinematic, etc.)— and ‘women’ —real, material subjects of their collective histories. (Talpade Mohanty 242)

Another way of putting this is to say that parallel to discussions around what women are, feminists have fostered an interest in both locating and articulating views of womanhood as a collective combined through non-essentialist understandings of gender. This project has attained prominence in recent years with the advent of the markedly global and action-driven fourth wave of feminism. As Ealasaid Munro explains, “the fourth wave centres around . . . the realisation that women are not a homogeneous group” (25) and the simultaneous need for communication and alliance across difference. She points to the Internet and, more particularly, social media, as tools which are enabling precisely this.⁴⁵ In what follows, I argue that specific manifestations of the women-only short story anthology have also been importantly interested in exploiting capacities inherent to the form to develop models through which these aims can be fulfilled.

Lauretis’ book *Alice Doesn’t*—the ideas of both of which I invoke and engage more particularly in the following chapter— or Linda Alcoff’s article “Cultural Feminism versus Post-structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory,” which I have already mentioned in Chapter 2.

⁴⁵ Both in the following chapter and, more significantly, in the Conclusion to this thesis I briefly consider ways to think about the porous relationship between the anthology and digital media, and how analyses of the former may inform or, more accurately, be portable to readings of the latter.

To do this, I first pay attention to anthologies of short stories written by women of racial or sexual minority backgrounds. I examine their articulation in the light of the development of intersectional theory to argue that examples of these texts have not just helped to make visible identity coordinates traditionally marginalised by mainstream feminism, but also been concerned with, and worked towards, reconfiguring understandings of how women can establish connections amongst them without sacrificing a complex and internally multifarious view of gender identity. Hence, whilst veering away from the questions raised in the first two chapters, Chapter 3 also establishes a continuity with them: in its engagement with intersectional feminism, it carries on imbricating the form and function of women-only short story anthologies with the broad institutional history of gender theory and feminism. Chapter 4, on the other hand, alters this narrative slightly. It concentrates on a tradition of women-only short story anthologies built around relational or emotional labels to propose that these texts too have worked to produce a non-essentialist view of women as a political body. In arguing this, though, my analysis puts these works in relation with a recent and narrower scholastic trend: the so-called “affective turn” in both literary and feminist studies. Despite the change of scale, this zeroing in is both necessary and useful. Not only does the articulation of these texts demand that we adopt an affective lens to elucidate their cultural function, as we shall see. Doing so allows, moreover, for a situating of the short story anthology and the reading practices it can promote alongside recent developments in the academic study of literature and culture more widely. Seeing the genre speaking to topical trends in literary and cultural studies opens a space from which to consider the currency of the short story anthology in the disciplines as well as intimate possible ways forward for its study.

Intersectional feminism and the short story anthology

As a critical concept, intersectionality emerged out of the same critical impulse against some of the essentialising workings of second-wave feminism which underlay the rise of poststructuralist gender theory and which I addressed in Chapter 2. The notion was originally devised with the intention to make visible the way in which black women were underrepresented in mainstream feminist culture. For

Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term in 1989, the idea was to conceptualise women as traversed by multiple identities in order to

show how white feminists excluded black women from the feminist movement by setting a white, middle-class agenda and how, at the same time, black women were not fully recognized within the anti-racist movement because of a male bias. (Carbin and Edenheim 235)

In its development, though, intersectionality has come to exceed this original frame in order to denote, more widely, how women in general are constituted by different and interlinked strands, and that, as a consequence, so are the social, political, economic and cultural oppressions they either impart or suffer.⁴⁶ In this way, the concept has proved a powerful tool to make visible the “*lived experiences* of multiply marginalised” women of any background which “could not be explained by the dominant single-axis paradigms in research and political activism” (Grzanka 70). But intersectionality has also provided a structure through which to conceive all these marginalisations as “being ‘kin-related,’ combined, ‘conjoined,’ in one single entity” (Carbin and Edenheim 241). Ange-Marie Hancock has usefully synthesised these positions by proposing a two-fold understanding of intersectionality’s intellectual projects: she refers to “the (in)visibility project,” which strives to give voice to women from non-normative identity backgrounds, and the “rethinking categorical categories project,” which seeks to reconfigure understandings of women as a collective in the light of inherent internal dissonances in the group (126). In this last

⁴⁶ Although intersectionality is increasingly used in the social sciences at large to conceptualise all kinds of subjects, not just women, several critics have noticed the extent to which the concept remains predominantly attached to feminist practices: Maria Carbin and Sara Edenheim remarked in the early 2010s: “In the last 10 years the use of the concept intersectionality has exploded in . . . gender research. Special issues have been devoted to the concept and it has been celebrated as one of the more important interventions in feminist theory” (233-4). Its popularity in the field, they further explain, has prompted discussions on whether it should be “regarded as a common platform for a new ‘paradigm’ that can replace gender research . . . or as a ‘nodal point’ for gender researchers (234). In a similar vein, Leslie McCall has argued that “feminists are perhaps alone in the academy in the extent to which they have embraced intersectionality” (1771).

sense, intersectionality provides a paradigm through which differences between women may be engaged, interlocked to produce what Hancock calls a “transversal politics . . . and dialogic practices that seek to obviate the trenchant universalism-relativism debates as an alternative to identity politics” (134).

The anthology has been an instrumental genre shaping intersectional thought in both of these incarnations. Anthologies of short stories and other kinds of writing build around racially or sexually inflected versions of women identity emerged in parallel to the two kinds of women-only short story anthologies I have described until now. With some of the earliest examples located in the 1970s⁴⁷ their appearance preceded by more than a decade the materialisation of intersectionality as a critical concept. Moreover, although varied in their form and ends, we can distinguish two main trends in the articulation of these texts which largely map onto the two projects of intersectionality identified by Hancock. First, many of these collections are originally born out of the wish to give voice to and conceptualise the identity of women whose non-white, non-middle-class, or non-heterosexual background put them at odds with, or excluded them from, the mainstream of the feminist project. In her introduction to the first of these kinds of texts, the 1970 anthology *The Black Woman*, Toni Cade Bambara writes, for example:

how relevant are the truths, the experiences, the findings of white women to Black women? . . . I don't know that our priorities are the same, that our concerns and methods are the same, or even similar enough so that we can afford to depend on this new field of experts (white, female). (15)

She goes on to advance that, subsequently, her anthology is an attempt to “piece together . . . an overview of ourselves” (15) and “reflect the preoccupations of contemporary Black women” (17). Similarly, in the later anthology of short stories by Latinas, *Cuentos*, the editors explain that their intention in curating the text has

⁴⁷ As I explicit below, the first intersectional anthology of women's writing is generally reputed to be Toni Cade Bambara's *The Black Woman*, published in 1970. Other examples of these kinds of texts published in this decade include: Phyllis Birkby's 1973 *Amazon Expedition: A Lesbian Feminist Anthology*, Elly Bulkin and Joan Larkin's 1975 *Amazon Poetry: An Anthology of Lesbian Poetry* or Jane B. Katz's 1977 *I Am the Fire of Time: The Voices of Native American Women*.

been that of “captur[ing] some essential expression . . . that could be called ‘Latina’ and ‘Latina-identified’” (ix).

The majority of short story anthologies intersecting gender with race and/or sexuality may be included, in fact, in this category. These texts manipulate the short story anthology form in ways that are akin to those of the “literary” collections analysed in Chapter 1. That is to say, even when they do not use the modernist short story to do so, they tend to establish an association between the identities they are trying to represent and theorise, and specific manifestations of the short story genre, either in terms of form or subject matter. To pursue the case of *Cuentos* further, for instance, an association is drawn there between the experience of Latinas and the oral or oral-like narratives exchanged in the heart of the family or neighbourhood and passed on from one generation to another: “Most Latinas, in looking to find some kind of literary tradition among our women, will usually speak of the “cuentos” our mothers and grandmothers told us” (vii). Likewise, in her preface to *The Diva Book of Short Stories* Helen Sandler argues for a link between lesbian identity and short fictions written in what she has “come to call Modern Lesbian . . . a way of weaving a story without sticking to a single thread, of letting the thoughts wander into wordplay or a witty aside without losing the plot” (viii). And in *Centres of Self: Stories by Black American Women*, to give one last example, Judith and Martin Hamer acknowledge a privileging in their collection of “stories fall[ing] into the category of social realism” due to the fact they consider them the most successful to “examine, define, and distil” the experience of African-American women (18). The way in which the functioning of these and other similar texts extends my findings regarding anthologies presented under the “literary” rubric exemplifies a dynamic which has been noticed by feminist scholars. A critical thread exists, more specifically, which has seen in the theoretical workings of marginalised feminism a replication of those of mainstream feminism. As Toril Moi explains it:

lesbian and/or black feminist criticism have presented exactly the same *methodological* and *theoretical* problems as the rest of Anglo-American feminist criticism . . . Instead of focusing on ‘women’ in literature, the lesbian critic focuses on ‘lesbian women,’ as the black feminist will focus on ‘black women’ in literature. (86)

The second trend of intersectional anthologies is constituted by texts whose interest in conceptualising particular identity coordinates co-exists with, or is

substituted by, an interest in using the form to foster dialogues and collaborations amongst women from various marginal backgrounds. Several critics have pointed to a series of generically hybrid or multi-genre anthologies published throughout the 1980s and 1990s as the main texts where this project is undertaken.⁴⁸ Cynthia G. Franklin, who has studied the form and function of these texts most searchingly, describes them as collections of especially commissioned pieces in which women from marginalised groups use “a mix of creative and polemical writings to express and directly address their cultural differences,” but also to “participate in textual conversations” and create “textual communities” (12). The idea is that whilst the generic promiscuity is expressive of the multiplicity of, and differences between, the identities of the women these texts include, the contents of the individual pieces are geared to partake in similar themes, echo or respond to each other, so that a picture of interconnected difference is weaved as a result. The introductions and often the titles of these works advance an image of the anthology, correspondingly, as a networking technology; a site where not only radically different kinds of writing but radically different subjectivities may be combined. Such is the case, for instance, with the most prominent example of this subset of texts, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa’s *This Bridge Called My Back*, whose title encapsulates the notion of interrelated individuality through the metaphors of bridging and the body. In their preface to the text, Moraga describes the collection as being about “the pain and shock of difference, the joy of commonness, the exhilaration of meeting through incredible odds against it” (xiv). Another example of this may be found in Evelyn Torton Beck’s *Nice Jewish Girls*, which gathers texts by Jewish lesbians in an attempt to both highlight the disparity of subjectivities included in the group and enact the links between them, as well as the links between being Jewish and being a lesbian more generally:

we ask, collectively, in different voices, genres, and styles . . . [w]hat does it mean for us to identify as Jewish lesbians? . . . How are we, as Jews, different from each other . . . and in what ways are we the same? . . . What similarities do we share with lesbians from other ethnic groups? How are we different?
(xxx)

⁴⁸ See, for example, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (58-62), and Hancock (126-60)

For Franklin, these anthologies constitute unique cultural artefacts and the main actors responsible for bringing about a sea-change in possibilities regarding the formation of feminist collectives. From their marginal identity positions, she argues, they did not just propose, but produced models to establish associations between women which “do not deny or exaggerate [their] differences from one another” (5). In this sense, their participation in the intersectionality project of rethinking categorical relationships may be deemed two-fold: first, the design and realisation of these texts provides for ways of reconfiguring relationships and alliances amongst women in the face of, and respecting, difference, or else, without homogenising their identity; and second, by doing this through a focus on the writings and interrelations of collectives typically displaced by mainstream feminism, they also upset or reshape the intellectual hierarchy of the women’s movement.

My aim in the rest of this chapter is to show that specific examples of intersectional short story anthologies also contributed to this project.⁴⁹ To do so, I jointly consider two anthologies, one by African-American women writers and another by lesbian writers, published at the turn of the 1990s: Mary Helen Washington’s *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds* and Margaret Reynolds’ *Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories*. Although different on the surface —Washington’s text is a 1989 collating and revamping of two previously published texts, as its title indicates, whereas Reynolds’ 1993 anthology is a completely new endeavour; additionally, there is remarkably little crossover between the texts, with *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds* including only one lesbian author amongst its list of thirteen

⁴⁹ A distinction is due, here, between intersectional anthologies of short stories and multi-genre anthologies which use the label “stories” in their titles. The first group of texts, amongst which are the anthologies I analyse, strive to produce selections of short fiction which they source from the existing tradition (even when they might at times recontextualise as stories texts which were not originally intended to be so, or which belonged to longer works). The second group of texts —amongst which are, for instance, Julia Penelope Stanley and Susan J. Wolfe’s *The Coming Out Stories* or the more recent Kogi Naidoo and Fay Patel’s *Working Women: Stories of Strife, Struggle and Survival*— understand stories as an umbrella term for self-expressions which can come in any literary form (short stories, poems, essays). It is the first group I refer to and focus on here.

writers and, correspondingly, *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* featuring just one black author amongst its more than thirty contributors— there are significant grounds for their combined analysis. To start with, both texts are central in the canons of their respective traditions. Washington’s collection is customarily seen as one of the most important efforts to promote the short fiction and writing in general of African-American women to date. As one commentator put it: “Washington has done more than any other single critic to expand the Afro-American and Anglo-American feminist canons” (Smith “Self-Critical” 15). On the other hand, Reynolds’ work pioneered the shift from margin to centre in the publication of lesbian fiction and the lesbian short story in particular. As Katherine A. Brandt explains, Penguin led the move of lesbian short fiction from alternative to mainstream presses (capitalising importantly on the process) (40), and Reynolds’ was the first anthology of its kind to appear in the catalogue of the publishing house. More importantly, however, a link between the collections exists based on the fact that they are similarly geared to express possibilities of non-essentialist combination amongst women in a fashion that both resembles and is different from that of the multi-genre anthologies described above. The description and analysis of the distinct strategies whereby they attain this conceptualisation is the central concern of the following section.

By undertaking this task, I do not mean to destabilise Franklin’s account regarding the unicity and importance of multi-genre anthologies. Rather, my argument that short story anthologies appearing in the wake of these kinds of texts show important overlaps—in terms of form and, especially, function—with multi-genre anthologies betrays, if anything, the influence exerted by these latter works in a way that reinstates their importance and cultural centrality. But I do mean to enrich, with my analysis, the critical narrative which has associated the anthology with the rethinking categorical relationships project of intersectionality. Unlike multi-genre collections, the texts I focus on are not gatherings of especially commissioned and edited texts, but collections of pre-existing (and, a priori, genre-specific) writing which the editor recontextualises in the anthology. This difference elicits a change in the strategies available to convey images of cultural dialogue and interconnectedness across difference in the anthology. In particular, it hinders possibilities of creating a heterogeneous textual space in which the different pieces are *apparently* speaking to each other. In the face of this difficulty, I argue that the texts in question do not

attempt so much to articulate what we could call a disjointed but cohesive or connected textual space, opting instead for the articulation of what I describe as discontinuous and *connectable* textual grounds. Although a fine distinction which, in fact, does not yield a new set of political implications, engaging with the specific mechanisms through which these short story anthologies articulate their ethos produces a valuable variant to the existing accounts of how intersectional anthologies have been able to express non-essentialist views of women as a collective body. In the second and last section of the chapter, I adopt the concept of “segmentivity” to systematise the workings of these two texts and, at the same time, show how their articulation opens new possibilities to think about the form and functioning of the genre. More specifically, I argue that conceptualising the short story anthology as a segmented text makes available a connection between these kinds of works and a tradition of critical inquiry concerned with the reader’s participation in the creation of a literary work. On the one hand, this generates a fresh angle from which to approach and study the formal capacities of the short story anthology. Moving us away from the metaphor of forces I have relied on until this point, it opens the door to examine alternative ways in which the form is able to signify. On the other, it allows me to advance a view of the anthology as a genre that can and has reified some of the largely unexplored political dimensions of otherwise widely used textuality theories.

