

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE BRITISH AND
THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY FOR
THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Although the tale is as old as civilization, the first known being those of Egyptian origin, 3,000 B. C., the term "short story," as used in England and America to designate an independent literary form, did not appear until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Poe and Hawthorne wrote "tales." Howells reviewed Aldrich's Marjorie Daw as a "sketch."

In 1884 Brander Matthews wrote, in the London Saturday Review, "the short story, properly and technically so called, is a work of art of a distinct kind, and the writing of short stories is a distinct department of literary art." In differentiating it from the novel, he believed the short story must possess some seven or eight requisites: originality, unity, compression, brilliancy of style, action, form, substance, and if possible, fantasy.

With the opening of the new century short story art in America was regarded as an exact science, governed by laws as elaborate and fixed as those ruling the sonnet.

In the Dial of September 15, 1904, Henry Seidel Canby stated, "It is the deliberate and conscious use of impressionistic method, together with the increasing emphasis on situation that distinguishes the short story of today from

the tale of simple narrative and makes it seem a new work of art."

J. Berg Essenwein in his book, Writing the Short Story, published in 1909, defined that form of literature as "a brief, imaginative narrative, unfolding a single predominating incident and a single chief character; it contains a plot, the details of which are so compressed, and the whole treatment so organized, as to produce a single impression."

Within the last two decades many story writers have revolted against a rigid definition of the short story. In America, Ruth Suckow has avowed there is no such thing as "the" short story. "The very use of the word 'the' implies a rigidity that does not exist. A short story may be a running commentary on life; fireflies in the dark; questions and answers; fragments or small finished bits of beauty--whatever, in fact, the author has power to make it."

Sherwood Anderson bitterly denounces the "poison plot."

Similar ideas were expressed in England.

Katherine Mansfield says in her Journal that plots leave her "cold." She feels that she must be true to her characters, and the significant moments in their lives--she cannot betray a story "just for the sake of rounding out something."

A. E. Coppard calls his stories tales "in order to es-

cape from disputes and to persuade critics to judge his work for what it is."

"The art of the s. s.," says H. G. Wells, "is the jolly art of making something very bright and moving; it may be horrible or pathetic or funny or beautiful or profoundly illuminating, having only this essential, that it should take from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud. All the rest is just whatever invention and imagination and the mood can give."

In order to include the experiments of many writers of the present, an investigator in the field of the modern short story must necessarily choose a broad definition. As one writer puts it, "The short story is a story that is short." When reading the fragments of Ernest Hemingway, the shortest of which is exactly 172 words, one questions whether the term "story" should be applied to any of these experiments. Brevity seems their only requirement, and "short prose pieces" would be a more accurate labelling.

On the other hand Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, of which Grant Overton says "a great weight of critical authority has been mustered to pronounce it the finest short story in the English language," is a novelette of approximately 39,000 words.

Thus we see that the forms used and the corresponding definitions of a short story are almost limitless. And anyone making a study of the British and American short story of the past fifteen years, if he is to include all types, must ascribe to the viewpoint of L. A. G. Strong, the En-

lish critic, who pleads for "the widest conceivable liberty in the writing of short pieces of prose fiction, and for the free extension of the term short story to cover them all."

The purpose of the writer in making a comparative study of the British and American short story for the past fifteen years was to examine representative types of the short story emphasized in each country and to determine the trends, with the hope of finding a suitable answer to some of the following questions:

1. Are the various types of short story the same in each country?
2. Are there corresponding or parallel trends in each country?
3. What is the present importance of the short story in England and America?
4. Has the short story become static, or does it have a future?
5. Are there any indications on which one might base a prediction of future trends?

The period from 1918 to 1933 was arbitrarily chosen; it includes the brief span of literature since the War. In connection with this certain period another question comes to mind: Was the literature of the post-War period influenced to any appreciable extent by the War?

In undertaking this study it was necessary to read

widely in the field of the modern short story. These stories were found in current and bound periodicals of both countries, in short story anthologies, in the collections of various authors, and in year books of the short story. It was also necessary to read the historical background of this form of literature in each country, with special attention to the period just preceding the year 1918, to read authoritative discussions of the technique of the short story, critical comment on modern literature in general, and criticism of the writers selected to indicate the various trends of the short story since the War. No attempt has been made to include a discussion of all important or recognized short story writers. Only those who best illustrate the various types and trends have been selected--those who have a following of authors of lesser importance.

Much less material was available for the study of the British short story for the obvious reason that much less exists. In examining the literary supplement of the London Times for the last three years only one critical discussion of the short story was found. The reviews of short story volumes contained scarcely more than plot synopses of the separate stories. Too, most of the short story writers in England are primarily novelists, and prefer to be known as such. Several of those whom one would expect to be included in a discussion of the contemporary short story have pub-

lished few or no short stories since 1918, for example: Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, James H. Barrie, A. Conan Doyle, W. W. Jacobs, John Galsworthy, H. G. Wells, and Arnold Bennett. The much-discussed James Joyce, exponent of impressionism in his novels A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses, published his volume of short stories, Dubliners, in 1914, and they are not "stream of consciousness" stories. These writers then, in so far as this study is concerned with them, belong to the history of the short story and not with its present.

HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY IN AMERICA AND ENGLAND

To Washington Irving is given the credit for being the first in England or America to write short prose pieces of distinction. Prose narratives there were previous to this time, but those of the eighteenth century existed more for the moral they could point than for their own sakes. Irving patterned after Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith, his early reading and literary ideals having come from the eighteenth century, but his use of humor, picturesque setting, and romantic atmosphere transformed his material into something undeniably superior. However, Irving had no definite conception of the short story; his contribution to construction was negligible.

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Irving's Sketch Book was a magazine miscellany first issued as a periodical in England. Soon after, there came from Germany, by way of England to America, the annual or gift-book. The first of these volumes in America was the Atlantic Souvenir, 1825. Then came the Tokay, and many other miscellanies of prose and verse which became so popular that they were an outlet for the sketch book material of the many followers of Irving.

Along in the 'thirties Goday's Lady's Book appeared, published monthly. It added an impetus to the short narrative, insisting as it did that stories appearing in it be complete in each issue. In its wake followed many similar publications.

The next important figure in the development of the short story, Nathaniel Hawthorne, made each of his tales the study of a single intense situation. He dignified the tale so that it became an accepted literary form--accepted even by the New England Brahmins who included seventeen specimens of it in the first volume of the Atlantic Monthly.

The first document in short story criticism was Edgar Allan Poe's review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales, 1842. In this Poe says:

"A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale . . . having conceived with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents--he then combines such effects as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very ini-

tial sentence tends not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the pre-established design."

Poe, then, availed himself of short story technique and formulated this technique into a science with its own laws. The 'thirties and 'forties were sentimental and romantic; the 'fifties and 'sixties, under the leadership of Henry James, took a turn toward the realistic.

"From his (James's) earliest critical dictum published in the North American Review, 1864, when he was twenty-one, through a series of reviews, some thirty in number in the next three years, during forty years devoted almost wholly to fiction he stood both in theory and practice for positive standards of art, for work based on truth and reflection, for conscientious workmanship and distinction in style. He brought a cosmopolitan air into American fiction. He was the earliest to explain with clearness the work of the French school led by Balzac and Flaubert, and to bring the artistic fundamentals of this school to practical bearing upon American fiction."¹

The 'seventies were influenced by Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Bret Harte. Mr. Pattee accredits Aldrich with adding to the short story form "lightness of touch, wit, epigrammatic compression, and then a flash of suggestion that makes the end not an end at all, but a beginning--in a word, art."²

Bret Harte's principal contribution to the short story was its localization.

1. Pattee, Fred Lewis, The Development of the American Short Story, p. 194.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

"He threw over his stories, especially over his early masterpieces, a peculiar atmosphere of locality, one that to the readers of his day was startlingly new. He did for California what Dickens had done for London: he romanticized it; he gave it a mythology with a background perfectly in keeping."³

After Bret Harte there was an era of localized romance characterized by Constance Fenimore Woolson, George W. Cable, Sarah Orne Jewett and others, while Mary Murfree, Joel Chandler Harris, and Thomas Nelson Page added dialect to local color.

The latest phase in the development of the short story, "mastery of technique and sophistication under a narrowing formula," began with Brander Matthews's Philosophy of the Short Story, 1894. By the 'nineties the writing of the short story had become an established industry. The many magazines already in existence were added to with the advent of fifteen-cent magazines and Sunday supplements. The new generation of writers, Richard Harding Davis, Stephen Crane, George Ade, and later, O. Henry, came largely from the journalistic school.

A climax of technical ingenuity was reached in the stories of O. Henry, who is seldom referred to by his own name, William Sydney Porter. Despite his cleverness his work lacked because of shallowness. His devices were those of an entertainer who sacrifices anything to secure the ef-

3. Ibid., p. 234.

fects desired. His famous surprise endings tempted hundreds of imitators to try the same formula.

The leader of the group formed since the opening of the new century is Edith Wharton, who, like Katherine Fullerton Gerould, is an avowed disciple of Henry James. Like her novels, Mrs. Wharton's short stories present her characters in moral conflict. Mrs. Wharton's larger influence on the short story, however, ended with the War; the newer generation has broken away from technique and has sought for the original both in form and subject matter.

In England, we find the beginnings of the modern short story in the essays of Addison, Steele, and others, particularly in the Sir Roger de Coverley papers. However, England has not until recently made any great progress with the short story. Although various tales were written before the time of Stevenson and Kipling, as, for example, Sir Walter Scott's Wandering Willy's Tale, the writers of these tales preferred the novel and as a rule contented themselves with a mediocre type of short story, inferior to the same form of fiction in France or in the United States. The stories of Rudyard Kipling, however, rank among the best, and those of Robert Louis Stevenson, though fewer in number, are also excellent. Both Kipling and Stevenson are more indebted to French story writers than to their English forerunners. Kipling, especially, seems indebted to Maupassant for some

of his methods.

