

## Chapter 3

### The development of short story as a genre

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the development of the short story with reference to British, American, European and Commonwealth short stories in English. It presents an overview of the development of the short story with reference to the American short stories during the nineteenth century and the recognition of the short story as genre. The discussion will include some of the best American short stories of Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849), Herman Melville (1819-1891), Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), O. Henry (1862-1910), Stephen Crane (1871-1900) William Faulkner (1897-1962), Eudora Welty (1909-2001), John Cheever (1912-1982), John Updike (1932-2009) and Saul Bellow (1915-2005). There will be a detailed account of Saul Bellow's work and place in the pantheon of short story writers.

##### 3.1.1. Development of short story as a genre in Britain

In the nineteenth century, England had far less number of short stories in comparison to their American counterparts. The early English short story writers who made a mark were R.L. Stevenson (1850-1894), Rudyard Kipling (1895-1936) and H.G. Wells (1866-1946). Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson was a Scottish novelist, poet, essayist, and a novel writer. *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Hyde* are significant for Stevenson's method of rendering ambiguous, enigmatic personalities. Rudyard Kipling was an English short story writer, poet and novelist. He wrote tales and poems of British soldiers in India and stories for children like *The Jungle Book*, *Just So Stories*, *Kim* and etc., Kipling's reputation as a children's writer was considered the corner stone of his career. His

works described rich, vivid word pictures that honour and, at the same time, parody the language of traditional English stories such as the *Jataka Tales* and *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. H.G. Wells was a prolific English writer in many genres. He wrote a number of novels, history, politics, social commentary and textbooks and rules for war games. H.G. Wells is best remembered for his science fiction novels like *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the World*. His works explored social and scientific topics, from class conflict to evolution. Robert Marler (1974) differentiates between the terms ‘tale’ and ‘short story’ in order to signal the change. Moreover, Marler also states that developments in America were driven by a shift in critical attitudes towards fictional moralizing: ‘The ability to suggest, to evoke, without resorting to explanations was increasingly praised. Tacked-on moral tags became a sign of mediocrity.’ Editors had difficulty in choosing impressive short stories from the English soil for the World Classic series. They had to depend on American short stories to fill in their volumes. Inspirational writers did not exist in England during this period.

### **3.1.2. Development of short story in America**

The brevity of the short story appealed to the American reading public during the time when Americans were busy clearing the wilderness and building a new nation. They had little time for the longer literary contributions commonly noted in European writings. Most Americans read magazines, journals, and newspapers which could be easily accessed, and, cost-wise, affordable, whereas novels/books were quite expensive. Moreover, improvements in printing revenue from advertisements in journals and newspapers paved the way for short story writers to emerge as a force to contend. The number of periodicals published between 1865 and 1905 increased over

to 6,000 ‘all trying to satisfy the appetites of a vast new reading audience that was hungry for news articles, essays, fiction, and poems’ (McMichael *et al.*, 6).

American short stories have been classified as stories belonging to the age of Romanticism, Realism and Naturalism, Modernism with regards to techniques and themes.

The rise of Romanticism in Britain had an impact on the American literature of the same period. Romanticism challenged conventional ways of thinking and aesthetic traditions and championed the authority of the individual mind responding to the environment without regard to social conventions or moral prohibition. Romanticism shared Enlightenment’s values of individualism and freedom but sought to challenge the boundaries imposed on the imagination by reason and moderation.

Realism (1865-1900): Naturalism mostly died out in the early forties and was largely replaced by “realism,” a movement that had been gathering momentum alongside naturalism. Realism depicted characters as psychologically complex. The idea of an interior world within a character began to flourish. Unlike Naturalist characters, realist characters, were held accountable for the choices they made. They could step aside from the forces of social and economic systems. Their actions were self-determined.

Naturalism (1900-1910): Early twentieth century writing was marked by the growth of the Naturalist movement in fiction. Naturalist fiction was characterized by a deterministic ethos. Characters were often depicted as being driven by forces beyond their control toward inevitable fates. They were not usually depicted as individuals with distinct interior worlds, and they were not often able to control their destinies. They were often lower class, sometimes described in mechanistic or dehumanizing ways.

American Modernism (1910-1945): After World War I Modernism, a third movement began to show its influence on the short story. Much American modernist fiction and poetry dealt with the disillusionment after World War I, when early modern values such as progress, freedom, and social equality were called into question. Progress had been made, yet modernist artists saw the “great war” as senseless and horrifying with its mechanized slaughter. The science and technology that early modern artists had embraced as progress had made the slaughter possible. Old social orders such as the aristocracy had fallen, and many people had lost faith in religious institutions, but the new social orders such as communism were not creating the kind of equality and freedom modern artists had desired. The world was new and confusing, and the modernists reflected this in their language. Much modernist writing presented the world in fragmentary, impressionistic prose meant to represent the confusion of the new world. Modernist writing also emphasized people’s isolation from one another through the technique of “stream of consciousness” writing.