Case study: Mary Helen Washington’s *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds* and Margaret Reynolds’ *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories*

When Reynolds’ *Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* was first published in 1993, the anthology was met with a mixture of appreciation and confusion. Whilst critics generally acknowledged the importance of the arrival of such a text in the literary market, they also tended to express puzzlement at the way in which the collection had been put together. Writing for *The Independent*, for instance, Will Self unfavourably compared the work to David Leavitt and Mark Mitchell’s *Penguin Book of Gay Short Stories*, published in the following year, based on the fact that Reynolds’ text displayed a perplexingly lax understanding of what constitutes a short story: “Seven of the ‘short stories’ in this anthology,” he wrote, “aren’t stories at all,

but extracts from longer works, in one case a non-fictional work.”⁵⁰ In a similar vein, feminist critic Bonnie Zimmerman remarked that Reynolds’ “book is admirably ambitious, but also raises a number of nagging questions,” especially “about what constitutes a short story” (23). She complains about an excessive resistance of the anthology to understand short fiction as a “unique genre with its own rules and challenges for the exploitation of limits, compression and shape” (23).

Indeed, whilst the majority of texts included in *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* are putative examples of short fiction, a salient characteristic of the anthology is its predisposition to recontextualise as stories a wide array of textual forms. The collection does not only include fragments from longer works such as Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* or Monique Wittig’s *Les Guérillères*, but also pieces which straddle the line between fiction and criticism such as H.D.’s “The Wise Sappho” or Nicole Brossard’s “These Our Mothers,” or intermedial pieces like Alison Bechdel’s comic strip “Serial Monogamy” or a fragment of Djuna Barnes’ *Ladies Almanack*. Although the valuative goals of the review genre compel critics to read the featuring of these texts as a drawback of the anthology, their reaction is also telling, from a more analytical perspective, of the effect that this decision has upon the reception of the text. Namely, it denotes the extent to which their inclusion generates incongruence: it “naggingly” disrupts possibilities of reading the collection as formally coherent or unified, highlighting instead the inherently discrete and discontinuous nature of the anthology as a genre. We can, from this angle, re-describe Reynolds’ collection not as one that fails to comply with the generic exigencies of the short story anthology, but as a text, instead, interested in underlining and amplifying, through form, the breaks, shifts and gaps intrinsic to the anthology. This hypothesis is supported by a second tendency of the collection — unnoticed by critics — to feature several “experimental” stories whose articulation is similarly marked by internal heterogeneity and clashes between different codes and

⁵⁰ Self, Will. “Book Review: The Boys Come Out on Top.” *The Independent*. 13 February 1994. URL: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/book-review-the-boys-come-out-on-top-the-penguin-book-of-lesbian-short-stories-ed-margaret-reynolds-1393975.html> Accessed 13 Oct 19.

registers.⁵¹ Kathy Acker's "The Language of the Body," for example, amalgamates a plotted storyline concerning the female narrator's fraught marriage during the Second World War years with journal entries written at a later point in time and, arguably, by a different person, about female masturbation and the (im)possibility of rendering orgasms into language. And in Jeanette Winterson's "The Poetics of Sex," the narrative of a relationship between two women is punctuated by the insertion of questions — "*Why Do You Sleep With Girls?*" (412), "*Which One of You Is the Man?*" (413)— which act as headings of the different scenes of the piece, but never directly answered in or by them. These and other texts both reproduce and contribute to a characterisation of the collection as a whole as a text revelling in formal disjunctions.

Black-Eyed Susans and Midnight Birds articulates a comparable realisation, albeit following a different strategy. Even when the anthology does occasionally reinterpret as short fiction excerpts from novels,⁵² discontinuity is principally introduced here via Washington's editorial apparatus. Besides a general introduction to the collection, the editor includes short prefatory essays before each of the pieces or cluster of pieces by the same author which both take a variety of forms and fulfil different functions: whilst several of them advance Washington's own reading and interpretation of the works that follow, others are employed to insert especially commissioned biographical notes by the authors, interviews, critical snippets, or extracts from other works. Thus, the introductory piece to Paulette Childress White's text, for instance, opens with the writer's own voice: "*When I am asked to speak about myself, this necessarily comes first; I am married and the mother of five sons*" (35). A first-person account of how another featured author, Sherley Anne Williams, became a writer is also used to preface her contribution "Meditations on History,"

⁵¹ In her introduction to the anthology, Reynolds concedes: "Many of the stories in this collection are experimental" (xxxii). She goes on to define these texts as not just pieces challenging literary conventions in one way or another, but as texts "breaking up . . . literary form" (xxxii).

⁵² This is the case, for instance, of Toni Morrison's featured text, "Seemothermotherisverynice," extracted from the novel *The Bluest Eye*, and of Gwendolyn Brooks' "If You're Light and Have Long Hair" and "At the Burns-Coppers'," both originally chapters of the novel *Maud Martha*.

whereas the essays introducing both Paule Marshall's or Alice Walker's texts, in contrast, both engage with the authors' essayistic work as well as with critical materials by other scholars to advance a political analysis of their oeuvre. And in the case of Gwendolyn Brooks, the text that preambles her featured pieces is made out of lengthy quotations and readings from the author's novel *Maud Martha*: "[*Maud Martha*] traces the girlhood and growth to womanhood of a dark-skinned protagonist through whose consciousness the entire story is filtered," the essay starts (111). Analogous to the employment of genre in *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories*, the insertion of these prefaces physically marks the transition between contributors. In doing so, they enlarge the distance between pieces and, by inviting of myriad voices into the work, multiply textual thresholds in a way that undermines possibilities of reading the collection as a cohesive text, emphasising instead the multiple, sectioned, and shifting form of the anthology genre.

We saw in the previous chapter how the curation of an anthology marked by internal difference led to a singularisation of the pieces included in the text, and how this, in turn, was liable to be interpreted as fundamentally atomising the collective identity the texts attempted to represent. To an extent, the textual discontinuities that both Reynolds' and Washington's works dramatize functions towards this same end. Generic variation as well as the idiosyncratic form that many of the experimental stories included in *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* articulate do as much to highlight the incongruent realisation of the anthology as a whole as to stress the uniqueness of each of the contributions. In the introduction, Reynolds expresses her intention, in relation to this, of creating an anthology that does not "iron out difference, forbid diversity, deny individuality" (xxxiii). She argues that her eclectic selection of pieces, together with the fact that she has considered for inclusion texts that, despite being about lesbianism, are not written by allegedly homosexual authors, all intend to frustrate the institution of general assumptions regarding lesbian identity (xxxii-xxxiii). In a similar way, Washington's prefaces are not just elements working to accentuate the anthology's disjunctions, but also textual particles that fence off and particularise the different contributions making up the collection; more than merely their presence, the varying and distinct forms each of these prefaces take

specifies the text to which it has been appended.⁵³ Even when Washington does not explicitly refer to them as singularising elements in this manner, her general introduction gives leeway to this reading as she expresses the hope of having been able to convey that the writers in her anthology are all “unique” in the sense that they “write with multiple, sometimes contradictory voices” (12).

And yet, unlike the collections analysed in Chapter 2, these two anthologies do not instigate in any way an association between the marked singularity of their contents and the radical ec-centricity or even the constructedness of the identity coordinates around which they are built. Conversely, for them lesbian women and African-American women constitute, in each case, both real and definable communities which their selection of texts strives to represent. Reynolds asserts that whilst the “law” might have long said that “lesbians [do] not exist” both science and history “said that they did” (xvi), and that the selection of texts anthologised in her collection intend to be a “reflect[ion]” of the actuality of “lesbian history” (xx) as well as “lesbian experience” (xxxii). On the other hand, Washington postulates that, whilst particular, the “racial voices” included in her anthology “speak not just for the individual but for a community” (14); they “represent black women . . . as subjects acting in” and creating their own “history” (5-6). In an additional and, as we shall see, related way, another difference between these anthologies and the ones studied in the previous chapter is that the markedly discontinuous realisation of the works at hand is not correlative with the articulation of a fundamentally disintegrated textual space. Instead, the anthologies advance a view of their fragmented textual grounds as connectable. They do so by characterising the very spaces and elements used to disjoin and individualise the amalgam of texts they present us with—their transitional *loci*—as sites where the reader is prompted to step in and establish links between the array of pieces constituting the collection. To put it differently, we could say that these anthologies explicitly typify the textual thresholds we have seen them exploit as “zones not only of transition but also of *transaction*” (Genette *Paratexts* 2), where what is or needs to be transacted is the definition of a common ground amongst the contributions they include.

⁵³ Relevant to, and further supportive of, the idea that Washington’s anthology seeks to “fence off” its contents is the fact that, besides being prefaced by an introductory essay, a bibliographical note is also appended to each of them.

This latter operation is carried out more evidently in the case of *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds*. In the central passage of her general introduction, Washington joins forces with the literary critic Robert Scholes in order to dissuade readers from adopting a “reverential attitude . . . the attitude of the exegete before the sacred text” (qtd. Washington 9) in their approach to the pieces collated in her anthology. Instead, she encourages them to become what she calls either “critical readers,” or else, “revisionists.” Revisionist readers, in Washington’s view, are those that “read and reread, that . . . continue to probe for deeper, hidden meanings” in the texts, and that ask “questions [that] are not easily answered” of them, including questions about “writers and their ambivalences, about narrators in conflict” and, most significantly, “about texts ‘speaking’ to one another” (12). At another point of the essay, Washington, momentarily ventriloquising a critical reader of her collection, asks: “How do I combine these voices, and how do I understand and live with [their] contradictions?” (11). She goes on to suggest that her “critical response to these writers” (11) —the prefaces to each of the texts— constitutes a subtext aimed at motivating the undertaking of these critical tasks: namely, they want to provide different kinds of information which might prompt readers to examine and interrogate the various layers of meanings of the texts, but also which might allow them, by the same stroke, to find and found connections amongst the textual constellation of the anthology. In this way, the feature formally dismembering the short story anthology is re-purposed, or simultaneously purposed, as enabling of a space for the reader to think about and establish threads through which the tissue of the collection might be weaved together.

Several of the stories that Washington includes in the anthology reinforce these claims by internally reproducing the interpretative project that the anthology as a whole proposes. Morrison’s aforementioned “Seemothermotherisverynice” constitutes a particularly clear case of this. The piece, which tells the story of its protagonist’s, Pauline, move from Alabama to Ohio, is composed by two competing voices —that of the text’s main character on the one hand, and a seemingly omniscient third-person narrator on the other— who take turns in advancing the action of the piece. Staging what at first is presented like a harmonious narrative duet, the two voices grow increasingly dissonant as the text unfolds and they start to show divergences in their versions of the story. Here is an example of their imbrication early in the piece:

Near the beginning of World War I, the Williamses discovered . . . the possibility of living better in another place. In shifts, lots, batches, mixed in with other families, they migrated, in six months and four journeys, to Kentucky, where there were mines and millwork.

“When all us left from down home and was waiting down by the depot for the truck, it was nighttime. June bugs was shooting everywhere. They lighted up a tree leaf, and I seen a streak of green every now and again. That was the last time I seen real June bugs.” (61)

The passage shows Pauline’s voice complement that of the third-person narrator by providing the specific detail to the general account advanced by the latter. A few pages later, though, the juxtaposition of the narrators takes a markedly less concordant form:

In that young and growing Ohio town whose side streets, even, were paved with concrete, which sat on the edge of a calm blue lake, which boasted an affinity with Oberlin, the underground railroad station, just thirteen miles away, this melting pot on the lip of America facing the cold but receptive Canada —What could go wrong? . . .

“Everything changed. It was hard to get to know folks up here, and I missed my people. I weren’t used to much white folks. The ones I seed before was something hateful, but they didn’t come around too much . . . Up north they was everywhere —next door, downstairs, all over the streets— and colored folk few and far between. Northern colored folk was different too.” (65)

The perceptual discrepancy this last passage enacts evinces a growing distance between the vantage points through which the narrative is communicated. It enlarges the space, to put it differently, separating the voices, materially manifest in the blank lines and typographical shifts signalling the transitions from one to the other. Concomitantly, the operation also works to increasingly signify these crossover areas as interpretative nodes. As differences between Pauline and the third-person narrator appear more obvious, the reader is also more drawn to these sites as places in and from which to negotiate the diverging information they receive from them. Donald B. Gibson, who has called this the “text and counter-text” dynamic of Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, explains that the novel —and particularly the section excerpted in the

anthology— compels us to decide, in its textual pauses, whose or what kind of discourse is Pauline’s voice being set up against. Even when the piece does not advance an answer, he proposes several candidates: the wider community of black women, African-Americans, women in general, or white Americans (20-3). Whichever it might be, what this analysis brings to the fore is the fact that the text is designed to make us not simply notice the tension between its two narrators, but to raise questions about their relationship. In an analogous way to that of the collection, the piece makes tangible divisions which, at once, are cast as zones of exchange prompting reflections about the possibilities as well as the limitations for the reconciliation of the different elements that constitute it.

There are other pieces in the anthology that articulate similar mechanics to that of “Seemothermotherisverynice.” Williams’ “Meditations on History,” for instance, combines and contrasts the voice of a black female slave with that of a white male writer trying to describe life in a plantation. Although this text is, unlike Morrison’s, fully narrated by one subjectivity —that of the white writer— it also displays a sectioned structure which alternates the writer’s general views on the plantation with the retelling of his interviews with the slave and compels, as well as formally opens spaces for, the reader to elucidate the symbiosis that exists between the two narrative fronts. And in the case of Alice Walker’s “Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells,” to give another example, the main layer of the story is traversed by reflective passages that may be thought to work in a way akin to that of the prefaces in the anthology. They serve to both evince separation, and provide information to make sense of or connect (but not resolve), the different perspectives that the story puts into play: namely, those of a black female activist and a white woman distanced by the experience of interracial rape. Despite their variation, the inner workings of these and a few other texts establish metonymic relationships with the workings of the collection that contains them.⁵⁴ They all read as synecdoches of the form and

⁵⁴ Toni Cade Bambara’s “Medley,” or Ntozake Shange’s “comin to terms” yield similar readings to the ones I put forward here. It is also worth remarking that, besides the number of texts in the anthology that reproduce the collection’s mechanics, my argument is further supported by the fact that the triad of texts and authors I have remarked on all occupy, in different ways, positions of prominence in *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds*: “Meditations on History” is the longest story of

hermeneutics of the anthology in which they are featured. In doing so, they underpin the logic under which Washington's text has been set to operate. Together with Washington's claims in the introduction, the interpretative practices that individual pieces demand help instil in the reader a critical and relational approach to the textual complex of the collection as a whole.⁵⁵

In the *Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* this same manoeuvre is carried out through slightly different means. As we have seen, the anthology does not deploy any additional textual elements to upset the continuity of the collection, employing instead the collation and juxtaposition of disparate texts to this end. Whilst the array of pieces has been selected to accentuate contrasts and textual shifts, a number of the works included here may be considered together in that they either revolve around or include a shared idea that textual fringes—the points where the text as presence ends and the text as absence begins—constitute interpretative centres from which the significance of a given piece is to be extracted. Nowhere is this made more evident than in Isak Dinesen's contribution "The Blank Page," whose very title denotes the subject matter in question. The piece concerns an elderly storyteller who sets out by reflecting upon her art and advancing the thesis that the points where a narrative is cut off, silenced, are those that carry the most interpretative weight: "Who . . . tells a

the collection; Alice Walker is the only author scoring three texts in the anthology; and in a reflective article published recently on how to teach the anthology in question, Washington herself suggests a comparison of her role as an anthologist with Pauline's artistic inclinations. She quotes from Morrison's text: "[Pauline] liked, most of all to arrange things. To line things up in rows . . . Whatever portable plurality she found, she arranged into neat lines, according to their size, shape, or gradations of color" (554).

⁵⁵ My point here echoes and is informed by a wider argument in the study of short stories, tales and sketches regarding the relationship between these shorter forms of fiction and the context where they appear. Most appropriately, Ian Duncan's study of John Galt's "tales" also argues for a view of them as synecdoches of the serial publications where they appear: they "not only reproduce, as their own internal principle, the serial and miscellaneous form of the magazine in which they appear," Galt writes, but also "but also the magazine's infrastructure of circulation and distribution" (48).

finer tale than any of us? Silence does. And where does one read a deeper tale than upon the most perfectly printed page? . . . Upon the blank page” (118). The storyteller goes on to exemplify her theory through a parable concerning an old Portuguese convent in charge of manufacturing the bedsheets for the marital bed of the country’s princesses. Traditionally, the first of these bedsheets, provided for the wedding night, was to be displayed in public the following morning to attest to the princesses’ virginity, and the central, blood-stained part of the sheet cut and returned to the convent where it was framed and hung for visitors from all over the country to come and gaze upon these marks of “honour” and interpret them as signs of some sort. However, out of all the pieces of linen on display the one that by far attracted more attention was a perfectly clean bedsheet, “snow-white from corner to corner, a white page,” in front of which everybody, including “old and young nuns . . . sink[s] into deepest thought” (122). Cleverly, the text ends at this point, reverting the order of the metaphorical relationship between bedsheet and paper that the parable had been establishing, and leaving the reader both staring at and thinking about the meaning of the space beyond the written text.

