
The short stories and their account

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Abstract:

This paper throws the light on how short stories came and existed in English language. It also helps to find the correct way in which the short stories have their notability in English literature. As early as Chaucer there were short stories in verse, for his *Canterbury Tales* are stories put into the mouths of travelling pilgrims; but a proper prose medium was lacking in the English of the time, and although Chaucer's Parson Tale and the *Tale of Melibee* are attempts at prose stories, they are of poor quality. In Italy, however, Chaucer's friend Boccaccio had written his own tales, contained in the *Decameron*, in prose, with much greater success. The short story is not merely a greatly shorten novel. It shares, of course, the usual constituents of all fiction – plot, character, and setting-but they cannot be treated with the same detail as in a novel. The Short Story is a favorite form of present –day writing many novelists, like Arnold Bennett and Hugh Walpole, have treated it as a side lines, and Elizabeth Bowen has described it as the obvious medium for the unsuccessful poet, but there are never nevertheless authors who are chiefly famous for contributions to the Short Story. The French author, Guy de Maupassant, had a whole troop of followers in every country. The Russian, Chekhov, came to have considerable influence upon Short Story writers between 1900 and 1920(e.g. Katherine Mansfield), while the Americans; Ernst Hemingway and William Saroyan have been widely imitated more recently.

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Origin

The short story is a comparatively recent development in English literature. As early as Chaucer there were short stories in verse, for his *Canterbury Tales* are stories put into the mouths of travelling pilgrims; but a proper prose medium was lacking in the English of the time, and although Chaucer's Parson Tale and the *Tale of Melibee* are attempts at prose stories, they are of poor quality. In Italy, however, Chaucer's friend Boccaccio had written his own tales, contained in the *Decameron*, in prose, with much greater success. Under Italian influence, prose romances continued to be translated and written in English during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but none of these can be claimed as direct ancestors of the modern short story. In the 18th century, Steele and Addison evolved the tale-with-purpose to drive home a moral, but this again is different from the present day tale of "impression" or "idea". "The stories produced in the latter half of that centuries do not display any appreciable advance, and perhaps Scott's *Wandering Willie's tale*, written in 1824, makes the first English approach to the modern type. The decisive step, however, was taken in America about 1830 by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe, who, both by precept and example, formulated the modern theory of short story writing. Each laid stress on a "final impression" in the story, holding that plot alone was not enough. In a review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, Poe defined his principles as follows: "A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents but having conceived with deliberate care, *a certain and unique or single effect to be wrought out*, he then invents search incidents, - he then combines search events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect.

If his very initial sentence tend not to the out bringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step in his whole composition there should be no word, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, which such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of his who compliments in which a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction ."Years later, in England, Robert Louis Stevenson's insistence on an "initial impulse" in the Short Story was strongly reminiscent of Poe. In each case he considered that the write must have an "impression" or "idea" to communicate, which should engage his attention from the first to the last. As A.H.Upham puts it, he must see the end in the beginning.

Structure

The short story is not merely a greatly shorten novel. It shares, of course, the usual constituents of all fiction – plot, character, and setting-but they cannot be treated with the same detail as in a novel. All, in other words, take the shortest route towards the "pre conceive effect, the one pre-

established design.” Detail only retards the progress towards the final effect. The plot is confined to the essentials, the characters to the indispensables, and the setting to a few suggestive hints. Sometimes one of the three elements may predominate over the other two. In other words, the writer may construct a story of plot alone, with characters and setting confined strictly to its requirements, or of character alone, with plot and setting just sufficient to display it, or of setting alone and characters as mere *Imp* is a plot.

A novel often has passages which could be scored out without detriment to the plot, but there is no room for these in the short story the will only act as a drag on its progress and lead nowhere. Like a man of limited means, the Short Story cannot afford to spend two coins the act word and the telling phrase. Here above all it is true to say of style that it should be a means to an end the form of the Short Story precludes indulgence in stylistic elegance or “fine writing” for its own sake.

Vogue in the modern world

The Short Story is a favorite form of present –day writing many novelists, like Arnold Bennett and Hugh Walpole, have treated it as a side lines, and Elizabeth Bowen has described it as the obvious medium for the unsuccessful poet, but there are never nevertheless authors who are chiefly famous for contributions to the Short Story. Its popularity can be accounted for in many ways, perhaps the chief begin the many other demands on the leisure of the modern reader, which in its turn has assisted the vast development of the magazine which contains several complete stories in one part in its success.

From the time of Stevenson, the influence of the Short Story has been international. Its popularity has grown and spread to and from England, France, Russia and America. As youth Kipling achieved world0wide success with his tales from India. The French author, Guy de Maupassant, had a whole troop of followers in every country. The Russian, Chekhov, came to have considerable influence upon Short Story writers between 1900 and 1920(e.g. Katherine Mansfield), while the Americans; Ernst Hemingway and William Saroyan have been widely imitated more recently.

To return to English writers, just as Kipling was a pioneer in describing life overseas, so H.G.Wells widened the field by apply his imagination to scientific discovery. There was a short contrast between work of this type and that of Oscar Wilde and other writers of the 1890’s who concentrated upon the beauties of an elaborate prose style and themes very remote from the problems and possibilities of a materialist industrial civilization. They studies the art of the Short

Story with great earnestness but so far as the ordinary reader was concerned, the most memorable work of this decayed appeared in a series quite outside their influence – the world famous Sherlock Holmes stories by (Sir Author Conan Doyle) some reference is also due to the delightful humorous tales of W.W.Jacobs.

Since 1900, John Galsworthy, Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, and James Joyce have all written memorable short stories in addition to their work in the realm of the Novel. Walter de la Mare, A.E. Coppard, H.E. Bates, and Rhys Davies have added the delicate touch and insight to the form, and are perhaps typical of all that is best in the Short Story of today their work is conscientious and literary, slower in its method than that of their American counterparts, but possibly more lasting in its effect. Altogether in spite of complaints that the requirements of magazine editors have reduced it to a formula, there seems no reason to doubt Short Story will long continue to meet the needs of authors and readers alike, and to find new material for its special purposes in a constantly changing world.

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