Post-War period (1945-1963): The academic orientation has been both a strength and a weakness. The strength is that one expects technical competence, and gets it. In fact, the very volume of good short stories in the post-War period is partly accounted for by the training of the writers. They not only read their predecessors on their own, but read them for their academic reasons. The weakness is that the writer tends to get caught up in a kind of academic inbreeding, going back to Chekhov, James Joyce, and other masters. He learns that there is a way to do things and hesitates to find his own way. He is a follower, not a pioneer. It is a healthy sign then that there has been a reaction against the carefully wrought story, an effort by some writers to break through the old forms.

Confessional Period (1963-1980): These particular years encompassed a time of revolution. Civil rights developed, humans began to explore space, countries began to use nuclear weapons as threats, college kids marched for peace, rock and roll swept the country, and poets confessed. In the 1950's, the United States was still dealing with discrimination against African American citizens. These developments had their impact on writers of the period, and their writings.

Post Modern Period (1980- till present): The history of the short story in mid-twentieth century America continues to be marked by a tension between the twin fictional poles of *realism* and *romance*, the story of accurate 'reportage' and the story of fantasy and imagination. The short story also encourages, and can accommodate in particular ways, a reflexive self-consciousness about literary form, and a propensity to build into the story a commentary on itself. The closeness of the typical length of the short story to that of the essay, and the relationship of story to essay through the sketch, which shares features of both, also influences the short story's tendency towards self-reflection and a mingling of genres and registers.

Magic realism is chiefly a Latin- American narrative strategy that is characterised by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction. Although this strategy is known in the literature of many cultures in many ages, the term 'magic realism' is a relatively recent designation which was first applied in the 1940's by Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier, (1904-1980) who recognised this characteristic in much Latin-American literature. Some scholars have posited that magic realism is a natural outcome of post-colonial writing, which must make sense of at least two separate realities that, is the reality of the conquerors as well as that of the conquered. Prominent among the Latin-American magic realists are the Colombian Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014), the Brazilian

Jorge Amado (1912-2001), the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) and Julio Cortazar (1914-1984), and the Chilean Isabel Allende (1942).

#### Major American Short story writers

Some of the major short story writers from late seventeenth century to the second half of the twentieth century are included in this review in the chronological order. The early contributor to the American short story is Washington Irving (1783-1859). Irving is much appreciated as the first American Man of Letters. He is the first writer to earn his living with pen. He perfected the American short story and the first American writer to write on the stories having their themes in the United States. His stories are credited as first to be written both in the vernacular, and without an obligation to the moral or didactic language. He wrote stories simply to entertain rather than to enlighten. Irving also encouraged would-be writers. 'Rip Van Winkle' (1813), 'The Legend of the Sleeping Hallow' (1820) 'Tales of Alhambra' (1832) and The Crayon Miscellany (1835) are considered his best short stories. James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) is one of the first major American novelists to include African, African-American and Native American characters in his works. 'Tales of Fifteen' (1823), No steamboats (1832) and 'An Execution at Sea'(1836) are some of his notable short stories amongst others.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864): The specialty of Hawthorne's work was that he cared for a deeper understanding of psychology in his own way and familiarized it in his short stories. His works covered early romanticism or dark romanticism. His stories had themes on guilt, sin and evil as the most inherent qualities of human life on earth. Many of Hawthorne's works were inspired by Puritanism of New England. "Roger Malvin's Burial" (1832), "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (1832), "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), "The Gray Champion" (1835),

"The White Old Maid" (1835), "Wakefield" (1835), "The Ambitious Guest" (1835), "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836) are a few of his short stories.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was an American author, poet, editor, and literary critic, considered part of the American Romantic Movement. The master of the macabre, Edgar Allen Poe was responsible for writing some of the most spine-tingling mysteries and chilling horror stories ever published. The complete collection of Edgar Allen Poe short stories delves into themes of madness, death and betrayal, all wrapped up in brilliant literary prose. Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in his literary work. Poe explores the similarity of love and hate in many stories, especially "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "William Wilson." Poe portrays the psychological complexity of these two supposedly opposite emotions, emphasizing the ways they enigmatically blend into each other. Poe's psychological insight anticipates the theories of Sigmund Freud, the Austrian founder of psychoanalysis and one of the twentieth century's most influential thinkers. Poe, like Freud, interpreted love and hate as universal emotions, thereby severed from the specific conditions of time and space. Some of his outstanding short stories are: The Fall of the House of Usher (1839), The Murders in the Rue Morgue (1841), The Pit and the Pendulum (1842), The Tell-Tale Heart (1843), The Purloined Letter (1845). Herman Melville (1819-1891) is one of the giants among the short story writers in American literature. His writings style is in echoes and overtones and imitates certain distinct style which creates such characteristic writings. Melville's three most influential works which strengthened his writing style were The Bible, Shakespeare, and Milton. "All Melville's plots describe this pursuit, and all his themes represent the delicate and shifting relationship between its truth and its illusion. (Nathalia Wright, 1949). 'The Bell Tower and other stories' (1853) Billy Budd, Sailor and other stories