The theme recurs in somewhat different guises in Monique Wittig’s and Virginia Woolf’s contributions. Concerned with the description of an Amazonian-esque society of women and their daily routines, Wittig’s selected extract from *Les Guérillères* pays attention at one point to the role of so-called “feminaries” in this society, sacred text-like objects characterised as important communicative tools between the members of the community. Unlike typical sacred texts, though, the bonding work that feminaries are set to perform is not carried out by what is written in them—their text is said to be often mocked and produce “full-throated laughter” (171)—but by the “numerous blank pages” and ample margins that they typically display (171). The *guérillères* use the spaces where the text of their feminaries breaks off to “write from time to time” their own experiences as well as those of the community and exchange them with one another (171). In being thus employed, feminaries upset the hierarchy between text and off-text as regards significance. They underline the potential for meaning and expression of the sites where text is not manifest. Similarly, Virginia Woolf’s fifth chapter from *A Room of One’s Own* centres around the reading of a novel by the fictional author Mary Carmichael and the narrator’s struggles to grapple with her writing style. Carmichael’s sentences, we are told, flow as if “[s]omething tore; something scratched” (71), and structurally, the

novel is said to move too abruptly, “heap[ing] up too many facts” and taking the reader from one scene to another dispensing with adequate transitions (72): “First she broke the sentence,” the narrator sums up, “now she has broken the sequence” (72). Rather than dismissing Carmichael’s writing, the narrator proceeds to argue for a view of the novel’s form as a consequence of its unconventional subject: that of relationships between women. The newness and controversy of the theme are deemed causes for the novel’s particular mode of signification: one in which events cannot be spelled out and readers are subsequently required to enter and intervene in the spaces where the text is disrupted or shifts unexpectedly to imaginatively construct “unrecorded gestures” or else “unsaid or half-said words” (75).

In her introduction to the anthology, Reynolds draws importantly on precisely this last text to advance a characterisation of lesbian experience as existing both historically and textually besides or beyond what is actually being articulated. She quotes from Woolf’s original typescript of the text, where the supposedly unstable and allusive realisation of Carmichael’s novel is more evidently reproduced by the narrator’s own writing:

‘Chloe liked Olivia. They shared a . . .’ The words covered the bottom of the page; the pages had stuck. While fumbling to open them there flashed into my mind the inevitable policeman . . . the order to attend the court, the dreary waiting [for] . . . the verdict; this book is obscene . . . Here the paper came apart. Heaven be praised! It was only a laboratory. Chloe—Olivia. They were engaged in mincing liver. . . (qtd Reynolds xxii)

Commenting on the passage, Reynolds writes: “It’s not explicit. But it’s there. Just for a moment we are invited to imagine *what* Chloe and Olivia might share” (xxii). The reading is used to reinforce, on the one hand, her claim that lesbianism is “made up of many unknowable private facts and a few public interventions . . . the private story of past lesbian experience is hidden” (xiv). On the other, she uses it as a springboard to point to the necessity to read lesbian fiction, as it were, between the lines: “lesbian writers have often resorted to word-play . . . secret language[s] . . . a mass of conundrums or private linguistic system[s]” in order to “make codes for things that cannot be named” (xxxii). In this way, Reynolds introduction prefigures the interpretative significance of breaks and margins that her selection of stories

stresses by repeatedly engaging the idea thematically.⁵⁶ Yet, by the same stroke, the essay is also suggesting that the meaning codified in these *loci* may speak to or of a connection amongst the variety of pieces that the anthology includes and the authors penning them. By situating shared lesbian experience in the extra-textual spaces of the stories that constitute the anthology Reynolds draws a parallel between inferring meaning from the off-text and the possibility of finding and founding a common ground among the works in her collection. Silences and disjunctions are not merely to be regarded as meaningful, to put it differently, but pregnant with lesbian meaning, whatever this might be. In the light of the work carried out both by specific texts in the collection and Reynolds' introduction, the discontinuous configuration we have seen the *Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* articulate does not just denote the anthology's aim to prevent the ironing out of difference and individuality. It also generates spaces enabling the reader to think of and about the connectability of the anthology's discrete parts.

Such an account of the workings of *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* makes inseparable the endeavour of connecting the textual space of the anthology and generating a specific view of the collective identity around which the collection is built. That is to say, in situating what we could call a deductible and relational — yet unspecified— picture of shared lesbian experience in the text's transitional spaces, the anthology conflates linking its textual arena with arriving at a vision or an understanding of lesbian collectivity. In particular, a vision which sees lesbian women as constituting an associable but fundamentally plural political body; a group whose members may partake in certain commonalities but whose complexity is not homogenised or obliterated in the process. Even when the parallel is less obvious, this analysis applies too to *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds*. The way in which the anthology is similarly geared to not unify its textual space but encourage the reader to work out connections amongst its contributions is readily translatable into the anthology's idea of how the configuration of the female African American community is imagined—a metaphorical reading which, in a sense, had already been made available by Washington, if we remember, when she pointed that her selection of texts represented the community producing them. In this fashion, the politics of

⁵⁶ The theme is also preponderant, to give some more examples, in Nicole Brossard's "These Our Mothers," Colette's "Nuits Blanches" or H.D.'s "The Wise Sappho."

combination that these two collections advance ought to be placed alongside those articulated by multi-genre anthologies I addressed early in the chapter. Like these latter texts, by which they were likely influenced, the short story anthologies in question are formally concerned with proposing and conceptualising new ways in which groups of women can be conceived without resorting to essential accounts of identity. Thus, they can and should be thought of as participants, too, in the project of rethinking categorical relationships of intersectional feminism.

To take this last point a step further, one last correspondence might be established between multi-genre anthologies and Washington's and Reynolds' text. As we have seen, Franklin argued that the categorical reconfiguration brought about by the texts she is interested in was not exclusive to the identities they represent, but one that could be extrapolated to the organisation of women as a collective more widely. In this sense, they did not just provide for new theories of collectivisation but worked to relocate the centre from which such theories are typically articulated (white, heterosexual, middle-class feminism). Equivalently, both *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds* and *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* make clear the fact that their anthologies do not merely operate within the confines of lesbian or African-American female identities, but within, or in dialogue with, those of feminism broadly. In *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds* Washington remarks that the women's movement is a "subtext inscribed in this [collection] of stories" (15) which should be put in relation to the tissue of the anthology. She argues for a two-way reading of this interaction: one which examines the extent to which feminism inflects the subjects and themes featured in the text, and one which considers the ways in which the texts might inform the feminist movement. In her introduction to *Midnight Birds*, the second of the two individual volumes that the anthology I am analysing amalgamates, Washington articulates this same point even more forcefully. She suggests there that her anthology pretends to be an intervention into a specific feminist moment marked by the need of "measuring diversity, and understanding what chasms there are" amongst women, as well as how we might be able "to bridge" them (xx).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The quotation and reference belong to Virago's reissue of *Midnight Birds* under the title of *Any Woman's Blues*. This latter text is the one included in the bibliography.

On the other hand, Reynolds makes available this same widening by arguing for a pre-eminently open use of lesbian as a label. We have already seen, in relation to this, the editor's willingness to include writers in her anthology who do not identify as lesbian themselves. In addition, she also engages in her introduction with Adrienne Rich's concept of the "lesbian continuum" in order to propose that rather than mapping a sexual inclination, the term lesbian might be more usefully understood as standing for all kinds of affinities between women in general. She quotes from Rich's essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence": "I mean the term *lesbian continuum* to include a range . . . of women-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman" (xxvii).⁵⁸ The excerpt sums up the thrust of Rich's essay to open up and expand the remit of "lesbian" as an identity. By adopting and heralding this view, thus, the anthology creates a fluidity between lesbian and female identity broadly. This makes not just possible but pertinent, in turn, the extrapolation of forms of lesbian association to associations between women in general, a critical possibility that Reynolds herself vocalises: "lesbian union [is] directly related to the political affiliation of all women" (xxvi).

The short story anthology and segmentivity

This account of the cultural work carried out by Washington's and Reynolds' collections evinces the political overlap that exists between the short story anthologies in question and those multi-genre anthologies mentioned in the first section of the chapter. Like them, these texts exploit the characteristics of the

⁵⁸ The adoption of Rich's essay as an intertext of the anthology reinforces my reading of the way in which Reynolds' text signifies transitional spaces as sites from which to establish associations amongst women. In her polemic, she suggests that women should read into the silenced and blank spaces of women's history to find models on which to establish connections between them: "witches, *femme seules*, marriage resisters, spinsters, autonomous widows, and/or lesbians . . . have managed on varying levels *not* to collaborate [with patriarchy]. It is this history, precisely, from which feminists have so much to learn and on which there is overall such blanketing silence" (635).

anthology form within an intersectional frame to reconfigure understandings of women as a social group in a non-essentialising fashion. In this sense, my analysis of *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds* and *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* enriches the critical narrative which has described multi-genre anthologies as unique texts engaging with intersectional thought to re-conceive categorical relationships amongst women. It demonstrates that the short story anthology has also participated in this project. Moreover, it has done so not by reproducing the mechanisms of multi-genre collections, but by deploying the anthology form in distinct and original ways. The manner in which the texts in question repurpose their textual thresholds as connecting spaces constitutes a variant to the analysis developed by Franklin of how multi-genre anthologies are fashioned to conceptualise non-essentialising coalitions. By doing so, they both reinstate and diversify the anthology's special amenability to the fulfilment of this task within intersectional feminist politics. Yet, the distinct ways in which Washington's and Reynolds' short story anthologies express their political meaning has wider implications for the study of the short story anthology in particular and anthologies in general. Their signifying processes as I have described them both chime with and may be further systematised through the notion of segmentivity in a way that opens a space to establish a previously inexistent triangulation between the anthology form, politics and textuality theories prevalent in literary studies.

First formulated by Rachel Blau DuPlessis, segmentivity denotes the way in which meaning arises in certain literary texts from the relationship that their different units, or segments, hold with "a chosen pause or silence" (DuPlessis 51). The notion originally aimed to typify the functioning of lyrical poetry, where the significance of a given piece often depends less on the way in which elements are made to follow one another and more on the reader's "negotiation of gap[s]" intrinsic to the form: "line break, stanza break, page space" (DuPlessis 51). As Brian McHale explains:

a gap is always a provocation to meaning-making. It is where meaning making [of the written text] is interrupted by *spacing*, where the text breaks off and . . . opens up [so that] the reader's meaning making apparatus must *gear up* to overcome the resistance . . . and close the breach. (29).

However, McHale also remarks that narrative, although "it is not dominated by segmentivity, as poetry is," can also be "segmented writing" (29). Shifts in voice, focalisation, or narrative time, he argues, might be seen as features which in fact

break down the continuous and smooth flow of a text into segmented units, potentially making gaps of various kinds abound too in the different levels of the narrative work. One way to reconcile these two approaches is to see segmentivity as describing a spectrum or continuum along which literary texts can be placed, rather than a concept attached to a specific genre. The degree to which a given work opens gaps and makes them operative elements in their significance determines whether the text tends towards a more or less segmented articulation.

Such view allows us to see that short story anthologies, and anthologies in general, hold remarkable potential to realise segmentivity. As a form whose realisation is marked by the patterned alternation of different texts and voices, anthologies are innately multifaceted and fragmented, granting them a great capacity to capitalise on their breaks and gaps. I argue that this potential is fully realised in *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds* and *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories*. As my analysis have shown, Washington's and Reynolds' texts may be thought to exploit the inherent characteristics of the genre to create segmented textual spaces that involve the reader in their meaning-making processes. In particular, the collections instil their audience to create a connective subtext through which the different parts of the anthology can be integrated into a whole. Seeing these short story anthologies under the rubric of segmentivity in this way provides for a way to succinctly describe the signifying mechanisms and dynamics of these collections. But, more importantly, doing so also enables a link between these two works and critical trends that since the mid-20th century have been concerned with the study of pieces of literature that work to redefine the reader's role in the literary encounter. More specifically, works that make readers co-producers rather than merely receivers of textual meaning. Umberto Eco refers to such examples of writing as "open texts," which he defines as "'work[s] in movement' . . . characterised by the invitation to *make the work* together with the author" (19-20). "Openness," for Eco, is a feature preponderant in, if not defining of, avant-garde modern and contemporary writing which may be contrasted with the "closedness" of previous literary texts, but also with the "complete chaos" of literature which either prevents or invites *any* interpretation. Conversely, the "open text . . . offers the performer the opportunity for an oriented insertion into something which always remains the world intended by the author," or, in the case concerning us here, by the editor (19). Roland Barthes' more widespread notion of the "writerly text" both reformulates and introduces a slight

variation on this same idea. “Writerly texts” for Barthes, denotes pieces of writing that “make the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text” (Barthes, *S/Z* 4). Yet, unlike Eco, he does not see this as a special feature of avant-garde modern literature, but a characteristic which might be manifest in works from all ages. Barthes also sees the “writerly” as a relative, rather than an absolute, quality of texts. A given work can be radically “writerly” or “readerly” (to use Barthes’ proposed counterpart) but will most likely exist somewhere between the two poles (Allen 88-9).

Whichever of these inflections we choose to endorse, it is clear that the idea underlying both Eco’s and Barthes’ concept speaks to the signifying mechanisms of *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds* and *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* as conceptualised through the notion of segmentivity. In fact, this association is reinforced by the fact that Washington herself refers to the bulk of female African-American short fiction her anthology is trying to represent as “writerly designs,” which make possible for “writers [to] speak to other writers” as well as “change, challenge, revise” one another (7). To the extent that her anthology wants to metonymically reproduce the form and structuring of this literary tradition, the assertion denotes a degree of self-awareness towards the functioning of the anthology that she is curating. Theorising the anthologies I have focused on as “open” or “writerly texts” in the face of their segmented articulation is significant in two ways. Firstly, the conceptualisation not only creates a previously absent link between the aesthetic these concepts describe and the anthology form, but in doing so it opens the door to new ways of thinking about (short story) anthologies from the perspective of their ability to articulate and function as a “writerly text.” Indeed, the extent to which the anthologies I have focused on here show that intrinsic qualities of the genre may be utilised to involve the reader as a co-producer of meaning delineates a fresh standpoint from which to examine the form and function in culture of these literary texts more widely. More specifically, it highlights and provides a model to examine the anthology’s capacity to foster collaborations and engagement not only between texts but between text and reader. For a genre that has been especially concerned with representing and speaking to collective identities, as I have shown, the systematic study of the collaborative features of the form seems not only possible but especially pertinent. Moreover, such a perspective opens possibilities of reading the anthology that differ from traditional approaches based on author quotas and

statistical representation, and veer, at the same time, from the model founded on the interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces I advanced in the first two chapters.

And second, the association of the anthology with the “open” or “writerly” text grants an uncharted political dimension to Eco’s and Barthes’ textuality theories. Of the two critics, Eco is the only one who makes available a link between his concept and politics. David Robey explains that for Eco the

modern open work represents through its formal properties a characteristically modern experience of the world. Like all art it is an ‘epistemological metaphor’ . . . through its lack of conventional sense and order, it represents by analogy the feeling of senselessness, disorder, ‘discontinuity’ that the modern world generates in all of us. (xiv)

Subsequently, the “open text” constitutes a “form of knowledge” which is “political in its own special way” (xiv-xv). It grants us an understanding of the world we live in that “can serve as a basis for changing it” (xv). In keeping with Eco’s “taste for broad, synthesizing generalisations” (Robey xv), this account conveys a wide sense in which the specific textual articulation of these works might help us make sense of our reality and motivate us thus to act upon it. Conversely, my study of Washington’s and Reynolds’ short story anthologies as “open texts” reveals a politics of a different order. It reifies the connection between the form of these works and the possibility of fulfilling a specific and localised political project. Namely, that of producing non-essential combinations amongst the members of a given identity group, in this case African-American women, lesbians, and women generally. By doing this, my study of the short story anthology contributes to making visible and concretise some the political potential codified in the aesthetics of the “open” or “writerly” texts as Eco and Barthes describe them. It makes manifest, in other words, a particular possible politicisation of these notions.