During the later 'nineties and the opening of the new century the English short story developed in two directions. There were those of high literary merit, published in the Yellow Book, the Dome, and The Savoy. Sometimes they were realistic, sometimes not; they were always distinguished in style. The more important authors were Sir James M. Barrie, Thomas Hardy, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, and Joseph Conrad. The popular magazines published many local color stories, realistic in the extreme, especially those picturing the slums of London. This interest was demonstrated in the stories of Arthur Morrison, W. W. Jacobs, Edwin Pugh, W. Petit Ridge, H. W. Nevison, Neil Lyons, and Thomas Burke.

Although the English have never been technique-conscious--regarding sketches, incidents, and portions of novels as short stories--this branch of fiction has acquired a different form and subject-matter since the War (as it has in America). Most of the post-War stories are concerned with what goes on in the mind, rather than with external happenings; in technique, they have broken entirely with earlier models.

"They may be all atmosphere, or all characterization, though they are never all plot. In form they are continually overstepping the boundaries of the essay, of the short play, of the poem; they may be descriptive sketches or condensed biographies, or sheer expositions of states of mind."⁴

4. Manly, John Matthews, and Rickert, Edith, Contemporary British Literature, p. 39.

TRENDS OF THE SHORT STORY

The great wave of realism that swept over Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century affected the short story as well as other forms of literature. The Russians and the French wrote bitterly of the down-trodden and the oppressed. They wrote tales powerful in realism and admirable in technique which have greatly influenced the development of realism in England and America.

However, it was not until after the World War that realism came into its own in England and America--came into its own, and, in the hands of such writers as D. H. Lawrence, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner developed into Freudism, naturalism, and literature of violence.

Realism aims to present actual conditions--sometimes with a form of solution. As a protest against romanticism, it is opposed to the extravagant, the unusual, the highly imaginative.

William Allan Neilson defines realism as "the tendency characterized by the predominance of the sense of fact over imagination and reason Romanticism is the tendency characterized by the predominance of imagination over reason and the sense of fact."⁵

5. Neilson, William Allan, Essentials of Poetry, p. 13.

Realism in itself does not preclude beauty, but the movement has become associated with the ugly and repellent conditions of life; writers portraying beauty in their realism are rare.

Of these few, the best example in England is Katherine Mansfield. A penetrating observer, she was much in earnest about depicting truth as she saw it, in reporting her characters faithfully. She wrote with a delicacy of feeling in a style clear cut and beautiful. Her three volumes of short stories are Bliss (1920), The Garden Party (1922), and The Dove's Nest (1923). Although not until shortly before her death in 1923 was her work generally known, her reputation as one of the most remarkable story writers has increased with the passing of time. One of her enthusiasts referred to her death at the age of thirty-four as "the greatest loss sustained by English letters since the death of Keats." Her creed was living life to its fullest: "with all my soul I long for a real life, for truth, and for real strength."

She did not evade the ironies of life; in her writing she mixed bitter realities with fleeting beauty. Edward J. O'Brien says of "The Fly":

"This story is as inevitable as the passage of time from hour to hour, from day to day, from year to year. It is an unhappy story, an untrue story, if you like, but it has a cry in it which has never been stilled from age to age, though that cry may be and should be transcended. The author sees with that terrible innocence of eye which children have, but here it is an old innocence deepened by suffering

and by rebellion. Nothing escapes it, nothing is added to it, very little is said about it; but the total impression recorded is an eternal one, and the question which that impression raises must be answered. Had Katherine Mansfield lived, I believe she would have answered it, and that would have been the true measure of her final achievement."⁶

The group of local color realists have been influenced to some extent by Thomas Hardy, and by various social movements, as the establishment of Toynbee Hall in London. Many of these stories are "fragments of life" rather than narratives.

The Linehouse stories of Thomas Burke, originating in the slums of London, present rudimentary characters--as do the Welsh tales of Caradoc Evans. In the latter, the most primitive emotions and actions of Welsh country people are presented in a style unusually flavored with Biblical phrasing and Welsh idiom.

Sheila Kaye-Smith, known chiefly as a novelist, has used the same rural characters and scenes of Sussex in her short stories as in her novels. Some of these stories are character studies; some, problem stories, dealing with matters of conduct and morals. She sees her characters from the individual rather than the psychological point of view; she is sympathetic and humorous, though penetrating in revealing character.