(1924). Mark Twain (1835-1910) Twain's literary career began with casual writing about light themes, humorous verses. But he was able to capture vanities, hypocrisies and murderous acts of mankind. Twain was well known for his mastery of rendering colloquial speech which popularized his works in American Literature. His book '*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*' was very popular but had a tough treatment by imposing a ban in school syllabus across America for using the word 'nigger' which was a word of pre-civil war coinage. Some of his notable short stories are: 'The Stolen White Elephant' (1882) 'The War Prayer' (1916) 'Eve's Diary' (1906) 'Advice to Little Girls' (1865). Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914) Bierce is considered a master of pure English by his contemporaries, and his writings were notable for its judicious wording and economy of style. He wrote in a variety of literary genres. His short stories are held among the best of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, providing a popular following based on his roots. He wrote realistically of the terrible things he had seen in the American civil war in stories. 'Tales of Soldiers and Civilians' (1891), 'Fantastic Fables' (1899), 'A Horseman in the sky' (1920), 'Can Such Things Be' (1893) are some of Bierce's well known short stories. Henry James (1843-1916) is one of the notable figures of Trans Atlantic literature. His works frequently place side by side characters from the Europe which embodies a feudal civilization, often corrupt, audacious and assertive. They give utmost importance to freedom, virtues and highly evolved moral character of the new American society. His short stories were of particular interest to him and he had the skill to compress the complex subjects into short fiction. The following works are a few good examples of his shorter narratives. 'The Aspern Paper,' (1888) 'The Beast in the Jungle,' (1903) 'A Passionate Pilgrim,' (1871) 'A Tragedy of Error,' (1864). Kate Chopin (1850-1904) Chopin closely followed Guy de Maupassant's technique and style to give her writing



a flavour of its own. She had the skill to perceive life and put it in black and white form creatively. Her stories highlight substantially emphasis on women's lives and their continual struggle to create an identity in the Southern American society. Some of her notable short stories are: 'The Story of an Hour,' (1894) 'The Storm,' (1898) 'Desiree's Baby,' (1893) 'A Pair of Silk Stockings,' (1897) 'A Respectable Women' (1890). Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909) at the age of 19 Sarah published her first story. She was popular from 1870s to 1880s. Her literary importance arises from her careful grasp of country life that reflected her contemporary interest in the local colour than the plot. Feminist critics have championed her writing for its richness in portraying women's lives and voices. Some of her notable short stories are: 'All My Sad Captains,' 1895) 'An Arrow in a Sunbeam,' (1880) 'An Autumn Holiday,' (1880).

O. Henry (1862-1910) William Sydney Porter is known by his pen O. Henry. His short stories are known for its wit, wordplay, skilful characterization, and surprise endings. His stories challenged the plot construction of the French writer Guy de Maupassant. His stories are known for its witty narrative style. Most of his stories are set in his own time, early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many stories take place in New York City. The central themes of these stories deal with the problems and day to day happenings of the ordinary people. His works are wide ranging. It explores the tensions of class and wealth in the turn of the century in New York. Henry had an inimitable hand for isolating some element of society and describing it with an incredible economy and grace of language. Some of his best and least-known work is contained in *Cabbages and Kings*, (1904) a series of stories each of which explores some individual aspect of life in a paralytically sleepy Central American town, while advancing some aspect of the larger plot and relating back one to another. The O. Henry Award is a prestigious

annual prize named after him and given to outstanding short stories. Some of his most popular short stories are: 'The Gift of the Magi,' (1905) 'The Ransom of the Red Chief,' (1910) 'The Cop and the Anthem,' (1904) 'A Retrieved Reformation,' (1903) 'The Duplicity of Hargraves' (1902). Willa Cather (1873-1947) Cather an ardent follower of Henry James preferred past literary masters to contemporary writers. Some of her particular favourites were Dickens, Emerson, Balzac, Tolstoy etc. Though she began her career as a journalist she showed the difference between journalism and literary writing. She saw literature as primarily an informative art form. Her work is marked by nostalgic tone. Her subject matter and themes are drawn from memories of her early childhood on the American plains. Cather didn't follow any modern writing techniques like the stream of consciousness. She followed her own writing style. A Few of her short stories are as follows. 'The Troll Garden' (1905), Youth and the Bright Medusa (1920), Obscure Destinies (1932), The Old Beauty and Others (1948). Edith Wharton (1862-1937) central themes of Wharton's stories came from her experiences with her parents. She was critical of her own work. She wrote public reviews criticizing her own work. Many of her works are characterized by use of subtle irony. Being brought up in a upper class 19<sup>th</sup> century society Wharton became one of its shrewd critics. Some of her short stories are: 'The Greater Inclination (1899), 'Souls Belated' (1899), 'The Descent of Man and Other Stories (1904).