In the next and final chapter, I continue the project started in the present one of investigating ways in which women-only short story anthologies have contributed to the localisation of non-homogenising ways for the combination of women. It focuses on a group of anthologies organised around emotional or homosocial labels to argue that these texts have exploited the affective capacities of both short fiction and the anthology form towards precisely this end. In examining these texts, I provide a second and different version of the more general argument that I have advanced here.

Yet, exploring the interaction between short story anthologies and affect also allows me to situate examples of the genre within topical trends in literary and cultural studies. This enables me, in turn, to consider the currency of the short story anthology as a form in the discipline as well as possible future pathways for its study.

Chapter 4 — Emotional Ties: The Women-only Short Story Anthology and the Economies of Affect

In the spring of 2016, the *Journal of the Short Story in English* ran a double volume adding to its general section a special one dedicated to the study of short fiction through the lens of affect. Entitled “Affect and the Short Story and Short Story Cycle,” this special section includes seven articles and the transcription of an e-roundtable in which leading voices in the field —such as Robert Luscher or James Nagel— joined new ones to explore and map what editors Paul Ardoin and Fiona McWilliam describe as new investigative routes to productively tackle the short story form and its associates (para. 5). Even though they do so in varying ways and degrees, all the pieces included here see in the rejection of the New Critical notion of the “affective fallacy”⁵⁹ a useful way to either reconceive long-standing questions in the field or produce exciting fresh ones. In particular, they consider that paying critical attention to the kind of emotional involvement and responses that short fiction elicits can help account for some of the genre’s defining features in terms of its form and functions. Two general trends emerge from the bulk of contributions collected in the special section. The first of these shows a concern with drawing attention to the inextricable link between the generic and the affective work that short fiction typically carries out. As Justine Murison explains: “in its very *shortness*, a short story . . . depends upon affective loops and leaps in place of exhaustive detail” (Roundtable, para. 19). This creates a space from which to redefine characteristic features of the form, such as its “emphasis on the focal ‘event’” (Roundtable, para. 25) or its distinct capacity to “leveraging gaps” (Roundtable, para. 52) as either geared to establish specific emotional relationships with the reader, or the product of these relationships. The second trend is concerned with affect as a tool which might account for the ways in which short stories relate to one another in composite forms

⁵⁹ Originally formulated in W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley’s essay “The Affective Fallacy,” included in Wimsatt’s landmark *The Verbal Icon*, the concept describes a critical attitude very much dominant in literary studies up to this day which sees “talking about a reader’s reactions or responses in discussions of literary texts” as something “alien and fundamentally extraneous” to the analysis of a given piece of literature (Bennett and Royle 11)

like the sequence or cycle. In the words of Ardoin and McWilliam, affect offers some of the critics included here possibilities to explain “how stories in a cycle seem to stick together more cohesively than they do in other contexts” (para. 1).

This latter issue and its ramifications have been suggestively picked up by Jennifer Smith in her recent and celebrated book *The American Short Story Cycle*. There, Smith argues, among other things, for a special amenability of the cycle to articulate what she calls, borrowing Walter Benjamin’s phrase, “emotional constellations” (134). She suggests that in their displacement of a “central protagonist” and subsequent “resistance to teleology” (8) the genre depends on non-traditional structural elements to maintain its integrity as plural text, and affect is privileged in this operation. Smith sees exchanges of feeling as a form of communication between stories which fundamentally work to maintain the wholeness of the cycles, translating their multiple and composite realisation into what she calls affective “connective tissues” (116). For the critic, this is a characteristic which not only distinguishes the realisation of the cycle from that of other forms, but also one that underlies the genre’s special potential to engage with and represent identity in unique ways. Namely, she brings forth the cycle’s aptness, in the light of her analysis, to convey notions of selfhood that emerge “not out of autonomy and sustained realisation but from interconnectedness” (8).

This chapter contributes to this new wave of enquiry in Short Fiction Studies in general and to Smith’s argument more particularly by turning the attention to the role that affect has played and continues to play in women-only short story anthologies. With their lack of a central protagonist *and* a central authorial figure, short story anthologies have a bigger potential to resist teleology and generate the kind of emotional networks that Smith identifies in the cycle. Moreover, since the genre has been more directly concerned with the representation of identities, as this thesis has shown, Smith’s suggestions about notions of selfhood do not only appear extendable but particularly pertinent to the short story anthology form. It is not my aim in remarking this, though, to suggest a misplacement of focus in Smith’s study due to the anthology’s greater capacity to engage emotionality in relation to identity. My interest in doing so, rather, springs from the fact that a number of women-only short story anthologies actually exist which have meaningfully exploited this capacity in relation to their codification of women as a collective identity. This group of anthologies, on which this chapter focuses, is constituted by a corpus of collections

organised around relational or emotional themes, such as filial relationships, friendships and animosities, or specific fields of feeling. Though usually cast and considered together with other themed anthologies, texts like Susan Koppelman's *Between Mothers and Daughters* and Ann Oosthuizen's *Stepping Out: Short Stories on Friendships between Women*, Wendy Martin's *We Are The Stories We Tell* or Rosalie Morales Kearns' *The Female Complaint*, all share a distinct interest in the role of individual experience and emotion in establishing bonds between women—as many of their titles already suggest—and, more importantly, in the capacity of the short story anthology to textually stage and promote these ties. Emerging at the turn of the 1990s, these and other texts thus form a tradition which has, furthermore, come to prominence in recent years with the publication in 2013 of Victoria Hislop's monumental *The Story: Love, Loss and the Lives of Women*. The largest women-only short story anthology to have appeared in the market, Hislop's anthology does not only chime in its form and concerns with the texts listed above, as we shall see, but in several ways—in its size and scope, as well as in its publication by a mainstream publishing house⁶⁰ and good commercial performance—constitutes their culmination.

In what follows, I focus on Hislop's *The Story* as a representative example of this kind of anthology and its workings. The following section shows, first, that the anthology is geared to destabilise gender identity as a central and unifying element of the collection in order to advance, instead, singular experience and emotions as operative elements whereby the texts included in the collection are both bound and binding. In other words, I argue that the text exploits the anthology form to characterise emotion as an attractive and connective element which links the

⁶⁰ *The Story* is published by Head of Zeus, an independent publishing house distributed by Harper Collins that since its inception in 2012 has grown to establish itself as one of the leading prints in the fiction market. *Bookseller* estimated its sales numbers in 2018 as falling just under £10m. Incidentally, an important part of the publisher's success is founded on it having become a preeminent home to the short story anthology in the last ten or so years. Besides Hislop's collection, Head of Zeus has recently published equally wide-ranging anthologies of general short fiction (*That Glimpse of Truth*), science fiction (*The Time Traveller's Almanac*), or ghost stories (*Ghost*), to name but a few.

narratives it features. But I also show that it codifies the reader's encounter with the texts as one which operates primarily on emotional grounds. These operations determine the gender politics of the text and, more particularly, the anthology's view on how women may be configured as a collective. By engaging with Sara Ahmed's concept of "affective economies" in my analysis, I am able to theorise the articulation of *The Story* and to connect it to the thrust of the text to produce, on the one hand, a view of women as a plural and multifarious group whose members combine through the establishment of shared affects. Echoing and, in a way, specifying Smith's argument via the anthology, I suggest the collection formally codifies women's collective identity as the product of emotional interconnectedness. But I also propose that what emerges from this configuration is a field of possibilities for the imagining of non-essentialist coalitions amongst women. On the other hand, I argue that the anthology does not merely depict but promotes this kind of association through the text-reader interaction it proposes. By encouraging its audience to read for emotion as it does, the anthology works to make readers experience how affect might connect us to others' experiences and subjectivities.

Whilst this analysis adds to and expands on the bulk of emerging criticism on the short story and affect, it is also clear from this summary that my study is pre-eminently concerned with continuing the task set early in the previous chapter. Namely, the exploration and conceptualisation of ways in which the women-only short story anthology has participated in the location of grounds upon which to build a collective feminist politics which resists the homogenising of gender identity. After showing how the workings of *The Story* are reproduced, *mutatis mutandis*, in other examples of the short story anthology group in which I inserted Hislop's text, this chapter links the collections in question to a line of feminist thought that has highlighted the potential use of affect to craft feminist coalitions in this non-essentialising fashion. As Carolyn Pedwell and Anne Whitehead explain, since the second wave feminism mantra "the personal is political," "feminist theorists . . . have been interested in the relationships between affect, solidarity and resistance" (121). Best exemplified in the work of critics like Donna Haraway, Wendy Brown or Sara Ahmed herself, as we will see, I argue that the brand of short story anthologies concerning us here may be thought to enact textually the ideas that these scholars can only advance theoretically. This complements the findings advanced in Chapter 3 regarding the role of short story anthologies in the development of intersectional

thought. Putting these anthologies in relation with feminist work on affect shows another way in which the genre has contributed to the development of an intellectual thread in the discipline that, however narrower, is similarly preoccupied with the articulation of a transversal politics. At the same time, this imbrication does more than produce a variant on the analysis advanced in the last chapter. In the second and last section of this chapter, I suggest that it creates a space to consider the anthologies in question in the light of contemporary trends in literary studies and culture more broadly. More specifically, I focus on the symbiosis that the collections hold with emerging postcritical trends in the study of literature. An increasingly topical area of enquiry, Postcriticism is constituted by a heterogeneous set of critical positions that find a certain common ground in their promotion of the singularity of literary texts and their moving against the “hermeneutics of suspicion.” Identifying different ways in which the texts that interest me here speak to the concerns of Postcriticism allows for a consideration of the currency and relevance of the short story anthology in literary scholarship today, as well as for speculations regarding the study of the genre’s possible future.

Case Study: Victoria Hislop’s *The Story: Love, Loss and the Lives of Women*

Early in Dorothy Parker’s short story “Sentiment,” the narrator Rosalie imagines her ex-lover criticising her for being overly dramatic: ““Oh, for heaven’s sake!’ he would say. ‘Can’t you stop that fool sentimentalizing? Why do you have to do it? . . . Just because you see an old charwoman on the street, there’s no need to get sobbing about her’ . . . That’s what he would say. I know” (308). The reflection serves her to ponder on her character tendencies throughout the rest of the text. Though she admits to having an intensely emotional personality, and acknowledging how that sometimes makes her suffer unnecessarily, Rosalie refuses to see this trait as a hinderance. Instead, she progressively embraces it as a source of richness in a process that leads her, at another point, to question in more general terms people’s disdain of emotionality:

I wonder why it’s wrong to be sentimental. People are so contemptuous of feeling. ‘You wouldn’t catch *me* sitting alone and mooning,’ they say. ‘Moon’ is what they say when they mean remember, and they are so proud of not remembering. It’s strange, how they pride themselves upon their lacks . . . ‘I

simply couldn't imagine,' they say, 'letting myself care so much that I could be hurt' . . . And why, why do they think they are right? (308)

In this way, the text enacts a reversal. It takes us from an initial pejorative view of feelings and their expression to a positive one, and attacks perspectives that would oppose this transition. As critics like Rhonda S. Pettit and Kathleen M. Helal have noticed, the story admits a metafictional reading. It functions as a response to validation of “the labelling of women’s writing as sentimental” (Helal 95). But I suggest that the story also raises the related question —without providing a definite answer— of what specific assets does Rosalie see in emotionality. What is the work that, she considers, emotions actually carry out?

Parker’s “Sentiment” is one of the one hundred pieces by female authors amalgamated in Hislop’s *The Story*. Subtitled *Love, Loss and the Lives of Women*, the anthology categorises these texts in three different sections bearing each one of these labels as their heading. Partaking in experiential and affective fields, the tags that introduce and organise the contents of the collection make apparent from the anthology’s most immediate layers its involvement in emotional domains. They highlight that the “story” the anthology wants to tell is one where feelings are at least as important as, or inseparable from, the female identity that the collection *a priori* sets out to represent. In this sense, I do not draw attention to Parker’s contribution in order to flesh out an interpretation of the piece nor —even when she is in fact one of the only two authors alongside Ellen Gilchrist to score stories in each of the sections— to underline the author’s importance in Hislop’s text. Rather, I do so because the question about the role of emotions that emerges most clearly in the story is one that not only underlies the whole of the anthology in which “Sentiment” is included, but one which the collection is fundamentally invested in answering.

One way to start exploring this is by noting the extent to which *The Story*’s embrace of emotion destabilises identity as a central and unifying element of the anthology. A displacement of womanhood as an operative category in the realisation of the text is already evident in the title and organisation that Hislop bestows upon her collection, as we have seen. Yet, both the publication history of the anthology and Hislop’s introduction to the texts exemplify this dislocation more obviously. Regarding the former, the commercial life of *The Story* has benefited from a marketing model that contrasts that of *The Secret Self* as I described it in Chapter 1. If we remember, Lee’s text was originally published as two separate anthologies that

were, in time, fused into an omnibus edition comprising a selection of the pieces included in the two previous texts and adding a few new ones. Conversely, *The Story* was originally issued as a single volume which was subsequently split into three individual tomes. The operation involved, significantly, a rebranding of the collection whereby the overarching title of *The Story* was substituted with the header of each of the sections: the first volume's title is *Love*, the second is *Loss*, and so on. Whilst the shift of the affective tags to a title position stresses their primacy in the conception and curation of the anthology, the process simultaneously involved an undermining of gender's role in determining the articulation of the text as *Lives of Women* became, in this process, simply *Life*. The same analysis emerges too when looking not at the anthology's development in the market but at its publishing prehistory. As several websites suggest, the working title of Hislop's anthology was *Love, Loss and Laughter*, relegating any reference to the female authorship of the pieces included in the collection to a second subtitle *100 Stories Written by Women*.⁶¹

These procedures correlate with the work carried out by Hislop's prefatory essay to the collection. In it, the editor sets out by relating the research process she undertook in the curation of the anthology. Her account casts gender, early on, as a premise, one of the two "guiding factor[s] in the selection of stories," together with their being "written in English" (xi). Yet, what ultimately determined the inclusion or exclusion of specific texts and their arrangement (and indeed what is set as the

⁶¹ A now empty domain of the Harper Collins website, distributor of Head of Zeus' books, catalogues the anthology under this title: <https://www.harpercollins.com.au/9781781851166/the-story-love-loss-and-laughter-100-stories-written-by-women/>. E-commerces such as Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com.au/Story-Lives-Women-Great-Stories/dp/1781851166>) or eBay (<https://www.ebay.co.uk/p/The-Story-Love-Loss-Laughter-100-Stories-Written-by-Women-by-Head-of-Zeus-Hardback-2013/176517353?iid=293081778308>) also include sites predating the actual publication of the anthology that ascribe this title to the collection. There is a trace, moreover, of Hislop's original plan in the editor's introduction to the collection, as I reiterate later on, where she states that the stories collected in "The Lives of Women" typically deploy "plenty of humour" (xiv).

anthology's parameter to assess literary quality) is emotion. Hislop introduces this with an anecdote:

On a few occasions, when I was reading in the library, I noted curious glances from my neighbours. They gave me sympathetic looks, but tactfully chose to ignore my tears, the context probably reassuring them that I was weeping over the fate of a fictional character rather than some personal catastrophe. Perhaps a few hours later, I would be shaking with suppressed laughter. (xiii)

On the one hand, Hislop utilises this sketch to advance an equivalence between literary excellence and emotional intensity which founds the selective rationale of the collection: “the stories that make the greatest impact are those that are the most emotional” (xiii). The estimation of a given piece's capacity to move the reader is seen as the preeminent attribute accounting for its presence in the anthology: “if a story [does] not arouse a strong response . . . I did not select it” (xi). On the other, the scene exemplifies how different texts have different emotional *qualities*, which provides Hislop with grounds to justify the tripartite structure of the collection. It is due to the fact that texts sharing a certain emotional wavelength seem to “happily fit” together, she suggests, that she has been prompted to classify the contents in this manner (xiii).

