

The Form of Truth: The Modern Short Story and Political Possibility (Roundtable)

Organizer: Heather Joyce (Grande Prairie Regional College)

“Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale,” insists Edgar Allan Poe (“Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales*”). In a profoundly skeptical context, when cries for authenticity and veracity from right and left abound, to what extent is the modern short story form a repository of capital T truth? And if Truth can be found in the emotional sincerity or essential knowledge about human connection that practitioners and theorists insist the form contains, can it be leveraged into concrete political or cultural change?

This roundtable asks presenters to consider these and the following related questions:

What do claims about its capacity for the expression of Truth mean for the form in terms of periodized relevance and/or historical transcendence? How is the short story’s relationship to Truth complicated by how Truth itself is mobilized and determined?

Does the recent turn to affect theory invite reconsideration of writers’ claims that the form is akin to the lyric in its emotional reach? Do short stories lend themselves to a humane politics?

What does the short story form expose about the relationship between Truth and contemporary reality? Does it house a distinct brand of realism that offers different political possibilities?