Stephen Crane (1871-1900) is a prolific American author throughout his short career. Crane wrote notable works in realistic tradition. His works were also examples of American Naturalism and Impressionism. Modern critics consider him as an innovative writer of his period. The common themes of his work were fear, spiritual crises and social isolation. Crane's writings made an impression among the

20<sup>th</sup> century writers. Some of his notable short stories are: ‘The Open Boat’ (1897), ‘The Blue Hotel’ (1899), ‘Bride Comes to Yellow Sky’ (1898), ‘The Monster’ (1898).

Katherine Ann Porter (1890-1980) Ann Porter’s short stories received much critical acclaim than her then bestselling novel “Ship of Fools” (1962). She is known for her penetrating insight and her works deal with dark themes such as betrayal, death and the origin of human evil. During 1930s to 1950s Porter secured a prominent position as a distinguished writer. She first published her story titled “Maria Conception” (1922) in *The Century Magazine*. Some of her well known short story collections are as follows. ‘Flowering Judas and Other Stories,’ (1935), ‘Pale Horse, Pale Rider’ (1939), ‘The Leaning Tower and Other Stories’ (1944), ‘The Old Order: Stories of the South’ (1955). *The Collected Stories of Katherine Ann Porter* (1964).

James Thurber (1894-1961) is a unique American literary figure. He became equally well known for his simple, surrealistic drawings and cartoons. Many of his short stories are humorous fictional memoirs from his life. His best-known short stories are ‘The Dog That Bit People’ (1933) and ‘The Night the Bed Fell’ (1933). John Steinback (1902-1968), a Nobel laureate, and he have been hailed “a giant of American Letters.” His many works are considered classics of Western literature. Steinback’s writings had the Californian Salinas Valley regionalist flavour. This gives many of his works a distinct sense of place. Steinback’s short stories have a realistic and imaginative writing. It combines sympathetic humour and keen social perception. Many of his books are read widely across American Schools. But his books *Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and *Of Mice and Men* (1937) were banned by the school board for its profanity. Some of his notable short stories are “The Pastures of Heaven” (1932) and “The Long Valley” (1938).

Eudora Welty (1909-2001) Welty's first short story, "Death of a Traveling Salesman", was published in 1936. Her work attracted the attention of author Katherine Anne Porter, who became a mentor to Welty and wrote the foreword to Welty's first short story collection, *A Curtain of Green* in 1941. The book established Welty as one of American literature's leading writers and featured the stories "Why I Live at the P.O.", (1941) "Petrified Man", (1941) and the frequently anthologized *A Worn Path* (1941). Excited by the printing of Welty's works in publications such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, the Junior League of Jackson, of which Welty was a member, requested permission from the publishers to reprint some of her works. She eventually published over forty short stories, five novels, three works of nonfiction, and one children's book. Seen by critics as quality Southern literature, her stories comically capture family relationships. Welty masterfully captures Southern idiom and places importance on location and customs. 'A Worn Path' (1941) was also published in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *A Curtain of Green* (1941). It is seen as one of Welty's finest short stories, winning the second place O. Henry Award in 1941. Eudora Welty was a prolific writer who created stories in multiple genres. Throughout her writing are the recurring themes of the paradox of human relationships, the importance of place, and the importance of mythological influences that help shape the theme as found in the Southern literature. Welty's interest in the conflicting relationships between individuals and their communities, according to the writer herself, brought out of her natural abilities as an observer. Perhaps the best examples can be found within the short stories in *A Curtain of Green*. "Why I Live at the P.O." comically illustrates the conflict between Sister and her immediate community, her family. This particular story uses lack of proper communication to showcase the underlying theme of the paradox of human connection. Another case in point is Miss

Eckhart of The Golden Apples, who is considered an outsider in her town. As is apparent, her stories are often characterized by the struggle to retain identity while keeping community relationships. Some of her prizes winning short stories are as follows: *The Wide Net and Other Stories* (1943), *Collected Stories of Eudora Welty* (1980), 'The Petrified Man' (1941), *The Bride of Innisfallen and Other Stories* (1955). John Cheever (1912-1982) Cheever's main themes in his stories include duality of human nature. Duality is dramatized as the difference between a character's befitting social persona and inner corruption. At times the conflict is between two characters that signify the salient aspects of both that are the light and the dark, flesh and the spirit. Many of Cheever's works also reflect nostalgia for a vanishing way of life. Some of his well known short stories are: 'The Way Some People Live' (1943), *The Enormous Radio and Other Stories* (1953), *The Housebreaker of Shady Hill and Other Stories* (1958), 'Reunion' (1962).