Even when the categories organising the texts are broad, allowing for thematic and, indeed, emotional variation within the them, Hislop's glossing of the stories stresses this last point by making evident the similar more specific affects that connect a number of texts within each of the parts. In the case of “Love,” for instance, she remarks how texts by Clare Boylan, Rachel Seiffert, Roshi Fernando and M. J. Hyland all share a “visceral” outlook on parental love (xiii-xiv). In “Loss,” she draws our attention to how Carol Shields' “Fragility,” Yiyun Li's “After a Life” and Lorrie Moore's “Agnes of Iowa” share “much of the same pathos” (xv). And in “The Lives of Women,” to give one last example, the common comical tone of a great number of pieces —amongst which are texts by Penelope Lively, A. M. Homes and Alison Lurie— is brought forth in a way that, incidentally, reasserts my previous point regarding the original plan for the anthology (xvi). In addition to this, *The Story* shows an unusual tendency to collocate texts within each of the sections that commonly partake in more specific fields of feeling. The anthology can be seen to structurally mirror, in other words, Hislop's effort to draw attention to the minute emotional similarities between contributions. This is visible in the juxtaposition of,

precisely, Fernando's "The Turtle" and Hyland's "Even Pretty Eyes Commit Crimes," the similarities between which Hislop had already highlighted, but also in the sequencing of Lively's "A World of Her Own," Anita Desai's "Sale," and Alice Munro's "Mischief," all dealing with the disappointments and difficulties of women's inhabiting the art world. However, nowhere is this strategy more striking than in the cases where such operation is carried out at the expense of putting side by side two stories by the same author, something which the anthology genre conventionally avoids doing.⁶² Lurie's "Ilse's House" and "In the Shadow," two ghost stories about dead lovers who make spectral appearances to haunt their ex-partners, are set next to each other in "Love," as are Munro's stories about older women who recollect traumatic events which took place in their childhood, "Gravel" and "The Eye," in "Loss," to highlight two instances of this occurrence.

All these selective and structural decisions denote the demotion of gender from being the absolute gravitational centre of the collection to being a markedly more relative one. At the same time, the affects encoded in the narratives emerge as having an inherently attractive and binding power to which the anthology is both attentive and responsive. Another way to put this is to say that *The Story* exploits the uniquely combinatory structure of the anthology genre to pose emotion as that which has not only attracted these stories to the collection but also drawn the narratives to each other and grouped them together. This balancing dynamic between identity and affect is further evident in one last aspect of the anthology: namely, *The Story*'s characterisation of the encounter between the reader and the texts. Towards the end of her introduction, Hislop remarks, in line with her previous downplaying of the role of female identity in the collection, upon the difficulty of engaging with the anthology's textual complex on the grounds of gender. Both the plurality of texts included and the rationale which has been followed in their selection and disposition are seen to complicate the location of common characteristics amongst them suggestive of a "female 'voice'" or of "quintessentially feminine writ[ing]" (xvii).

⁶² In their "traditional organization . . . anthologies embody the principle of clustering together different . . . items. They presuppose that all their contents are alike enough to be compared, yet unlike enough to spur readerly evaluation . . . [By] arranging entries to emphasize contrast, these books [typically] stimulate readers to compare, judge, and thus rank the separate items" (Benedict 4)

Many of the writers, in fact, are described as “providing no clues as to their [gender]” (xvii) or else “leav[ing] their gender behind in their writing” (xviii). This frustrates the possibilities of reading the anthology for identity, or of establishing an attachment with the narratives based on an alignment of the reader’s and the texts and their author’s gender. Instead, Hislop proposes that the collection motivates what we could call an affective navigation of its contents. Its emotion-based design has the effect of maximising opportunities for the reader to read, in her own words, “according to her or his mood” (xiii), and to build connections with the contributions, accordingly, founded on and through an exchange of feeling. One way to reformulate this is to say that the anthology extends the emotional attachments which determine its contents and organisation to the relationship it seeks to establish with the reader. The emotional tissue the collection articulates prompts the creation of an emotional narrative on the reader’s part whereby they relate to and involve themselves in the collection of stories that the anthology amalgamates.

The view of the anthology I have advanced thus far, as well as the reading experience it codifies, is not just grounded on paratextual elements of *The Story*. Many of the pieces included in the collection thematise the idea that affect has an intrinsic connective force capable, more than anything else, of generating ties between different narratives and the subjects authoring or reading them. The theme is central and directly addressed, for instance, in Alison McLeod’s “The Heart of Denis Noble,” where stories are defined as encoding “[t]he principle of Eros,” an “attractive force” that “binds the world” and “makes connections” (251). In other texts such as Willa Cather’s “Consequences” and Elizabeth Bowen’s “A Walk in the Woods,” the subject recurs in a more covert guise: stories are not openly characterised as the recipients of affect in them, but individual narratives and interactions between the personal worlds of characters depicted as affectively binding lie at their core. Yet, here I want to concentrate on the way in which the theme is manifest in two other pieces whose positioning in the collection—they are the first and last texts in *The Story*—renders their engagement with the issue particularly significant.

Katherine Mansfield’s “A Married Man’s Story,” the text that opens the anthology, engages the theme in two different yet complementary ways. This

unfinished piece⁶³ offers a self-portrait of an unnamed writer and husband who, unable to relate to his wife and child, sets out to reflect in writing about his character and his past in order to account for his present state. A correlation is established, in the text, between his estrangement and his inability to either communicate his feelings or sympathise with those of others. Early on, for instance, the married man's systematic failure to comply with his wife's request to share his inner world with her is set as an underlying cause of the distance between them. After insistently retorting "nothing" to her question about what he is thinking the narrator observes that his answers "dart at her. She turns away" (4). In the married man's account of his childhood, an emotionally deprived and repressed upbringing is progressively revealed as the root of his isolated and isolating personality —what he calls his "extraordinarily *shell-like*" character (6). The only son of a controlling and calculating father and a perpetually ill mother who are not just inattentive to but often censuring of his emotional needs and expressions, the married man describes having spent his childhood "like a plant in a cupboard. Now and again, when the sun shone, a careless hand thrust me out on the window-sill, and a careless hand whipped me in again —and that was all" (9). The passage not only captures the detached and transactional relationship of the narrator with his parents; it also evokes through its metaphors of de-humanisation and confinement its de-sensitising and self-enclosing effects upon the protagonist's character. Mansfield's story negatively hypothesises, thus, the primacy of affects in the successful integration of the self with others. It advocates the connective power of emotions and personal experience by exploring the alienating consequences of their suppression. But the text can also be seen to *perform* this same idea in the opposite direction. A peculiarity of the married man's burrowing into his character and memory is that it does not take the form of a personal reflection. Rather, his exercise of introspection is addressed to an either

⁶³ Originally collected in Mansfield's posthumous collection *The Doves' Nest and Other Stories*, "A Married Man's Story" is one of the several "fragments" that John Middleton Murry decided to include in the publication, alongside the title piece, "Weak Heart" and others. Dating its writing to August 1921, Antony Alpers cannot account for why the story was never finished (572). Murry himself referred to it in his introductory note to the volume, in fact, as "an unfinished, yet somehow complete piece" (12).

unknown or imagined reader who is explicitly and variously alluded at several points in the text: “Am I being obscure?” (5); “we understand each other” (6); “[d]o you remember your childhood?” (8). The introduction of an imagined interlocutor makes available a reading of the text as the materialisation of precisely the kind of affective communication that the narrator is incapable of establishing with his family. It suggests that his writing constitutes as much an attempt to unearth the causes of his isolation as an effort to overcome it by, following the logic of his diagnosis, opening up. Pamela Dunbar already intimates this when she writes that the married man’s expectation in sitting down to write about himself is that in doing so “he may be able to be healed” (84). In this way, the text doubly centres the general concerns of the collection it inaugurates. It both situates affect as the cornerstone of our capacity for association and highlights, by the same stroke, the affective and relational potential of narratives and stories.

Although it does not articulate the metafictional dimension of “A Married Man’s Story,” Stella Duffy’s “To Brixton Beach,” the last piece in the anthology, mobilises similar ideas to those at the heart of Mansfield’s text. The story focuses on Charlie, a middle-aged man who spends the day swimming in Brixton’s outdoor pool observing and briefly coming into contact with other swimmers and pool attendants. Though no actual words are exchanged in these encounters, the text enacts a communication between Charlie and the others through focal shifts. That is to say, whenever the protagonist pays attention, or comes close, to another character, the narrative briefly enters the latter’s subjectivity to give us a taste, via free indirect discourse, of their thoughts and feelings. After Charlie swims past a group of mothers at lunchtime, for instance, the narrator zeroes in on one of them: “Two babies hanging on to each arm. Helen can’t believe it. This is not what she’d planned when she booked that first maternity leave, four years ago. Can it really be so long?” (790). The implication of this strategy is that Charlie is able at some level to read or receive the interior world of other characters and is *affected* by it. The story is punctuated with moments in which this is suggested, such as when following the narrator’s focusing on a group of young men interested in “the curving lines on young women’s bodies,” Charlie is said to “[find] himself thinking of young women” (790). But it is the piece’s closing paragraph that make this transferral evident. In it, Charlie’s emergence from the pool after everybody is gone is imagined as the recovery of his own individual body after

it has been fused throughout the day with the thoughts and emotions of the people from the neighbourhood amongst whom he has been moving:

Charlie climbs from the water now, his body his own again, reassembled from the wishing and the tears and the could be, might be, would be, from hope breathed out into water, from the grins of young men and the laughter of old women and the helpless, rolling giggles of toddlers on soft towels. (792)

The story leaves us thus with a list of affects characterised as capable of undoing of the boundaries of the personal self. Others' emotions and experiences are posed as impressing upon, and communicating with, those of the main character in a way that allows for the development of intimate ties between them.

Enclosing the anthology as they do, "A Married Man's Story" and "To Brixton Beach" occupy privileged positions to both announce and recapitulate the main concerns of the collection respectively. In this sense, their engaging with the connective capacities of affect reads as a mechanism through which *The Story* strengthens the ideational frame on which the anthology has been built. Furthermore, in both pieces the protagonist's involvement with others' experiential and emotional spheres is deemed instrumental, as my readings suggest, in the development of a sense of belonging to a larger group or community. In the case of Mansfield's text, this group is constituted by the family unit and in Duffy's by Brixton's neighbourhood and its inhabitants. Emotionality is set in them as both allowing for and determining the individual's insertion into these groupings and, by extension, as that which founds the configuration of the groups in the first place. This opens a space from which to consider political implications of the articulation of Hislop's anthology. In other words, the texts I single out offer models of collective configuration that can be extrapolated to *The Story's* view of women as a political body in the light of the anthology's design and realisation: the collection's codification of its different zones of contact —between editor and texts, between texts themselves, and between texts and reader— as sites of affective exchange or alignment. Similar to the collectives depicted in the aforementioned stories, "women" emerges in Hislop's text as a multiple and heterogeneous group whose integrity is not dependant on any pre-established and fixed traits, such as gender identity. Instead, the affects encoded in particular forms of expression are proposed as that which attracts women's narratives to one another and enables their combination in a way that can be extended to the subjects penning them. More

specifically, the anthology's exploitation of form stages textual attachments based on emotion that read metaphorically: since this is an anthology of women's voices, the selection and arrangement of texts marks the image of women's collectivity that the anthology codifies. More than this, I argue that my analysis provides too for an understanding of the text as being simultaneously crafted to make the reader undergo the formation of such forms of attachment in their reading of the collection. In prompting its audience to engage their emotional state with those of the texts, *The Story* may be aptly seen as working to induce in readers the same experience of affinity and empathetic connection that it sets as basing relationships between female subjects.

This view of women as a collective that emerges from Hislop's anthology both chimes with and can be further theorised through the work that Sara Ahmed has done on emotions and, precisely, the formation of collectives. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Ahmed proposes that the movement of emotions "constitutes the relationality of subject, objects, signs and others" (46). That is to say, the way in which affective states move between and amongst us is what puts us in relation to the world and others, and determines our attachments to them. Attachments occur, in her view, when the same or similar emotions move between subjects. Feeling with or similar to another is posed as that which brings subjects together and, in that sense, "materialise[s] the very 'surface' of collective bodies" (46). The critic draws on an analogy with Marxist theory to systematise the workings of this last process. She proposes that we can see emotions working "as a form of capital" whose affective and binding value increases the more they are "circulated" (45). The circulation of a given affect by and amongst individuals is seen as directly proportional to the "intensity" of these individuals' attachment to it and between them, codifying subjective interconnectedness in this way as a form of "affective econom[y]" (46). Usefully for the purposes of my argument, Ahmed goes on to exemplify her thesis by engaging with how "stories of pain" might be thought to contribute to the foundation and securing of "feminists collectives" in this fashion. She argues that pain expressed in women's narratives and testimonies is an instrumental signifier moving women "towards feminism" and enabling them to *feel* "connected, and to make connections" (174). By sharing and exchanging stories of pain, women are increasingly able to link their personal emotions to structural relations of power "in a way that undoes the separation of the individual from others" and constitutes them as a group (174). It

leads them, in other words, to the “formation of a ‘we’” that, “being made up of different stories of pain” is moreover inherently non-homogenising (174). Because a pre-condition to the sharing and exchanging of stories is that these stories are not equal, Ahmed remarks that feminism’s constitutive “stories of pain . . . cannot be reduced to a ground, identity or sameness” (174).

Even when *The Story* is not directly or exclusively concerned with narratives of “pain,” —or “feminism” for that matter— Ahmed’s exemplification aptly maps onto the ideation of women as a political body that the anthology presents us with. It provides a metonym that accounts for and systematises the way in which Hislop’s text poses emotionality in broad terms as the preeminent tying feature of the social group it represents. Further, it helps crystallise the idea that a key consequence of conceptualising collective associations in this way is the possibility of imagining women as a plural entity whose combination capitalises on, rather than obliterates, singular experience. Indeed, as my description suggested, *The Story* depends on a deemphasizing of a unique or shared identity amongst the texts and authors it includes to characterise its textual complex as made out of different stories that are affectively bound. In this last sense, Ahmed’s argument speaks to and makes available a link between the anthology in question and a tradition of feminist thought which has long been interested in the capacity of affects generally as a way of creating political coalitions which resist or eschew essentialism. The conundrums that the essentialist debates of the 1980s and 1990s posed to the undertakings of feminist action, as I explained early in Chapter 3, prompted several critics to turn to, and propose, affect as a concept on which to base a coalitional politics that bypassed the problems underlying identity-based associations. As early as 1984, for instance, Haraway argued for the articulation of a feminist politics based on “affinity, not identity” in order to develop a “political kinship” whose “poetic/politic unity” avoided getting caught up “on a logic of appropriation, incorporation, and taxonomic identification” which she saw as inherently exclusionary (297). A decade later, Wendy Brown similarly proposed a substitution of a language of “being” in feminist politics with a language of “wanting,” a shift that would allow women to establish “attachments” based not on who they are but on the effects that the established social order has on their desires (407). And more recently, Clare Hemmings has proposed the development of a feminism based on the transferral from “affective dissonance” of women with the world to “affective solidarity” amongst women: “a politics that

[transforms] experiences of discomfort” into “a productive basis from which to seek solidarity with others, not based in a shared identity” (158). Taken together, the theses of these critics define a logic within which we can aptly situate the form and workings of Hislop’s anthology. More than this, I would argue that *The Story* as I have described it *dramatizes* the very forms of affective, non-essentialising associations that this thread of feminist criticism advocates theoretically.

This last point brings forth an additional advantage of my engagement with Ahmed to conceptualise the cultural work of Hislop’s collection. Ahmed’s account of how emotional ties amongst women are generated evokes a special amenability of the short story anthology—which my analysis has been suggesting—to textually represent these bindings. First, her view of “stories” as affective artefacts, despite not being genre specific, echoes the arguments of short story critics mentioned early in the chapter which see in the properties of the form a singular capacity to record and generate emotive responses.⁶⁴ And second, her insistence on the need for multiplicity and difference of narratives to establish non-homogenising affective economies renders the anthology’s exclusive capacity to combine a plurality of voices from different time-space coordinates especially adequate to materialise this process, as *The Story* does. On the one hand, this correspondence reinforces the claims I advanced at the beginning of the chapter regarding Smith’s study of interconnected identity in the short story cycle. Namely, they highlight the anthology’s greater potential to realise a view of a given group as an emotional network. On the other, it provides a base to account for the proliferation of short story anthologies which, as I suggested, resemble *The Story* and appeared alongside the development of the feminist turn to affect of the last thirty or so years.