Another realist who is also a character portrayer is

6. O'Brien, Edward J., The Twenty-Five Finest Short Stories, p. 510.

Leonard Merrick:

"More emphatically than any other fiction writer of the present time, Leonard Merrick is a chronicler of the individual. What interests him primarily is the fortunes or misfortunes, defeats or triumphs of some particular man or woman, so that when one of his characters proves to be a type as well as an individual, one feels that it is the result of chance rather than intention. . . . America has been swift to appreciate the beauty of his clear and flexible style, where the right word slips into the right place as if by magic, the dramatic interest of his stories, his enchanting humor, his deft play of irony, his sympathy with men, and more than all his extraordinary, almost uncanny understanding of women."⁷

Merrick is more interested in the short story form than any other, regarding it as the one in which perfect artistry can most nearly be attained. He has been called the "short story writers' short story writer." His best stories compare favorably with those of O. Henry.

One might be inclined to classify the stories of W. Somerset Maugham, who is primarily a novelist, as romantic because of their exotic and oriental backgrounds, their unusual and dramatic incidents. However, especially in his latest book, Ah King, short stories of the Malay States, his narratives are ironically tragic after the realistic manner of Maupassant. Many of Maugham's stories are purely drama with little more than the necessary scenery and stage directions. He is a craftsman who uses his material as an artist.

In America, the foremost representative of the best in

7. Field, Louise Maunsell, Leonard Merrick, Bookman 75:713, 714.

realism is Willa Cather. She has concerned herself mainly with two types of characters, the pioneers who appear in several of her novels, and artists, whom we find in her short stories as well as in her novels. The figures who move through her stories in Youth and the Bright Medusa show that she has keen observation and insight; a preference for beauty and simplicity rather than vulgarity or shoddiness. Her style is always finished and artistic.

"At a time when many American writers of fiction seem content to record a merely faithful transcription of what they see before them, Miss Cather is reasserting the ancient distinction between nature and art and expressing the artist's old confidence that art is artistic precisely because it is not natural. Not content with mere naturalism, she has begun to subject what she has seen in the world around her to an imaginative reconstruction that is gradually gaining in depth of conception, beauty of design, and emotional power."⁸

Although the words "imaginative reconstruction" and "emotional power" suggest that Miss Cather may be more inclined to romanticism than to realism, still one could not say that she avoids the "realities" of life.

The Sculptor's Funeral emphasizes the provincial ugliness and insensitiveness of a mid-western village by the bringing home for burial of the body of an artist who had escaped in youth from these surroundings.

In A Wagner Matinee, considered by many to be Miss Cather's best short story, the principal character is a little old lady, who, unable to dominate her environment, has

B. Morris, Lloyd, Willa Cather, North American Review, 219: 652.

succumbed to it and is thereby defeated. In Paul's Case it is a boy, who, revolting against the monotony and drabness of his existence, takes the easiest way out--a way ending tragically.

A local color realist, Ruth Suckow, pictures the drabness of Iowa and the middle west. She has a sympathetic attitude toward her characters but is too objective to see far below the surface. It is her belief that artists should get more material from the "folks" environment. She says:

"The essence of the meaning of 'folk' is involved in participation; and the majority of art-loving Americans to-day, unlike the Henry Jameses of the past, grew up out of, and in the midst of, folks. Only a few American intellectuals have been able to identify themselves with the folks environment, and to use its creative opportunities. Among those who have are Dreiser, Anderson, and Carl Sandburg."

Although reminiscent of Katherine Mansfield and Sheila Kaye-Smith in her use of material, Miss Suckow lacks their charm, and pleasing style. Too, she is inclined to see the obvious monotones of daily existence and to overlook or ignore its brighter moments.

Fannie Hurst utilizes the local color of New York City, writing of the Jews and of the working girl. In most of her stories Miss Hurst reveals character, but she relies largely on emotionalism for her effects. Her work often approaches sentimentality; her style is not unusual.

Edna Ferber portrays character through single events or moods. She uses a journalistic style, vivacious, up-to-date,

unconventional, so that at times she seems more the reporter than the artist. Her theme is always timely; her purpose is to entertain. In her own words:

"Nothing in the field of writing dates as quickly as the short story. By its very form and brevity it is restricted from penetrating deeply into the fundamentals of life. . . . You need only stand looking out of your window to see the world changing before your eyes. A revolution, bloodless or sanguine, is going on in the street below, whether that street be in China or New York. The kingdom of today is the republic of tomorrow. This morning's millionaire is a pauper this afternoon. The artisan is next week's dictator. The writer of fiction finds himself trying to create in an atmosphere of a three-ring circus, with clowns, equestrians, acrobats whirling in mid-air."⁹

A consideration of realistic writers leads one to the extremes which realism has taken: naturalism, Freudism, and the bent toward violence and horror.

Naturalism was introduced by Emile Zola (1840-1902), a French writer whose inspiration was that nothing that happens is too bad to relate.