Ray Bradbury (1912-2012) while browsing books at a second hand book store in the year 1930 found a handbill promoting meetings of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society. Excited to find that there were others with likeminded interest, at the age of sixteen he joined the conclave. Truman Capote, a young publisher spotted Bradbury's manuscript of *Homecoming* and published it in a magazine named *Mademoiselle*. The story won him a place in The *O. Henry Prize Stories* of 1947. Bradbury has written more than 600 short stories in his lifetime. Some of his notable short stories are: "The Candle" (1942), "Eat Drink and Be Wary" (1942), "The Crowd" (1942), "The Lake" (1942), "The Piper" (1943), "Tomorrow and Tomorrow" (1947). Bernard Malamud (1914-1986): He is one of the best known Jewish American writers along with Philip Roth (1918-2018) and Saul Bellow. Malamud's fiction lightly covers upon the mythic elements, explores themes like isolation, class conflict between

bourgeois and artistic values. Being a writer of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century he was well aware of the social problems of his day. Rootlessness, infidelity, abuse, divorce and so on. His works also depicted love as redemptive and sacrifice as uplifting factor. Malamund short stories sixty five in number were published after his death. Some of his notable short stories are: “The Mourners” (1955), “The Jew bird” (1963), “The Prison” (1950), *The Complete Stories* (1997). J.D. Salinger (1919-2010) Salinger’s language was especially energetic, realistically scarce dialogue. He was a revolutionary at the time his first stories were published. Salinger was closely identified with his characters. He used techniques such as interior monologue, letters, and first extended telephone calls to display his gift for dialogue. The recurring themes of his stories were ideas of innocence and adolescence, including the corrupting influence of the Hollywood and the world in general. Some of his short stories are: “Go See Eddie” (1940), “The Young Folks” (1940), “Once a Week Won’t Kill You” (1944), “A Girl I Knew” (1948). James Baldwin (1924-1987) Baldwin’s first novel *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (1953), a semi-autobiographical novel of formation and education was published in the year 1953. His collected of essays titled *Notes on a Native Son* (1956) came two years later. Baldwin experimented throughout his literary career with literary forms publishing poetry, plays, fiction and essays. His writings were overlooked by the critics between 1970s and 1980s. At present his books are receiving attention. His essays of 1980s discuss homosexuality and homophobia with forthrightness. Some of his notable short stories are: “Come Out of Wilderness” (1965), “Going to Meet the Man” and “The Outing” (1965).

Cynthia Ozick (1928- ) an American Jewish short story writer, whose fiction and essays are often about the Jewish American experience. She also writes on broad topics like politics, history, and literary criticism. She has also written and translated

poetry. Much of her theme centers on the Holocaust and its aftermath. Much of her work ‘explores the disparaged self, the reconstruction of identity after immigration, trauma and movement from one class to another.’ The titles of some of her shorter fictions are as follows: *The Pagan Rabbi and other stories* (1971), *The Shawl* (1989), *Collected Stories* (2007). Philip Roth (1933- ) Roth first gained importance through his novella *Goodbye Columbus* (1959). The story deals with the American Jewish life which he experienced in the United States. His stories are regularly set in Newark or New Jersey. Roth is known for his autobiographical character. His philosophical insights formally highlight the distinction between reality and fiction. His works explore the Jewish and American identity. Roth's fiction has often combined autobiographical elements with retrospective dramatizations of postwar American life. Some of his notable short stories are as follows: *Goodbye Columbus*- a collection of short stories (1959), “Letting Go” (1962), “When She was Good” (1967), “The Humbling” (2009). Woody Allen (1935- ) Allan started writing short stories and cartoon captions for magazines like *The New Yorker* inspired by four prominent New Yorker humourists such as S.J. Perelman (1904-1979), George S. Kaufman (1889-1961), Robert Benchley (1889-1945), and Max Shulman (1919-1988). He modernized their material. Allen has published four collections of short pieces and plays titled “Getting Even” (1971), “Without Feathers” (1975), “Side Effects” (1980), “Love and Death” (1975) Allen released digital spoken word versions of his four books, in which he reads 73 short story selections from his work and for which he was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word Album.

Stephen King (1947- ) is an important writer of science fiction and supernatural themes; number of his novels converted into television shows and films, his short stories 200 in number are collected in books. King uses authors characters,

mentions fictional books in his stories. His style of creation is a process by imagining a supposed to be scenarios in his stories. Most of his stories are set in his home state. In 1996 King won the O. Henry award for his short story “The Man in the Black Suit” (1995). Some of the terrifying short stories which have been made into movies are as follows: “Night Surf” (1969), “Sometimes they comeback” (1974), “The Moving Finger” (1990), “The Night Flier” (1993). Saul Bellow’s (1915-2005) works vividly captured the disoriented nature of the modern times and the countervailing ability of humans to overcome their weakness and achieve greatness. His works also highlighted ‘the flaws of the modern world and its ability to foster madness, materialism and misleading knowledge.’ (Malin Irving, 1969) More details of Saul Bellow’s contribution to the American short story are seen later within this chapter.