⁶⁴ Andrea Deciu Ritivoi, who shares Ahmed’s interest in the way that “stories,” understood as narratives, encourage “feeling with another,” characterises them in a way that further supports this point:

The limited aspect [of a “story”] is key: what is left out is as important as what gets in . . . [This] draw[s] attention to a phenomenological aspect, namely, that it is a knowledge of *certain* experiences, which are inevitably embodied in particular individuals manifested within their concrete lives, and thus different from others. (67)

Not all the anthologies I enumerated in the introduction to this chapter follow exactly the same strategies as the ones deployed in Hislop's text; but they all share with *The Story* an exploitation of the genre which works to promote an emotionally-bound view of the social identity they set out to represent that resists essentialisation. Published shortly after the collection that has concerned us thus far, Rosalie Morales Kearns' *The Female Complaint* is the short story anthology that most approximates Hislop's work both in chronological terms and in terms of its realisation. The main difference between the two works is merely one of scope: instead of engaging with vast fields of feeling through an equally vast selection of texts, Morales Kearns' anthology features fewer contributions and centres on the re-appropriation of "complaining" —an affectively charged verb traditionally used to disregard women— as a specific form of expression around which women's experiences and feelings often orbit, and through which they can subsequently be connected. In her introduction to the collection, Morales Kearns writes that "'female complaint' evokes 19th century . . . tendency[ies] to dismiss outspoken women as complainers," but what the anthology sets out to demonstrate is that the sentiments complaint mobilises also, and more importantly, provide grounds for "transformation, connection, joy" amongst women. One way in which *The Female Complaint* illustrates this is by including several pieces in which a woman's protest leads to the development of understandings, sympathies or partnerships with another member of the same sex. For instance, in E. A. Fow's "Your Giraffe is Burning" two sisters strengthen the ties between them by confronting their family in their shared determination to remain childless. Similarly, Joanna Lesher's "Diversion," to give another example, depicts the complicity that is established between a female flight attendant and a woman on the plane as the latter stands up against the machismo of an American man on board.

More importantly, though, the anthology is geared, similar to *The Story*, to also articulate this kind of bonding structurally. *The Female Complaint* is divided into five sections, each bearing a title which describes a different form or mode of combination resulting from expressions of disconformity. In the case of the two texts to which I have just referred, to continue with the same example, they are grouped together with six other pieces under a section titled "Resistance," where stories repeatedly stage women's acts of rebellion against different sorts of social expectations and impositions. Even when some of the texts featured in the section do not dramatize associations between women like the contributions I have highlighted

(as is the case of Sarah Marian Seltzer's "Ironing," for instance) their amalgamation implies that the experiences and emotions codified in such acts provide for a finding and founding of a common ground and associations between the narratives and their subjects. In other words, the grouping intimates that experiences and feelings against specific rules or behaviours, in this case, afford the possibility of connecting women. Moreover, by proposing as it does that *different* forms of engagement emerge from the combination of specific fictions of complaint—other sections include "Solidarity," "Entanglements" or "Mother Figures"—the anthology also underlies that the result of affective connections between women and their stories is not homogeneous nor homogenising. The design of the short story anthology, to put it more clearly, suggests that the form and character of women's associations based on emotions and experience is variable and dependant on the particular subjects and the narratives that constitute it, as well as on the form of their encounter.

The Female Complaint is useful because by actually naming the kinds of associations between women that emerge from specific emotional engagements it draws our attention to the affective nature of collections built around specific forms of women's relations that do not readily seem to be about the interplay of women and affects. Yet, short story anthologies centred around women's familial relationships, friendships or other sorts of complicities, like some of the ones I listed early in the chapter, are founded upon the same ethos as that of Hislop's and Morales Kearns' texts. They articulate it, however, in a somewhat reversed fashion. Instead of starting out from a specific emotion or set of emotions and proceeding to highlight their operativity as binding devices, as *The Story* and *The Female Complaint* do, these texts collect stories about specific groupings or forms of interaction between women and underscore, through their editorial selection and framing, that affects underpin these interrelations more than anything else and make ties possible. To illustrate this, let us jointly consider, briefly, two examples of short story anthologies built around the mother-daughter dyad, a particularly salient set of texts in the subgroup that I am outlining.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ A great number of mother-daughter short story anthologies appeared in the market in the late 1980s and 1990s. Besides the two texts I address below, other important examples include Irene Zahava's *My Mother's Daughter*, Lilly Golden's *In Praise of Mothers*, or Jill Morgan's *Mothers and Daughters*.

Like most collections of this sort, Christine Park and Caroline Heaton's *Close Company: Stories of Mothers and Daughters* and Susan Koppelman's *Between Mothers and Daughters* start out by challenging the inherence of the communion between mothers and daughters based on either blood ties or a shared identity. The stories that constitute their texts, these editors note, show rather that women's filial relations are frequently fraught with conflict and separation, and that conciliation, if it happens, is built upon empathy towards one another's feelings and experiences. As Koppelman explains, focusing particularly on the relationship daughters establish with their mothers: "daughters often hate their mothers" (xviii); they "create [their] own sense of identity by separating from them" (xx), and it is only when or whether they reach an understanding of the "fear and the love, the ignorance and the hope" (xviii) of their mothers and align with it that associations become possible. But a similar process also takes place vice versa, as several of the stories in these collections show. The ending of Alice Walker's "Everyday Use," for instance, illustrates this last point (and exemplifies the gist of the claims on which these collections are built) with particular force, something which has likely prompted the inclusion of the piece in both of the texts being addressed here, as well as made it a favourite of familial women-only short story anthologies widely.⁶⁶

In it, the African-American, working-class mother and narrator of the text, Mrs Johnson, arbitrates the discussion between her two opposing daughters over the right to inherit some old quilts hand-stitched by their grandmother. The argument pivots around the validity of contrasting value systems and ends with Maggie, Mrs Johnson's unschooled and housekeeping daughter to whom the patchworks were originally promised as a wedding present, accepting to give up the quilts to her older, university-going sister Dee, who wants to display them in her city home as mementos of her heritage: "'She can have them, Mama,' [Maggie] said, like somebody used to never winning anything . . . 'I can 'member Grandma . . . without the quilts'" (238).⁶⁷ Maggie's renunciation works as a catalyst for the epiphanic

⁶⁶ The short story is also included, for example, in Stephanie Spinner's *Motherlove: Stories by Women about Motherhood*, Lilly Golden's *In Praise of Mothers* or Joyce Carol Oates and Janet Berliner's *Snapshots: 20th Century Mother-Daughter Fiction*

⁶⁷ This and all subsequent page references for Walker's story in this chapter are from Koppelman's *Between Mothers and Daughters*.

climax of the story, in which Mrs Johnson experiences an unexpected and unprecedented sense of affinity with her younger daughter:

I looked at her . . . [and] something hit me in the top of my head and ran down to the soles of my feet. Just like when I'm in church and the spirit of God touches me and I get happy and shout. I did something I never had done before: I hugged Maggie to me, then . . . snatched the quilts out of [Dee's] hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap. (238)

The implications of this moment are that Mrs Johnson, on the one hand, is moved by Maggie's surrender act and entrenched memory of her ancestors, which Dee patently lacks. But on a deeper level, the scene also suggests that the newfound closeness between mother and daughter emerges from Mrs Johnson's recognition of her own deprived background in Maggie's defeat and stoical resignation. Emotional and experiential alignment, it is proposed, does not merely underlie the intensification of the filial bond, but as Mrs Johnson's *first* hug signifies, makes the bond possible altogether.

Although the multi-faceted structure of these short story anthologies does not serve to *enact* the attractive power of affect that they advocate—as I have shown to be case with *The Story* or *The Female Complaint*—it is still utilised and plays an important part in the articulation of their meaning. Both collections remark on how the plural design of the genre makes possible a reproduction and reinforcement of the message that the texts they feature embody. Park and Heaton note, for instance, that the inclusion of a variety of voices and contrasting narratives that the anthology form uniquely allows and which they have tried to exploit may be thought to mirror the different “social and historical backgrounds against which mothers and daughters confront one another” (xv). The clearest manifestation of this sought-for heterogeneity in the collections—which evokes a somewhat mitigated pursuit of the ec-centricity we saw Virago anthologies articulate—is the intermingling of texts about mothers and daughters with various pieces in which motherhood is surrogated, such as Sue Miller's “Given Names” and Jan Clausen's “Children's Liberation” in *Close Company*, or Fannie Hurst's “Oats for the Woman” and Ann Allen Shockley's “A Birthday Remembered” in *Between Mothers and Daughters*. Yet, editors also draw attention, extending the correlation between the structural level of their collections and the content of their texts, to the fact that despite the miscellaneous articulations of their works, it is possible to see the texts speak to and read one

another, precisely, “through the joy or pain” that they encode. That is to say, like the relationships between the characters at the centre of their contributions, an affective “piec[ing] together” of the anthology is made available, to use Koppelman’s expression (xxvi), which enables the combination of texts without integrating them into an essential narrative.

Both Park and Heaton, and Koppelman make clear, finally, that the interest of their short story anthologies in the configuration of mother-daughter relationships is one that bespeaks, and can be extrapolated to, women’s relationships widely: “The different visions [in these stories] will suggest the richness and variety of choices open to women, and even provide a bridge between [their] separate, yet connected worlds” (Park and Heaton xviii). Koppelman’s familial collection, in fact, is chronologically framed in her production as an editor by an anthology of stories on women’s rivalries (*The Other Woman*) on the one hand, and another entitled *Women’s Friendships* on the other (a category in which she joins Ann Oosthuizen’s *Stepping Out: Stories on Friendships between Women*, mentioned above). This reinforces the idea that the filial anthologies I have singled out are indeed part of a broader set of texts concerned with women’s interrelations more generally. These latter works all follow analogous patterns of selection and framing to the ones I have described with reference to the two collections above, and pursue the same aims: a substitution of a shared sense of identity amongst women with a plurality of alliances crafted on affective grounds. In *The Other Women*, for instance, to give a flavour of this, Koppelman writes: “In these stories we learn not only what the women feel about the men in their lives but, more importantly, what they feel for each other” (xviii) and the “nurturant communities of women” that emerge from these feelings.

Hence, all these texts may aptly be considered together with Hislop’s and Morales Kearns’ anthologies as constituting a coherent body of work. Although they do so in slightly different ways, all these short story anthologies work to propose ways in which experiences and emotions provide for the institution of —indeed, institute— associations between women which spring from, rather than obliterate, individuality and difference. Appearing over the course of the last three decades, these texts have not just coincided with an increasing fascination in feminism with affect as a tool to locate non-essentialist sites of collective identification. In the light of the short story anthology’s special capacity to bring forth a view of short stories as affective artefacts and to textually stage, subsequently, affective bindings susceptible of being

read politically, the collections in question emerge as preeminent recipients of this line of feminist thought and unique works in their dramatization of its theoretical ideas.

The short story anthology and Postcriticism

There are several ways in which this analysis of the short story anthologies in question makes these texts speak to current topical issues both within literary studies and contemporary culture at large in a way that reinforces and expands the remit of their relevance. A productive and readily available connection, for instance, can be established between the functioning of these texts and contemporary movements for women's rights that are not confined to academic spheres, particularly the Twitter-based phenomenon #MeToo. Emerging from the wish to foster solidarity between the victims of sexual violence, the logic and dynamics of #MeToo are ones that do not just resemble, but in many ways reproduce those of anthologies like Hislop's, Morales Kearns', or Koppelman's as I have described them. As the bipartite structure of the hashtag suggests, #MeToo is based on and motivates the insertion of the individual into a group by relating and aligning their personal experience with those of others. The idea is not so much one based on the addition and assimilation of individual narratives in the Twitter archive in order to define or draw attention to the issue of sexual violence (or, indeed, the women who experience it). Rather, as Allison Page and Jacquelyn Arcy explain, the hashtag works as a tool of "empowerment through empathy" (1), providing women with a (virtual) space where their experience and the feelings it ignites can be put in touch with those of others to create what they call "*feelings of community*" based on understanding, "healing and care" (2). In this sense, the short story anthologies to which this chapter has paid attention may help us identify and account for the kind of attachments that the movement promotes and the means whereby they are fulfilled. But to the extent that the collections can also be seen as an obvious antecedent of the ethos and workings of the movement, they also serve to contextualise #MeToo within a broader history of textual strategies making available the connecting possibilities of women's narratives and affects.

In a not completely unrelated way, I want to concentrate more here, though, on the relationship that *The Story* and other similar anthologies hold with the recent

emergence of postcritical trends in cultural and literary studies in the light of my analysis. An increasingly topical area of enquiry in these disciplines, Postcriticism is best defined as an umbrella term amalgamating a wide variety of arguments that call for a renewal of reading and interpretative practices within them. Despite their heterogeneity, postcritical positions share a moving against what Paul Ricoeur dubbed the “hermeneutics of suspicion,” the thrust to “interrogat[e], demystif[y], and defamiliariz[e]” literary texts so as to uncover their hidden ideologies which has become synonymous, in their view, with literary criticism (Felski and Anker 1). Postcritics like Rita Felski, Timothy Bewes or Valentine Cunningham not only express a dissatisfaction with the privileging of “suspicious” reading in the field, but argue that the entrenchment of this critical mode has resulted in the stifling systematisation of the study of literature: “critique [has turned out] to be a quite stable repertoire of stories, similes, tropes, verbal gambits, and rhetorical plays” (Felski, *Limits* 7). A consequence of this, they argue, is the reduction of literary texts “to formulae, or the formulaic” (Cunningham 122) upon which such critical narratives can be erected. Or else, as Derek Attridge puts it, the “instrumentalization” of the work of literature:

the treating of a text . . . as a means to a predetermined end: coming to the object with the hope or the assumption that it can be instrumental in furthering an existing project, and responding to it in such a way as to test, or even produce, that usefulness. (7)

In the light of this diagnosis, postcritics set out to reclaim or restore the “singularity” of the literary artefact (Attridge 13). They variously advocate the cultivation of critical methods that, without resorting back to old formalist approaches, will grant primacy to the text and its unique, distinctive qualities, and open new productive avenues for the study of literature.

Significantly for the purposes of my argument, one of the ways in which this project is being undertaken involves arguing for the reconfiguration of critics’ engagement with literary texts on emotional grounds. Indeed, if the ideological unveiling that critique promotes and its consequences rest upon a fundamental distrust of the work, a reversal of this *attitude* might prove key to postcritical aims. Some voices have suggested, in this sense, that being attentive and responsive to the feelings embodied in a text and how they work both within it and upon us—rather than suspecting or dismissing them—allows for the generation of fresh questions

that reinstate the text's centrality in critical practices. Cunningham, for instance, advocates a focus on "touch" in the study of literature towards this end. He argues that investigating and describing the distinct ways in which a given text may be "touching," as well as how we are "touched" by it, creates a space from which to rethink the form and function of literary works attending, instead of obliterating, to their idiosyncrasy (155-6). In a similar fashion, Felski has proposed that a sensitisation to the emotional realm which a literary work is expressing would prompt, among other things, a fundamental shift in the nature of the critical idiom with which we approach literary texts. Rather than an interpretative enterprise founded on decoding and unmasking, she imagines such recalibration would necessarily put the stress on issues of "attaching, collating, negotiating, assembling—of forging links between things that were previously unconnected" (173), and on how "specifics of style, emplotment, viewpoint or *mise-en-scène*" make them possible (182). As a result, the question "'What does this text undermine?'" together with the standardising set of answers that many postcritics see behind it, may be supplanted with the more open and specifying interrogation "'What does this text create, build, make possible?'" (182).