"The ideal of the naturalists was to record what they saw without moral or ethical basis, to set down all the facts that they could collect, with as little artistic selection as possible."¹⁰

Theodore Dreiser is the devout follower in America of Zola. Like most of the naturalists, he tends to see the animal elements in human behavior. He uses little of taste or

9. Ferber, Edna, They Brought Their Women, preface, p. VI, VII.

10. Manly, John Matthews, and Rickert, Edith, Contemporary American Literature, p. 11.

loyalty, but is faithful in observation and the amassing of details to show the confusion he sees in modern living. Misery and poverty, the hopeless struggle of the impotent, the futilities of daily existence occupy his attention to the exclusion of all beauty in nature and in character. His worst fault, however, is his wretched style. Grammatical errors, trite phrases, and the tendency to indulge in banal sentimentality make it difficult for one to appreciate his virtues.

The Lost Phoebe has been called the most important contribution to American folk legend since Hawthorne. It is one of the stories from Dreiser's first collection of short stories, Free and Other Stories (1918). He is also the author of three other volumes of stories: Twelve Men (1919), Chains (1927), and A Gallery of Women (1928).

Ernest Hemingway is a naturalist who has made behavioristic studies of soldiers, boxers, bull-fighters, gangsters, and jockeys. In his stories he reflects his disillusionment and "post-war weariness."

Hemingway's first book was a collection of short stories entitled In Our Time, Paris, 1924, New York, 1925. In his preface to the 1930 edition of this book Edmund Wilson shows that these short story experiments use the themes which Hemingway has since treated more elaborately in his novels.

"A Very Short Story is almost a scenario of A Farewell to Arms. Yet it has the whole of Hemingway already in it. It has the brutality of life, bound up with its enjoyment. The condition of life is pain. Even contentment vibrates with it. The resolution of that discord in art makes the beauty of Hemingway's stories. Suffering and making suffer, and their relation to sensual enjoyment of life, are the subject of them all."

Hemingway's interest in human suffering is even more apparent in his latest volume, with the pessimistic title of Winner Take Nothing. God Rest You, Merry Gentlemen is a terrible story in which two doctors describe a case of self-mutilation. A Way You'll Never Be, a story of the War on the Italian Front, explores the aberrations of shell-shock. Suffering is likewise the theme of One Reader Writes, A Clean Well-lighted Place, The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio, and A Natural History of the Dead, reprinted from Death in the Afternoon.

Although Hemingway has made use of the trend toward violence and horror--the latest extreme that realism has taken--he has not made it his "theme song" as has William Faulkner in his short stories and novels, and Robinson Jeffers in his poetry.

Instead of seeing life as it is, this type of realism, influenced by the War and by Freudian introspection, has become absorbed in life's more sordid and violent moments for the morbid fascination they hold.

William Faulkner's importance is still a subject of

controversy, but the furor raised in repudiating his morbid themes and preoccupation with abnormal and vicious characters is undeniable. Too, he has had admirers and many imitators. Even in his descriptions Faulkner conveys ugliness, as when he mentions "poles bearing clusters of bloated and ghastly and bloodless grapes."

These Thirteen are Faulkner's short stories published in 1931. Many of his stories have appeared in Harper's, Scribner's, and the Saturday Evening Post.

Although literature of violence is more prevalent in America, there are examples of it in England. D. H. Lawrence at times verges on the horrible. The Prussian Officer is a story one turns from with repulsion. Some of the Welsh studies of Caradoc Evans are bitter and horrifying, intent on "taking the lid off" things. A newer and obscure writer who seems to be following in the steps of William Faulkner is Liam O'Flaherty, whose gruesome tales of idiocy, maiming, and torture possibly overstep the boundaries of art.

Freudian, as the doctrine of psycho-analysis is usually called, was first applied by Dr. Sigmund Freud of Vienna for the cure of disease. It worked on the theory that "inhibitions" and "suppressed desires" are the cause of abnormal behavior, which must be brought to the surface in order to effect a cure. Freudism influenced literature in that it furnished new material and new methods for the presenting

of character--the character of abnormal individuals. David Herbert Lawrence explains his interpretation of Freudism in a study, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious. His novels and short stories are subjective, based on his theories of the subconscious. It is said that the War had a tragic effect on the development of Lawrence; his lack of integration shows plainly in his writing.

"It is impossible, as one reads his letters, not to feel the lasting effect on his attitude which was produced by the War. Until then his letters have hope and faith in them, the achievement and happiness of love. In the War his hope of a new life burns fitfully in letters that are among the most interesting in the book, but are also of a profound sadness and growing isolation. . . . 'It comes to this,' he said, 'that the oneness of mankind is destroyed in me.' . . . A consequence of his self-exclusion is that the accent of hate and the word itself began to haunt his letters, and this anger against most of the human world grows more violent with the later struggles of his astonishingly restless life. That is the first and not the least part of his tragedy; a tragedy of tenderness inverted to bitterness. . . . 'My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says is always true.'"¹¹

Lawrence should be read as an artist and not for his message. His descriptions of nature are excellent, but his long and pointless conversations retard his narratives.

Sherwood Anderson is an American D. H. Lawrence in his interest in abnormal characters--day dreamers, perverts, and the inhibited. His materials are the lives and minds of

11. Letters of D. H. Lawrence, London Times Literary Supplement, Sept. 29, 1932. p. 673.

everyday people in Ohio and the middle west.