### 3.1.3. The development of the short story in Europe

The 19<sup>th</sup> century is associated with the gradual supremacy of the naturalist mode in prose fiction. In France, the compact and detached narratives of Prosper Mérimée redefined the French short story, or *conte*, in the late 1820s. Mérimée's *Mateo Falcone* (1829), which recounts a violent and tragic clash of honor between father and son with lucid simplicity and economy, is usually considered a pivotal piece. Other significant short stories were composed by Honoré de Balzac and Gustave Flaubert, whose short fiction reflects in miniature the artistic achievements usually associated with their more well-known contributions to the realistic novel. Additional French short-story writers of note include Alfred du Musset (1810-1857), Alphonse Daudet (1840-1897), and Théophile Gautier (1811-1872). While acknowledging the accomplishments of these and other writers, many critics reserved their highest esteem for the realistic stories of Guy de Maupassant, who in the 1880s and early 1890s focused on this genre, effectively liberating it from the last vestiges of Romanticism to produce startling, lyrical stories admired for their clarity, unity, and compression.

### 3.1.4. Development of short story in Canada

The development and popularity of short stories as a genre in Britain and America during the Nineteenth century had its impact in the English Canadian writing. Development of Canadian short story has its beginnings after seventy years of the American short story. In 1820s short story writers like Isabella Valancy Crawford, Susan Frances Harrison, Ernest Thompson and others influenced the genre. But their works could not gain popularity with the expertise crafting of techniques by the American short story writers of the American Renaissance, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville to name a few. It was only in the twentieth

century in the year 1920s Morley Callaghan, the modernist Canadian short story writer brought the Canadian short story to the realm of world literature. Canadian short story developed very crucially in 1960s raising the quality, diversity and prominence of the genre to new levels. At present, short stories are considered as the flagship of Canadian literature. Alice Munro and Margret Atwood. These writers concentrated to the form and have succeeded in producing globally renowned collections of short stories. Alice Munro's collection of short stories titled *Selected Stories 1968-1994*, *No Love Lost*, 'Vintage Munro' to name a few are popular among the readers. Munro's work is often compared with the great short story writers. A frequent theme of her work has been the dilemmas of a girl coming of age, coming to terms with her family and the small town she grew up in. In recent work, such as *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001) and *Runaway* (2004) she shifted her focus to the travails of middle age, of lonely women, and of the elderly. It is a mark of her style for characters to experience a revelation that sheds light on, and gives meaning to, an event. Margret Eleanor Atwood is best known for her work as a novelist. She has also published fifteen books of poetry. Many of her poems have been inspired by myths and fairy tales, which have been interests of hers from an early age. Atwood has published short stories in *Tamarack Review*, *Alphabet*, *Harper's*, *CBC Anthology*, *Ms.*, *Saturday Night* and many other magazines. She has also published four collections of stories and three collections of unclassifiable short prose works. Some of her popular short fictions are: *The Dancing Girls*, (1977) *Murder in the Dark*, (1983) *The Tent*, (2006) and *Stone Mattress* (2014) to name a few. One of her most outstanding features of her short fiction is 'the use of easily noticeable procedures to expose the fictional illusion and underscore the overtly metafictional nature of her self-reflexive texts' (Vicorica Patea 18).

### **3.2. Short story as a genre**

The cultural history of the published short story is only a few decades longer than that of film. It is to be found in industrial and demographic processes. The short story had always existed as an informal oral tradition, but until the mass middle-class literacy of the 19th century arrived in the west, and the magazine and periodical market was invented to service the new reading public's desires and preferences, there had been no real publishing forum for a piece of short fiction in the five to 50-page range. It was this new medium that revealed to writers their capacity to write short fiction. Readers wanted short stories, and writers suddenly discovered they had a new literary form on their hands. The way the short story effectively emerged into being in its full maturity almost proves the point that there were no faltering first steps, no slow centuries of evolution. The fact that in the early to mid 19th century Hawthorne Poe and Turgenev were capable of writing classics and timeless short stories shows that there always was among writers a latent ability for highly productive and creative work in this regard. The short story arrived fully fledged in the middle of the 19th century and by its end, in the works of Anton Chekhov, had reached its perfection. The short story thus became recognized as a genre in its own right.

### **3.3. Characteristics of the Short Story**

Story-telling has always been a favourite pastime with people everywhere in the world. Some forerunners to the short story were anecdotes, parables, fables, ballads, sketches, and tales. In America the short story came to be acknowledged as a favourite literary genre of the American society and the symbol of American literary independence. . Edgar Allen Poe is called the "father" of the American short story and credited with setting up the first guidelines for the short story. Poe believed that

a short story should be able to produce a certain unique effect, have brevity and read it “one sitting”, have unity, have intensity, begin with the first sentence i.e., not spend too long on background, setting, introduction of characters, etc.

**3.3.1. Unique Effect:** To produce a true short story an author must not only make his tale short and to the point but must also fashion it with deliberate care so that it will produce a single unique effect. This point has been accepted by all short story writers since Poe’s time. A short story is always a ‘single effect.’ A good short story should exhibit certain effect. That effect can be created as done by Poe by fixing the reader attention upon the climax of his story so that the reader feels the ‘unique effect’ of the short story and nothing else. If modern short story has a technique it is then invented by Poe by using his ‘unique effect.’