It is not my interest here to advocate the need for, or the usefulness of, a postcritical turn in literary studies of the kind that these latter critics endorse. Instead, I want to draw attention to the fact that anthologies like *The Story, Close Company*, or *Women's Friendships* not only seem to prompt the reader to adopt the kind affective engagement that Cunningham or Felski argue for; they make responsiveness to the emotions with which they are concerned and articulate, as well as to the work they are carrying out in the texts, an integral part of their meaning and function, as my analysis has shown. Elucidating what these collections *do* in terms of gender politics depends on being receptive to how the emotions each of its components embody are, at once, singular and enabling of generating connections with other texts. Moreover, expounding as I have done the relationship that exists between this conception and realisation of the anthologies and the articulation of a non-essentialist view of women as a collective constitutes a possible and apt answer to the very questions Felski sees emerging from the brand of postcritical reading she puts forward. In the light of these findings, we can trace meaningful associations between this set of women-only short story anthologies, and the short story anthology more generally, and Postcriticism. First, I suggest that the body of

anthologies this chapter has been interested in can and should be seen as a corpus of texts that has contributed to the emergence of postcritical attitudes in literary scholarship. This hypothesis is not just supported by the fact that besides demanding attention to their engagement with, and the exploitation of, emotions in the stories, many of these texts preceded the coming into being of this scholarly trend. But also, more importantly, by the fact that, as several critics have noticed, there is a relationship between the thread of feminist thought these anthologies dramatize and the development of Postcriticism as a mode of textual analysis. Stephen Ahren, for example, sees the two as participants in a post-poststructuralist culture of re-assembly and reconstruction: “A moment of postcritical reflection is now upon us, challenging long-held habits” in the name of “potentially revolutionary new assemblages” and “rehabilitation,” he writes, “while an ethic of repair that promises reconciliation of self to others has reinvigorated influential voices in the feminist project,” such as those of Haraway, Hemmings or Ahmed (14). Anker and Felski are clearer about the fact that certain postcritical approaches are in fact indebted to feminism’s validation of emotions and promotion of their restorative powers: “we should acknowledge that feminist thinkers continued to highlight the importance of feeling and embodiment even when such approaches fell out of favor” (11). Establishing an affiliation between feminism’s interest in affect and Postcriticism in this way, creates a space in which we can insert the short story anthologies as mediating the transference of ideas from one to the other. To put this more clearly, by textually realising the ethos of feminism’s affect theorists, the collections constitute a body of literature that facilitated and continues to facilitate the translation of a politics of emotion into postcritical hermeneutic practices.

But we can also look at the relationship between the short story anthology and Postcriticism in a different way. Though focused on the study of an existing corpus of women-only short story anthologies concerned with affect, my analysis has also brought to the fore the special capacity of the form to codify and express affective relationships more broadly. Seen from this angle, the short story anthology emerges as a genre which is particularly amenable to postcritical reading practices. Indeed, as I have already hinted, the idiomatic shift that Felski outlines as a result of the postcritical readjustment is one that appears especially suited to the study and description of meaning-making processes of the genre in which this thesis is interested. At the same time, an investigation of the form in terms of attachments,

assemblages or negotiations would counter more traditional, suspicious-based, approaches based on issues of representativity —and derivate binaries of inclusion and exclusion—, that, however useful politically, have proved detrimental for the study of the genre, as I remarked in the Introduction. In this way, I would argue that Postcriticism has the potential of breathing new life into the study of the short story anthology. Opening new and exciting possibilities from which to explore the complex and combinatory structure of the genre, it makes visible fresh avenues though which to continue to productively investigate the creative possibilities of this literary form as well as the functions it has fulfilled and continues to fulfil in our culture.

Conclusions — Imagined Communities of Women, “Dialogic Formalism,” and Futures

Imagined communities of women

In his landmark study on the origins and spread of nationalism, Benedict Anderson sets out by claiming that “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined” (6). In this view, communities are not distinguished by their “falsity/genuineness” but, since they are all equally “created,” by the “style” and means through which they come to be conceived (6). His underlying thesis is that the development and use through history of a variety of media has allowed large groups of people, some of whose members will never “meet . . . or even hear” of each other, to create a shared sense of identity and communion (6). In the specific case that concerns him, he argues that the “revolutionary vernaculariz[ation]” (39) of culture in the 17th century together with the advent of “print-capitalism,” particularly as manifest in the rise of “the novel and the newspaper . . . provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation” (25). The mass production of printed work in localised languages helped reify some of the geographical boundaries that vernaculars established whilst granting to the growing numbers of people in each of those regions a vehicle “to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others” (36).

Although focused on the emergence of national consciousness, Anderson’s general frame, encapsulated in the concept of “imagined communities,” has proved not only influential but pre-eminently portable to myriad other fields. The notion has been adopted by the humanities at large (as well as fields outside of them) to think not merely about the nation but about how different social or cultural groupings come to be configured.⁶⁸ Feminist and gender studies are not exceptions to this. In

⁶⁸ To give some examples, in 2011 the *American Behavioural Scientist Journal* published a paper entitled “Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community” by Anatoliy Gruzd, Barry Wellman and Yuri Takhteyev; in 2017, Elina Hytönen-Ng wrote the article “Place and Imagined Community in Jazz” which tries to apply “the concept of imagined community amongst the professional jazz musicians” (62); and in the field of education, Ye He, Silvia Cristina Bettez, and Barbara B. Lavin

general, critics working in these areas have taken up the concept of “imagined communities” in two different ways: first, they have criticised Anderson’s lack of attention to gender —particularly the use of gendered language and metaphors— in the constitution of nationalisms. Linda McDowell, for example, has argued that Anderson fails to account for “gendered symbolic structures” which have been instrumental in the imagining of national identities, especially representations of the nation as female and of its inhabitants as typically male (195-6). Other critics, conversely, have adopted Anderson’s frame, either explicitly or implicitly, as a way of exploring possibilities of thinking about women as a community and the means whereby this imaging has taken or can take place. Some voices, such as that of Rajeswari Sunder Rajan in her book *Real and Imagined Women*, have posed that the “universal and abstract rhetoric of ‘Woman’ or ‘women’” is one whose origins “are to be sought in the dominant modes of ideology (patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism)” (129). In this view, women are cast as a community by external discourses and forces: men, empire or the market underlie the imagination of women as a group. Others have been more interested in exploring how women themselves have been involved in the enterprise of self-definition and the instituting of a sense of commonality amongst them. Soshana Felman, for instance, has remarked upon the key importance of the increasing number of female writers and readers in the fulfilment of this project. She characterises feminism as a movement whereby women come to be imagined both individually and collectively through the “bond of reading”: “discovering, through others’ reading and through the way in which other women are *addressed* by one’s own writing, that one is not born a woman, one has become . . . a woman” (12). In her account, the rise of women as readers and, especially, as writers has been instrumental in opening lines of communication through which women have been able to reflect upon and articulate their identity as such.

Understood in this last sense, Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities” usefully serves to crystallise much of the work that this thesis has carried out. Throughout the foregoing chapters, I have situated the short story anthology at the

published in 2015 a sociological study titled “Imagined Community of Education” which used Anderson’s notion to characterise the conception of the US school system by refugee and immigrant students.

centre of key developments in gender theory and feminist thought taking place in the last forty or so years. My argument has been that the proliferation of these texts since the 1980s has not just served to enhance or highlight women's position in the literary market or their excelling in a particular literary form, as they are often seen. Neither has it been a mere accompaniment or response to changing ideas of gender in culture during the period. Rather, I demonstrated that these works have been active agents contributing to these changes, and at times even pioneering them. Women-only short story anthologies constitute a textual corpus through which female identity has been variously conceptualised, and original forms of political organisation amongst women fostered. To be more specific, I have shown how the genre has theorised, on the one hand, both essential and poststructuralist understandings of gender; on the other, it has worked as a medium through which to reflect on and elaborate models of political coalition amongst women which eschew the homogenising of internal differences. These different cultural functions—which have served my thesis, incidentally, not just to articulate its structure but to contribute to the largely underdeveloped task of categorising of women-only short story anthologies—can be brought together and considered under Andersonian terminology. We could say that the short story anthology has been and continues to be an important literary object through which women have been able to think about who they are, and about the existence and nature of links between them as individuals and other people of their same sex. Like the novel or the newspaper in the case of the nation, then, the genre might be thought to have opened a space for self-reflexive creativity which provides for the articulation and development of what we can call gender or female consciousness. Of course, the assimilation of my findings with Anderson's claims cannot be seamless and calls for a degree of qualification. Unlike Anderson's argument, more particularly, I do not claim an absolute centrality of the genre at hand in this enterprise, but a more relative one. The anthology's contributions to questions of gender coexist with contributions made by and through other forms and mediums, such as Theory, as my research has shown in its continual interweaving of the short story anthology and theoretical discourses. As a result, my research has characterised the genre as *a* main, rather than *the* main, or the sole, actor in the project of imagining women's communities.

In addition to this, nevertheless, engaging with Anderson's argument is further apt to describe the work that my thesis has carried out from the perspective of method

thanks to the focus that he places upon the “style” in which a given community is imagined. Intertwined with the concept of style are the notions of genre and form which, as I have argued throughout, have been instrumental in the development of my project. As Katie Wales defines it, what we call “style” may be a variation “in literary language within or between texts, GENRES, and periods so we may talk of the style of Augustan poetry” (398). Attention to form—that of the anthology, the short story, and the short story anthology—has been key in my elucidating of the cultural work undertaken by the women-only short story anthology in relation to gender and feminism. It is through close analysis of what I have often called the polyvocal and combinatory articulation of the anthology—the study of specifics of selection, arrangement, framing, sequencing, etc.—that I have been able to demonstrate the claims advanced in the previous paragraph. To recall a couple of examples of this: Chapter 2’s argument that Angela Carter’s short story anthology works to codify a poststructuralist understanding of women’s identity is founded upon the thesis that she manipulates the multi-voiced form of the anthology to create an ec-centric textual space. And in the case of Chapter 4, the contention that *The Story* characterises women as an emotionally- rather than an identity-tied collective emerges from an analysis of the affective properties of the short story genre and how the anthology is able to exploit them. In each case, I have confirmed an intimate relationship, as Anderson suggests, between a specific imagination of the community and the *manner* in or through which this imagination is attained.

Another way of putting this last point is to say that attention to formal aspects has provided me with a way of categorising different women-only short story anthologies according to the cultural function they perform. Indeed, although my thesis has not primarily pursued elaborating a classification of the body of texts in which it is interested, its focus on the consequences of adopting and articulating different “styles” of short story anthology has nevertheless contributed to a refinement and, in many ways, a complication of the distinctions between and amongst this set of literary works. Usually considered, as I pointed out early in the thesis, in binary terms, such as literary/popular or themed/non-themed, my analysis has shown possibilities of seeing more nuanced differences traversing the corpus women-only short story anthologies and to render these differences significant to the various roles that the genre has played in relation to gender. For instance, I have shown how not all themed short story anthologies can be cast as being designed and working in the

same way. Engagement with different themes or the different employment of a certain theme, as precisely Chapters 2 and 4 have exemplified, result in varying realisations that have a determinant effect on a collection's final meaning.

“Dialogic formalism”

From a more general point of view, as I pointed out in the Introduction, approaches to the anthology have been fundamentally lacking in attention to form, and so this way of addressing the genre constitutes the main source of originality of my research in relation to the genre it is studying. More specifically, it has allowed me to develop a vocabulary with which to speak of the (short story) anthology in relation to politics and identity which is largely missing from literary criticism altogether. Throughout the chapters, I have variously characterised the anthology as a text dominated by the interplay of centrifugal and centripetal forces, a discontinuous form with the capacity to infuse meaning to its textual thresholds, and an emotional textual arena promoting exchanges of feeling. Each of these descriptions has developed a set of terms with which to speak about the properties and mechanisms of the genre —an idiom of overarching narratives and centres of attraction; of thresholds and liminal spaces; of assimilation and contrast; of interplays between texts, contexts and paratexts, etc.— in a fashion that paves the way for future scholarship interested in the form, as I will reiterate later on. At the same time, this focused methodology has also produced, and been informed by, incursions into the theory of short fiction. Each chapter has engaged with specific arguments or theories of the short story present in the field and, by situating them in relation to the short story anthology and gender politics, has either inflected or furthered their significance. Thus, in Chapter 1, the role played by the modernist short story in *The Secret Self* and other “literary” anthologies to establish an essential understanding of womanhood adds to the functions ascribed to this particular manifestation of the form. Chapter 2 has built on theories of short fiction as “minor” literature by remarking upon the incidence of context in realising this quality of the genre. In Chapter 3, my analysis of the potential to realise segmentivity of both the short story anthology and short fiction as exploited in a text like *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* has not only fed into long-standing interests in the capacities opened by the discontinuous qualities of the form and, more specifically, its combination in collections, but also advanced a way in which to

politicise these formal features. And Chapter 4 has added to discussions around the affective capacities of the short stories by showing how they can be mobilised by the anthology and used to reconfigure senses of the collective.

One last field to which the method this thesis has employed critically contributes to, and which has not been fully considered before, is that of feminist scholarship. In her 2013 book *Forms of Engagement*, Elizabeth Scott-Bauman posits that, as with the case of the anthology, feminist criticism and formalism have, too, been “insufficiently combined” (9). She argues that the rise of feminism in a “post-formalist” climate (that is, post-New Criticism) has determined that approaches to women’s writing have tended towards the “historical, archival and biographical” (9). As a result, feminist scholarship remains deficient in accounts of *how* women have engaged with specific literary materials (genres, rhetorical devices, and so on) and to what ends. In the Introduction to her study—which concerns the exploration of literary communications between women (through influences, imitations or reactions to each other) and the way in which, subsequently, they have created and participated in literary networks and communities—she joins forces with feminist scholars Sasha Roberts and Ellen Rooney to argue for a correction of this.⁶⁹ She highlights the need to foster what she calls (following Roberts⁷⁰) a “dialogic formalism” in feminist literary studies; not a return to form, but rather, the establishing of form as “an ‘interlocutor’ to the history, theory and ideology,” in this case of women (10). Such an account makes it possible to situate my research as a participant in precisely this shift demanded by feminist critics at work today. My approach to the short story anthology has provided an examination of women’s exploitation of the genre’s formal parameters in relation to the articulation of political and identity narratives. Indeed, the phrase “dialogic formalism” precisely captures the way in which my argument has proceeded: we can think about this thesis as staging a dialogue between the use of the features and devices of the short story anthology and the development of discourses of gender.

⁶⁹ Ellen Rooney’s article “Forms of Contentment” discusses the role of form in Cultural Studies widely. In her essay “Feminist Criticism and the New Formalism” Sasha Roberts makes a more focused case for the need to attend to form in the study of Early Modern women’s writing.

⁷⁰ See Roberts (89).

Invoking here this dialogic view of my research is useful not just because it encapsulates the underlying structure and mechanics of my chapters, but because it opens a space, too, from where to consider what or who has not taken part in the conversation I have presented. In other words, the decision to put in contact a formal approach to women-only short story anthologies and changing ideas of gender identity and politics is at once the main source of productivity of my work and the basis of its limitations. By choosing to tackle my object of study in this way I have inevitably displaced or omitted other possible angles from which it could have been addressed. In consequence, I believe it apt to identify and consider these briefly here before moving into the possible futures for my research.

Futures

One obvious dislocation prompted by my approach concerns the general exclusion of the more commercial aspects of the women-only short story anthology. As I remarked in the Introduction to the thesis, this genre is made as much of projects that set out to be, or become, culturally relevant and agenda-setting as, often, works designed with more purely commercial-oriented goals. A degree of overlapping exists between the two, as my thesis has shown throughout: in several cases I have drawn attention to the longevity and remarkable selling rates of the anthologies on which I have focused, particularly *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* and *Black-Eyed Susans/Midnight Birds*. However, many of the most profitable women-only short story anthologies (and short story anthologies generally) are short-lived publications produced with the aim of appealing to specific readerships or intervene in localised historical moments. As Linda Prescott tells us, annual best-of anthologies constitute the archetype of these kinds of texts. They are works which “maintain the genre’s visibility in the literary marketplace as a form of writing which is ‘of the moment’” (564) and “regularly make the best-seller lists for fiction” (577). My concentrating on landmark works which have had a special incidence in the development of discourses of gender has largely prevented me from delving into and considering the market dynamics of the genre. As a result, a study investigating the women-only short story anthology from the perspective of its sales numbers, placing the focus on the mercantile performance of the form, emerges as an alternative, supplementary project to the one I have produced.