"He has not given the sordid accidents of their lives for their objective value, but for their bearing on the natures of those subject to them. He does not seek average, or commonplace, or typical occasions that give a cross section of life. He seizes the mood or moment in life when a man or woman's guard of consciousness breaks, and allows a glimpse of the suppressed but essential self, that is almost as much a stranger and a mystery to its owner as to an outside observer."¹²

One weakness in Anderson is the fact that his subject matter seems limited to his own experience and confined to his own reaction to life. He has never become adjusted to society; he is as inarticulate as his characters. Moreover, he is often repellent. Regis Michard in referring to Winesburg, Ohio says that "Dante's Inferno is an Eden compared to this American abode of inescapable gloom."

The newest phase Freudian literature has taken is the impressionistic novel or short story. Impressionism in literature came in after impressionism in art and music. Although the greatest impressionistic work is James Joyce's Ulysses, his first book of impressionism, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 1916, was preceded one year by Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage. Since then Miss Richardson has written seven other parts, a continuation of her first novel, and some short stories dealing with the "stream of consciousness." She is more restrained than Joyce, but

12. Perry, F. M., Story Writing, p. 192, 193.

less intelligible; she never tells her reader that a thing happens, except to the extent that the incident is recorded in the mind of the central character.

Although she has been heeded but little by the readers of America, Miss Richardson has influenced American writers in a measure. Sherwood Anderson, Glenway Wescott, and Ruth Suckow have used impressionism to a limited extent, as have minor writers.

The vogue for realism has not supplanted romanticism in modern literature, but has run parallel to it. Although more romantic literature is to be found in the popular magazines and among lesser writers, we find writers of distinction who prefer romanticism and whose work is published in the so-called "literary" magazines. For example, in England we have the work of A. E. Coppard, Hugh Walpole, and G. K. Chesterton; in America Wilbur Daniel Steele, James Branch Cabell, and Conrad Aiken.

Alfred Edgar Coppard, essentially a poet, became famous as a writer of fantasies and tales after the age of forty. He believes that folk tales are the best models for good writing. He has introduced a strange variety of people--fishmongers, farmers, tailors, sextons, sailors, and so on. His style is compelling, often poetic. Of it Ford Madax Ford has written:

"Mr. Coppard is almost the first English writer to get

into English prose the peculiar quality of English lyric poetry. I do not mean that he is metrical; I mean that hitherto no English prose writer had had the fancy, the turn of imagination, the wisdom, the as it were piety, and the beauty of the great seventeenth century lyricists like Donne and Herbert--or even Herrick."

It has been said of Hugh Walpole that he writes of romance realistically. Perhaps this is another way of saying that he is so convincing in his pictures of the extraordinary that they seem familiar. Although his characters are unusual, he makes living people of them; they seem no different from those we meet every day. Walpole uses local color in his novels and short stories, but he is not provincial; he has represented various sections of England. His short stories are usually character stories. Sometimes they are also thematic. The Enemy and The Enemy in Ambush, though with totally different setting and characters, have the same underlying idea--one which has been expressed by Edwin Arlington Robinson in An Old Story:

"I would have rid the earth of him
Once, in my pride.
I never knew the worth of him
Until he died."

Gilbert Keith Chesterton, essayist and poet, is also well known for his romantic mystery stories, similar to those of A. Conan Doyle. These stories represent the popular vogue in England and America for "series" stories--stories which are separate but having the same central charac-

ter running throughout. The Father Brown of Chesterton's invention is the Sherlock Holmes of the earlier stories of Doyle. Chesterton reveals in his stories cleverness, ingenuity, and a style that is superior to that of most writers of "series."

Wilbur Daniel Steele has been pronounced the best contemporary short story writer in America by more than one critic, and praised for his "sensitive fidelity to the more abiding romance of ordinary life." Steele chooses powerful themes, putting his characters in situations which are extremely dramatic. Many of his stories are grim, frequently of insanity or murder; sometimes his characters are studies in psychology. Steele has been compared in certain respects to both Hardy and Conrad by Edward J. O'Brien:

"Mr. Steele's extraordinary gift for presenting action and spiritual conflict pictorially is unrivalled, and his sense of human mystery has a rich tragic humor akin to that of Thomas Hardy, though his philosophy of life is infinitely more hopeful."¹³

"Mr. Steele's apprehension of human life in its relation to natural forces is from a different angle than that of Joseph Conrad. The latter sets men against an eternal background remote from common experience, and reveals him translated from his fellows by the simplification of space and time experienced by those who follow the sea. Mr. Steele's preoccupation is with a more generally shared background, in which wonder is born of ordinary things, whose strangeness has been forgotten through constant surface familiarity. He finds as much drama in the dory life of Portuguese fishermen on Cape Cod as Conrad has found in the

13. O'Brien, Edward J., The Best Short Stories of 1917, Bookman 46:706.

southern seas, and as much detachment from circumstance, save in so far as it is transformed by insight into a new world of strange, forgotten things."¹⁴

James Branch Cabell is at the same time a romanticist, a satirist, an idealist, and a humorist. He glorifies the colorful past, the adventurous existence, and the idolatry of women. On the other hand, he implies that none of these things are worth devotion or praise. In his volume of short stories, Certain Hours, he reconstructs, from facts or imagination, the lives of famous authors. His style is finished and sophisticated; he is a master of prose rhythm.