**3.3.2. Brevity and fraises read it “one sitting”:** the typical feature of a short story is the time factor. A short story is best suited for a short period of time that is the story should be read in one sitting. Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity are the hallmarks of short story. Though like a drama comprising many acts and scenes a short story too has a plot. The plot should be construed in a way that it should be well formulated in meeting out the quick attention of the reader at a short period of time.

**3.3.3. Unity:** unity of time, place and action are also important requisites of a short story. Time factor is limited, place normally takes place in a particular place or time and action is very brief and impressive.

**3.4.4. Intensity:** there is a degree of unity in a well thought and structured short story. It has a captivating theme. This kind of intensity in a drama or a novel tires the reader. Whereas, in the short story it ties the reader’s interest towards the narrative development.

**3.3.5. Begin with the first sentence:** speaks of the seriousness of the short story over the reader. It refers to the impact of the story which captures the imagination of the reader. The short story has direct reference to events in the form of quick narrative discourse than elaborate descriptions employing long backgrounds, settings and character sketches.

### **3.4. The Essential elements of the Short Story**

The earliest form of short stories were oral story telling traditions, fables and parables in the form of brief moralistic narratives, and prose anecdotes. The emergence of the realistic novels of the later 19th century gave birth to modern short stories in America. Print magazines and journals popularized the modern American short story as genre where most of the modern American short story writers experimented their creative talents. Short story is the concentrated form of the narrative prose fiction. The traditional elements of short stories were: exposition, complication, climax, and resolution. But modern American short fiction composed of six important elements namely plot, characterization, point of view, setting, theme and style.

#### **3.4.1 Plot**

Aristotle (385 BC-322 BC) in his seminal work *Poetics* describes the plot as a sequence of events with a beginning, a middle and an end gave plot its importance. A plot generally takes place over a period of time and so brief time is always governed by time. A good short story follows the sequence of brief time. Kate Chopin's (1850-1904) *The Story of an Hour*, Edgar Allan Poe's (1809-1849) *The Tell Tale Heart* and Raymond Carver's (1938-1988) *Cathedral* are a few examples of short stories with unified plot structure which is in the realistic manner of a drama. The wide popularity

of short stories to the advent of episodes as plots where the writer makes transitions between scenes, and the technique of flashback, where the past incidents that took place in the life of the main characters are described by the writer. Modern short story writer adopted various tricks with time. For example, Ambrose Bierce's (1842-1914) "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (1891) recounts the miraculous escape from execution of the main character which shows that the escape is a fantasy that flashes through the man's mind in the split second before the hangman's rope reaches its end. William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" moves forward and backward in time but if he has followed a chronological sequence there won't be suspense at the end. Foreshadowing was also another technique followed by modern short story writers where the writer predicts about the forthcoming events of a story which fits appropriately to the narrative flow.

The dramatic structure of the plot is very well adopted in the modern short stories. The first technique is exposition which provides the reader with the essential information about who, what, when and where before continuing the reading of the story. In *Medias res* beginning where the story begins in the middle of things. Complication or conflict where trouble constitutes and takes form of some circumstance that disturbs the stable situation. The conflict begins with the rising action of the story which refers to the rise of action which builds to a crisis and complication. The central moment of crisis is climax, the point of greatest tension leading to falling action. Many modern writers also followed James Joyce's epiphany leading to a physical confrontation leading to a spiritual insight. The final part of the plot is denouement or resolution, the French term which means untying the knot or the emotional release of a story's ending where action winds down. A closed denouement answers all questions leading the reader's mind free from all confusions.

An open denouement leaves the readers with a few tantalizing ends. Another important factor connected to the plot structure of a story is the point propagated by Carl Jung as archetypes where characters are of universal types and situations that are carried in the mind of characters in their unconscious mind. Such types are found in myths, fairy tales and contemporary fiction and films.

### **3.4.2. Characterization**

Apart from the surprising plot developments by the modern American short story writers, equal attention was given to impressive characterization. Limitations of space, characters in short fiction were portrayed with a limited description but the great masters like Edgar Allan Poe, Maupassant and O. Henry made characters impressive and memorable through their adept technique of portrayals of human beings with which the reader is to identify and remember. The ancient Greeks conceived epic and tragic heroes as men and women controlled by mysterious agencies by adding complexity to characters. In the middle ages, writers wrote anonymously with lack of interest in individual characterization. They idealized knights, ladies in chivalric romances. Such characters are also found in poems of Dante and Chaucer. During the early Renaissance scientific approaches to characterization began to gain importance based on the four humours found in the human body like choleric, melancholic, and sanguine. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Naturalist writers applied scientific approaches of Charles Darwin and Cesare Lombroso in the form fictional characters. Then came psychological characters based on Freudian psychology probing into the unconscious motives of actions and new advances in science provided future writers with methods of investigating human behavior that is not easily conceivable.