I imagine that one of the places where the undertaking of this task could lead to is the consideration of short story anthologies of popular or genre fiction, which my thesis leaves widely unaddressed. In his book *Art and Commerce in the British Short Story, 1880-1950*, Dean Baldwin explains that, in the period that he is interested in, anthologies of “detective, ghost, mystery, adventure and humorous stories” were “by far the most successful” in commercial terms (113). He further explains: “[genre] anthologies . . . were often very profitable for their publishers and appear to have involved little risk, as the market for popular genres of short fiction and even ‘hall-marked’ literary fiction . . . was reliable and relatively large” (115). An analogous analysis can be advanced of women-only short story anthologies published at the turn of the 21st century. Whilst agreeing with Baldwin that “the majority of short story anthologies are commercially oriented, often featuring specific genres such as fantasy or ghost stories” (564), Prescott notices that this tendency is also present, if not accentuated, in anthologies of short stories written by women: “sub-genres can be seen to flourish,” she writes, in the women-only short story anthology (567). As an example of this, she merely mentions a couple of popular anthologies of crime short fiction published by the Woman’s Press in the 1980s and 1990s: Jen Green’s *Reader, I Murdered Him* and Helen Widrath’s *Reader, I Murdered Him, Too*. But the list is obviously much longer than that. In Chapter 4, for instance, I mentioned Sophie Hannah’s *Deadlier*, another short story anthology of crime fiction by women published by House of Zeus in 2013; in the catalogue of Robinson & Constable, an imprint of Little, Brown, we can find Ingrid Pitt and Stephen Jones’ *Mammoth Book of Vampire Stories by Women*, Marie O’Regan’s *Mammoth Book of Ghost Stories by Women* and Alex Dally MacFarlane’s *Mammoth Book of Science Fiction Stories by Women*, all published in the 2000s and 2010s. And Irene Zahava, to give one last example, has published four annual anthologies of contemporary mystery stories by women—entitled *WomenSleuth Anthologies*—for Crossing Press between 1988 and 1991.

Paying attention to this large corpus of texts has the potential, further, to perform interesting feminist work which the particular organisation of my research has discouraged. Specifically, it may function to revalue popular or mainstream artforms as important means through which women have expressed themselves. In her landmark article “Pleasurable Negotiations,” Christine Gledhill speaks for many other feminist scholars when she advocates the need for a feminist criticism which

does not dismiss but acknowledges and studies women's relationship with popular culture due to two main reasons: first, because mainstream, generic or low- and middlebrow artforms have long been mediums through which women have been able to articulate their voice as well as find pleasure.⁷¹ To ignore them, then, is to obliterate an important part of women's participation in culture either as creators or audiences. And second, because, contrary to the claims advanced by traditional feminist analyses, Gledhill argues that popular works hold relevant "textual possibilities of resistant or deconstructive reading" (113) which might contribute to struggle against hegemonic ideologies and undo hierarchies both within and without feminist thought. Thus, a study of genre or popular women-only short story anthologies could constitute an important addition to this line of criticism. By focusing on a yet unexplored form it might be able to offer new accounts of how different kinds of genre and popular fiction have been employed by women in culturally relevant and, potentially, subversive ways. On this last note, I am aware that from Gledhill's and other similar critics' perspective my study could be accused of precisely reinforcing the reification of literary hierarchies and, with them, of certain power dynamics amongst women. Whilst a valid criticism, such an attack would miss the fact that my research constitutes one of the first, rather than the last, words on the topic I have investigated. From the outset of my study I have remarked upon the exciting, rather than the exhaustive, character of my project. Its design has been geared to open up discussions about the anthology and gender, not to shut them down. In this sense, I would argue that, if anything, my thesis makes room for complementary and substantiating accounts of the genre including ones with a focus on popular manifestations of the form. It does so, first, by casting the women-only short story anthology as an object worth of critical attention. And second, by developing critical tools with which to approach and analyse it.

⁷¹ In a book-length work contemporary with Gledhill's essay, Billie Melman remarked, as an illustration of this, that parallel to the rise of modernism after the First World War was the rise of the bestseller, a genre "popularly regarded as a feminine artefact, produced by women for women" (45). (For an exploration of modernism's relationship with popular culture and the gendering of literary forms, see also Nicholas Daly, with whom I engaged in Chapter 1.)

Lastly, the narrative of this thesis has deterred the consideration of a second subset of significant women-only short story anthologies: namely —as my focus on Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities” at the beginning of this conclusion may have betrayed— those organised around national categories. Indeed, nation- and nationality-based anthologies of women’s short stories constitute an important part of the genre’s output. Emerging practically at the same time as what we could call, for clarity’s sake, “general” or “unlocalised” women-only short story anthologies did, these texts are still being produced in remarkable numbers and represent, in certain cases, major editorial efforts which have attained noteworthy cultural statuses in the traditions within which they are inserted. A couple of recent examples of this would include, for instance, Sinéad Gleeson’s 2015 *The Long Gaze Back*, a “seriously comprehensive” anthology of Irish women’s short fiction, as the *Irish Times* would have it,⁷² or Lisa Moore’s *Penguin Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Women’s Short Stories*. The reason for my not attending to these texts is that in them nationality tends to be the identity being primarily theorised. Unlike the intersectional anthologies I addressed in Chapter 3, gender identity is here often subordinated to, or works to inflect, a particular conceptualisation of nationhood rather than the other way around. This is perfectly exemplified by Candace Ward’s opening lines of her introduction to another example of these kinds of texts, *Great Short Stories by English and Irish Women*:

The question that immediately arises when considering the contents of an anthology of writings by English and Irish women is, whose writings should be included? Although all compilers of anthologies ask a similar question, in this case conceptions of national identity complicate matters. How, that is, does one define ‘English’ and ‘Irish’? (v)

As a result of this, they could have been only awkwardly or, indeed, disruptively inserted in the dialogue that this thesis has established. A much more natural pairing for these texts would be with other non-gender-based short story anthologies built

⁷² Evans, Martina. “*The Long Gaze Back* Review: A Feast of Female Voices.” *Irish Times*, 12 September 2015, URL: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-long-gaze-back-review-a-feast-of-female-voices-1.2348626>. Accessed 6 September 2019.

around the same national identities, such as, if we take the case of Ireland as an example, William Trevor's *Oxford Book of Irish Short Stories* or Anne Enright's *Granta Book of the Irish Short Story*.

Remarking upon this last omission, however, does not only delineate the restrictions of my project. It usefully provides, too, for a way to start considering the possible futures of my thesis beyond the specific coordinates (short story, anthology, and gender) around which it has been built. The most immediate of these, of course, is the possibility of extending my research into the study of short story anthologies built around identities other than the one I have been focusing on. If we remember, in the Introduction I made a case for the gender focus grounded on the existence of a special and critically relevant relationship between women and the short story form. Yet, I was careful not to suggest that this was the only identity with which the short story anthology has engaged or shown an interesting symbiosis. In fact, my exposition of the way in which identity-based short story anthologies have proliferated since the 1980s clearly indicated that many other identity labels have attracted the form. National identities, precisely, constitute a particularly apt example of this which is worth briefly looking into.

The nation has long been associated with the anthology and with anthologising practices. As Leah Price notes, in their imbrication with processes of canon formation anthologies have played and continue to play a key role in the "consolidat[ion of] national tradition[s]" (67). Conversely, the short story has been characterised as a genre which naturally opposes the grand narratives that typically articulate national(ist) discourses. As Paul March-Russell argues, one of the consequences of the spatial limitations of the genre is the fact that "the protagonists of short stories cannot attain . . . 'typicality': the capacity . . . to embody the internal contradictions of their historical moment" (121). This renders them particularly inept to stand for or represent a larger reality than their own in the way that master-narratives such as those of history or the nation are traditionally geared to do. Despite this seeming incompatibility, though, many national traditions have appropriated the genre as a "national art-form,"⁷³ and numerous short story anthologies exist which

⁷³ Beryl Pong argues, in relation to this: "American, Canadian, Irish, South African and Australian short fiction, among others, have all described [the short story] as a

are organised around national identities, such as the ones built around Irish identity which I mentioned above. How do these texts navigate, then, or exploit, the tensions inherent to a nation-based short story anthology? Does the genre provide for distinctive ways, in the light of these contrasts, in which to theorise national identity? Or else, are specific national configurations, such as, for example, those in postcolonial geographies, especially inclined to express their identity through the short story anthology form?⁷⁴ A project focusing on short stories built around a specific nationality could use some of these interrogations as core research questions.

Whilst markedly different from mine, such a study could immediately benefit from and build on the research I have developed. In particular, I see the analyses of women-only short story anthologies I advanced in Chapters 1 and 2 as being potentially relevant and furthered by attempts to answer the questions I have posed. My study of the ways in which short story anthologies may be able to institute overarching narratives, or else bring forth, conversely, the “minor” capacities of short fiction, seem particularly extendable to studies of the form in relation to national axes. They provide for ways in which to think about radically different ways, not unlike the ones I have advanced regarding gender identity, in which the genre might undertake the conceptualisation of the nation. Of course, I am not suggesting that my findings are readily applicable to these or other similar

‘national art form,’ with the genre viewed as uniquely representative of those geographies and identities” (76).

⁷⁴ March-Russell and Maggie Awadalla have argued that, in contrast to many Western countries, in postcolonial nations the short story has been “keenly used . . . and critically endorsed” (4). Postcolonial peoples have shown a tendency to see in the aforementioned resistance of the form to accommodate or be accommodated into master-narratives a productive “counter-discursive” quality which offers them an opportunity to express their identity away from colonial models. Unsurprisingly, then, nation-based short story anthologies have flourished in postcolonial geographies such as India, the Caribbean or New Zealand, to name but a few. Examples include: Moazzam Sheikh’s *A Letter from India: Contemporary Short Stories from Pakistan*, Edward Archibald Markham’s *Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, or Witi Ihimaera’s *Where’s Waari: A History of the Maori through the Short Story*.

explorations of the genre. What I propose instead is that, although focused on gender, my work has the capacity to function as a heuristic for the study of the short story anthology and its relationship with different discourses of identity, as the ones I advanced as examples, even when each of these studies might, and should, develop its own set of critical tools and vocabulary.

But the conclusions offered by my research may also find meaningful continuations outside the study of the short story anthology genre. A number of these emerge from the fact that the short story is a form that nearly always appears in context. With this in mind, my examination of the short story anthology can be classed as an investigation of the dynamic between the short story form and one of its contexts, and the kind of significations that this dynamic has been and is able to produce. Throughout the foregoing chapters, I have remarked upon how some of my findings in this respect are in conversation with studies of the imbrication of the short story and other textual frames. In Chapters 3 and 4, especially, I remarked upon how my research might substantiate enquiries into the short story collection, sequence or the cycle; and my argument in Chapter 4 drew a connection between the work carried out by the short story anthology and the deployment of personal narratives in Twitter. In the same way that my focus on the anthology allowed for a furthering of these areas of study, research into the interanimation of the short story and other contexts could potentially add to the claims I put forward in this thesis. I highlight two cases that seem to me to be readily connectable to my study: short fiction in/and the magazine and short fiction in/and digital media, understood broadly. Even though magazines can be thought to embody the anthology's opposite in terms of their cultural function due to their ephemerality and general embrace of the new, the publication has not merely been equally hospitable to the short story form⁷⁵ but displays a comparable internal articulation to the extent that it is constituted through the amalgamation of texts (although not exclusively literary) put in conversation. As Ann Ardis has explained, the articulation of magazines is determined by "*internal dialogics* . . . the relationships among and between specific components of any given issue of the magazine, and the creation of meaning through these juxtapositions" (38). Similarly, Laura Dietz has recently argued that what defines the short story's

⁷⁵ For an account of the relationship between the short story and magazine culture see Beryl Pong's "The Short Story and the 'Little Magazine.'"

fate in digital media is not an increase in its marketability or cultural status, as it is generally assumed, but rather a shift in our reception and interaction with the genre. Digital cultures have produced new ways in which stories are “part of a whole” (132) or participate in the production of “different wholes” (136) through its contact with “comments,” “tags,” “algorithms” (134) as well as its affiliation with other digital media such as “video, audio . . . and games” (135), all of which compel us to reconfigure how we read and interpret short fiction.

Studies of these areas might work in combination with my research, first, towards completing a picture of the ways and functions short fiction fulfils in relation to the textual spaces it inhabits and how it does so. They would add to the reconciliation of a traditional text/context divide in short story criticism with which the most recent scholarship in the field, including my thesis, is concerned.⁷⁶ Secondly, attention to these forms of publication would work to expand the critical repertoire to read and speak about the ways in which short fiction generates meaning through interaction with other texts. Because of the typically multi-media character of magazines and digital media a consideration of these publications could serve to illuminate, more specifically, some aspects of the short story anthology which my thesis has not analysed, most notably the role of covers and the stories’ relationship with the most visual aspects of the collections (I think here of illustrations, artwork, but also ornaments such as patterns that often feature in, and are exclusive to, specific short story anthologies and might, indeed, contribute to their significance). And thirdly, I see opportunities in which their study could serve to importantly expand the remit of my discussion of the short story and affect in Chapter 4. Particularly in the case of the magazine, these publications critically depend upon the construction and securing

⁷⁶ See Paul Delaney and Adrian Hunter’s “Introduction” to *The Edinburgh Companion to the Short Story in English* for a discussion of this. Besides Delaney and Hunter’s collection of essays, Dominic Head’s *Cambridge History of the Short Story in English* is also pre-eminently concerned with bridging this traditional divide in the field, particularly from an understanding of “context” in a historical sense. On the other hand, the latest number of the *Journal of the Short Story in English* features a special section entitled “The Short Story in Context” for which the same issue, albeit considered more from the perspective of forms of publication, is also central.

of readerships for their survival which may be seen to depend, largely, on the text's capacity to generate attachments. Interlinked with this, however, is also the particular way in which these texts are put into *circulation*: their reaching, and therefore forming, their audience depends partly upon the particular channels these texts are made to navigate. Thus, my exploration of affect in the anthology could, on the one hand, serve to examine the internal strategies magazines or e-platforms use to construct, attract and secure their community of readers and, in particular, the role that stories may play in this. On the other, attention to these publications could add new dimensions to my argument by theorising the way in which attachments might be generated through the way that these texts circulate the different spaces of the cultural sphere.

Finally, if potential futures for my conclusions can be inferred by seeing the anthology in relation with other platforms host to the short story, they can also be anticipated by connecting the genre to other collections and forms of collecting. Indeed, rather than the study of a specific literary genre, my thesis may be seen as an intervention into the field of the poetics of collecting more generally. The anthologising of stories, in this view, constitutes a specific example amongst practices such as the curation of exhibitions or archives, the collection of objects either privately or for public display, or the configuration of museums and libraries. In her book *On Collecting*, Susan M. Pearce outlines the shape of a field of study that is "still young" but growing at a considerable pace (4). She argues that the scholarship on collections has exploded, in the last fifty or so years, as critics have started to see the practice as interlinked with sociology, ideology, economy or questions of identity. As Pearce puts it: "Collecting and collections are part of our dynamic relationship with the material world" (33). Regarding this latter category, it is worth underlining the fact that recently important work has been undertaken in the intersection of collection studies and gender or feminism. Kate Eichhorn, most notably, has recently helped consolidate this intersection into an area of enquiry in her 2013 examination of archives of feminist documents from the 1960s and 1970s, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*. Her book argues that "collections" effectively shape and resituate "feminist cultural production and knowledge" (23). In pursuing this idea via the archive, she opens a space for the study not just of women's cultural output, but also the use and value of its compilation, preservation, ordering and future display, where my research can be usefully inserted. Women-only short story

anthologies constitute archive-like texts whose study can equally inform Eichhorn's thesis and be informed by this and other critics' work in the sphere of women's collecting practices widely.

In their diverse ways, all these possible developments of my research speak of the fertility of the short story anthology as an object of study, especially in combination with issues of identity in general and gender in particular. They underscore the extent to which my argument has exposed the genre's potential to not merely contribute to the configuration of ideas of womanhood, but to participate in multiple and current areas of enquiry in related fields. Taken together, they return us to Sarah Lawall's argument, advanced early on in my thesis, for the need to see the anthology as "theoretically interesting"; not merely a receptacle for other forms but a "genre in its own right" (Price 3) capable of generating unique associations and meanings. This is also, of course, the most general idea to which my thesis has fed into throughout. Through the lens of the women-only short story anthology, it has attested to the anthology's capacity to not just canonise or represent, but intervene in and shape discourses of identity and culture more broadly in original ways which challenge us to reconsider the form's place and function within it.

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