Conrad Aiken writes fantasies similar to those of A. E. Coppard. Like Coppard, he is first a poet. He employs an exquisite style and an unconventional form. Some of his stories border on impressionism.

In concluding a discussion of the trends found in the modern short story, it should be stated that they are not confined to that branch of literature only. If there are differences in the tendencies of short stories, novels, and poetry, they are quantitative, not qualitative. This has been implied in the consideration of the work of story writers who are also novelists. It is equally true of poetry. Edgar Lee Masters is a naturalist, perhaps a psychoanalyst; Carl Sandburg is a realist; Edna St. Vincent Millay, a re-

14. O'Brien, Edward J., The Advance of the American Short Story, p. 235.

manticist; and Emily Dickinson, to a limited extent, an impressionist. Moreover, the trends of modern literature are not limited to literature; they are also present in the other arts.

TYPES OF THE SHORT STORY IN AMERICA AND ENGLAND

Aside from that intangible something called style which distinguishes the work of an artist from that of every other, there are two things to consider in the study of a short story--form and substance. It has been said that the theme and the form and the style of a good story are indistinguishable. It is true that they are very closely related; substance often dictates form. More strongly, substance should dictate form if it is true, as many critics believe, that ideally every bit of material has but one inevitable form, and that the measure of success of a writer is the measure in which he finds it.

The relation between form and subject matter may be further illustrated by the two most divergent types--the "stream of consciousness" story, and the mystery story. Could a strictly "stream of consciousness" story be anything but amorphous? On the other hand, a mystery story or a story of dramatic incident requires a carefully constructed plot.

In addition to the "stream of consciousness" story and the short story of accepted technique, the various types rep.

recounted in contemporary literature are the tale, the anecdote, the sketch, the scene, and the fantasy. Each of these types is, as has been said before, determined largely by its subject matter.

The tale is defined as "a connected narrative or account, whether oral or written, long or short, true or false."¹⁵ It is a series of incidents, but they are unrelated incidents. On the other hand, the incidents in a short story with a plot are closely connected; each one is the result of preceding events, and the cause of those which follow.

A. E. Coppard is England's chief narrator of tales. Some of these are The Higglee, Fine Feathers, and The Field of Mustard. The American Theodore Dreiser has written tales rather than short stories with plot, among them The Lost Phoebe, and The Second Choice.

An anecdote is "a brief account of some interesting event or incident, especially a personal or biographical incident."¹⁶ An example of the anecdote in England is France by L. A. G. Strong. In America, Ruth Suckow's Susan and the Doctor may be cited.

The sketch, "a rough suggestive delineation or presenta-

15. Funk and Wagnalls, How Standard Dictionary (1921), p. 2459.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

tion of anything, whether graphic or literary, is also defined as "a literary or dramatic composition, short and of slight construction."¹⁷ The sketch often reveals character, as in Katherine Mansfield's Ma Parker and Sherwood Anderson's The Thinker.

The scene is a brief description as interpreted by a character; it has no action but is a preparation for action. The scene may be illustrated with The Fly by Katherine Mansfield and The Killers by Ernest Hemingway.

Fantasy is defined as a fantastic idea or mental image; an irregular or whimsical fancy; a mental caprice.¹⁸ One of A. E. Coppard's fantasies is called Adam and Eve and Pinch Me. Conrad Aiken has written Silent Snow, Secret Snow, Mr. Arcularis, and others.

The formless "stream of consciousness" story, explained in another section, is exemplified by Dorothy Richardson in Death.

In the conventional sense the short story is defined as "a brief, imaginative narrative, unfolding a single predominating incident and a single chief character; it contains a plot, the details of which are so compressed, and the whole treatment so organized, as to produce a single impression."¹⁹

17. *Ibid.*; p. 2287.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 896.

19. Essenwein, J. Berg, Writing the Short Story, p. 30.

Walter B. Pitkin says that plot is "a climactic series of events each of which both determines and is determined by the characters involved."²⁰

Thus we see that the technical short story has the following essentials: plot, characterization, atmosphere, and theme. The experimental forms often have none of these. Some may be all characterization or all atmosphere; they are never all plot.

The principal of unity is secured in the short story by its having one central character, represented with a dominant trait. The story contains a theme or underlying idea. Conflict is at the heart of the story; the central character struggles to obtain some objective.

There are many classifications of the technical short story; according to the material used, the objective of the central character, or the particular element emphasized. John Gallishaw divides stories into two classes only, stories of accomplishment and stories of decision.