Apart from approaches to characterization writers began to employ actions undertaken by main characters called protagonist. The word is drawn from Greek word meaning literally 'first debater.' Opposing characters are called antagonist with whom the protagonist is drawn into conflict. Antihero is another characterization of the modern short story writers where the antihero does not fit in traditional heroic mold. In short stories characters are normally called flat characters or round characters because it depends on the depth of the details the writer provides on them. Minor characters are called stock characters, stereotypes that may be necessary to advance a plot but otherwise are not important characters. Static or Dynamic characters depend upon the degree to which they change during the course of the story. Character motivation is the rationale the reader gives for character actions. The writer describes the actions going on the characters mind. But others do not know these transformations that take place in the character's mind. This type of characterization leads to psychological and theological dimensions to the story. Interior monologue is a method of narration like a soliloquy in drama or stream of consciousness technique.

### **3.4.3. Point of view**

In a short story, point of view is employed in a specialized sense, referring to the question of who narrates the story. Every story has a narrator, a character that provides the reader with information and insight into characters and incidents. In first-person narration the narrator is a participant in the action. He may be the main character or a minor character contributing to the action of the story. Some first person narrators are close to the events they describe and others are removed from it in time or place. An unreliable narrator is an ignorant narrator whose narration of events may be distorted and does not make any sense in the information he gives.



A dramatic monologue is another possibility of first person speaker who performs similar to dramatic monologues in drama. Third person narration employs a nonparticipant narrator a voice of authority, which never reveals its source and can usually move from place to place to describe action and report dialogue. In third person stories the question of reliability is rarely an issue. An omniscient narrator means just a narrator who knows everything about the characters and their lives, even their future and may reveal the thoughts of anyone in the story. An editorial point of view is allowing the godlike author to comment directly on the action, a device favoured by Victorian Novelists like William Thackeray. Dramatic point of view is where the narrator simply reports the dialogues and actions with minimal interpretation and not involving into characters' minds. Dramatic point of view is present in many stories of Ernest Hemingway.

**3.4.4. Setting:** the time, place of a story and in most cases the details of description are given to the reader directly by the narrator. A story may employ many locations in different scenes; its time frame may cover only a few hours or many years. Some stories cover certain time frame or time setting. They give more attention to different landscapes and customs of bygone class. Such settings are called Historical setting. Local colour fiction depends heavily on the unique characterization of a particular area. Usually a rural one that is different from the usual path. Such places have become increasingly rare in contemporary America. These regions are in deep Southwest, South and Pacific Northwest. These places provide strange locality to the readers. Regionalism is setting the writers work in a particular area or country and Magic Realism is a setting where places cut off from main land, where past, present, natural and supernatural join as seen in William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha Country which is an imaginary world of the writer.

### 3.4.5. Theme

The modern American fiction has adopted a complex theme by allowing the readers to assume the theme of the story. It also adopts by providing hidden theme which provokes the reader to interpret the theme of the story using hidden meanings. The theme of the story can be determined by the reader finding his own system of values. This approach can hinder problems when the author's moral system differs from those of the reader. A reader can interpret the theme of one story in the light of what he or she knows of the author's total work. Some modern short stories have microcosm theme, where the small world reflects the tensions of the larger world outside.

**3.4.6. Style:** in short fiction refers to the characterization of language in a particular story and to the same characterization in a writer's complete works. A detailed analysis of the style of an individual story might include attention to dictum, sentence structure, punctuation, and use of figurative language. In English use of different types of words such as slangs and foreign vocabulary also constitute to style. In analyzing style literary fashions of the periods should also be considered. The particular qualities of a story are best understood in the context of fiction written in the same period and place. Another important element of modern American short story is the tone of the story. It is what the reader can indirectly determine about the author's own feelings about events. Tone can be generally classified into tragic, ironic, satiric and sentimental. The tone of the story actually gives the reader a clue how to read a story. "All styles are good except the tiresome kind." – Voltaire.

### 3.4.7. The impact of the short story now

The rise of motion picture changed the status of modern short story rather 'short fiction' as Tim Killick (2008) suggests. The rise of the film obliterated the

short story's function of delivering short narratives. The modern short story has responded to film by attempting to render in fiction that which can be brought through the lens of the camera. American short story has had unique development and rise in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was the result of simple market forces responding to the urban popularities in America. The unstable urban workers moving from city to city in pursuit of employment opportunities and the newspapers serialized novels in newspapers. American short story has its unique history and pattern of development. The history and development is not the same as that of American novel, which is still a thriving genre. The American short story, as a popular genre is now almost extinct. However, the short story in America now surpasses in the Print Media, although only in the fringes of the literary culture, especially in the journals and magazines. For example, the recent editions of Reader's Digest have included publishing of fiction feature in their new edition. The short story as its descendant survives, albeit in the literary fringes of the culture.