Raymond Woodbury Pence makes a classification according to the particular element emphasized. He calls these elements "the major kinds of interest that a reader of fiction may find in a story--interest in action, in character, in setting, in theme, and in mood." He says further, "Although all of these elements may be found, to be sure, in a given

20. Pitkin, Walter B., How To Write Stories, p. 58.

fiction, yet one of them will usually be felt, by a given reader, to be the main interest to which all others are subordinate."²¹

Stories of action include stories of dramatic incident, detective and mystery stories, stories of ingenuity and surprise, and problem stories. Stories of character are subdivided into individual or psychological; stories of setting, local color and atmosphere. Stories of mood emphasize humor, love, or fantasy.

There are a number of writers in America today who are artists in writing the conventional short story. Probably the foremost is Wilbur Daniel Steele. Steele has always been true to short story technique, yet he handles his material so cleverly that one is not aware of the mechanical make-up of it. He has no formula. He chooses powerful themes; it is the crisis in every human relation which interests him most. Of him Manly and Rickert have said that "he has taken the conventional form and treated it with such pains and ingenuity that he has made it seem fresh and vigorous." Although always dramatic, his themes are varied. Blue Murder, as the title indicates, is a murder-mystery story. The Woman at Seven Brothers centers around an insane individual, as does How Beautiful With Shoes. The Man Who Saw Through Heaven is

21. Pence, Raymond W., Short Stories of Today, p. VII, preface.

a psychological character study. The Yellow Cat is a clever mystery story that almost leads one to believe in the Chinese idea of reincarnation until the supernatural happenings are explained at the last in terms of the natural. The Silver Sword is a poignant story based on the post-war invasion of the Yankees into the South; it is also a portrait of Kit Lorillard, a woman whose husband was killed during the Civil War, and who, many years later, loses her home to the hated Yankees in order to give her grandson a chance in life. Never Anything That Fades is a thematic story, with the title indicating the theme.

Booth Tarkington has been called a "journeyman" rather than a master. He is a prolific writer whose work appears in the popular magazines, particularly The Saturday Evening Post. He has given humorous representations of the adolescent youth; more recently, he has been writing stories of children for adult readers. These stories are examples of the popular "series" stories; the same child is the central character in each of the various narratives.

Although the stories of Fannie Hurst have plot, they are many times too long to be effective and her characters are overdrawn. However, they have a certain vividness and color, and usually an emotional appeal to the reader.

Dorothy Canfield presents Vermont characters with "a uniform level of craftsmanship. Her attainment is sometimes

high, yet she is somewhat inclined toward pointing morals, or at least conveying "messages" to the reader.

Although there are a lesser number of writers in England using good short story technique, among these may be mentioned W. Somerset Maugham, G. K. Chesterton, Leonard Merrick, and, in some instances, Hugh Walpole and Sheila Kaye-Smith.

W. Somerset Maugham is an artist who chooses to write the story of dramatic incident, as in his well-known story, Rain (originally entitled Miss Thompson), and The Letter.

G. K. Chesterton stories are necessarily carefully plotted since most of them are mystery-murder, or detective stories.

Although Leonard Merrick makes use of technique, he is an author without a set pattern; his range is extensive. One of his stories may be a farce or a melodrama. It may have satire as The Bishop's Comedy, or it may be as amusing as The Suicides in the Rue Sombre. It may have a theme--in The Man Who Understood Women, Merrick says that our greatest remorse is not for our sins but for our stupidities. It may picture "heart-break" as in Dead Violets.

Sheila Kaye-Smith and Hugh Walpole, although differing in style, have chosen to write character stories, of the individual rather than psychological. Many times the stories

are also thematic. Examples are Walpole's The Brother and Mr. Oddy. Miss Kaye-Smith has written The Mock-Beggar and A Day in a Woman's Life.

Of the form of the modern experimental short story it has been said that it is "continually overstepping the boundaries of the essay, of the short play, of the poem."²²

The essay-like stories of Sherwood Anderson, as Like a Queen and Sentimental Journey, may be cited along with Katherine Mansfield's Miss Brill and Dorothy Richardson's Death. The stories of W. Somerset Maugham which resemble the drama have been mentioned.

In looking at the distinctions between poetry and prose we find that a number have been broken down by the short story. Louis Untermeyer and Carter Davidson have listed the differences between poetry and prose as follows:²³

Prose	Poetry
1. Usually informative	1. Usually suggestive
2. Usually factual	2. Usually imaginative
3. Usually low-pitched and unemotional	3. Usually tense and emotional
4. Concerns judgments	4. Concerns intuitions
5. Irregular and expansive	5. Formal and condensed

22. Manly, John Matthews, and Rickert, Edith, Contemporary British Literature, p. 39.

23. Untermeyer, Louis, and Davidson, Carter, Poetry: Its Appreciation and Enjoyment, p. 19.

Prose

Poetry

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6. Loosely rhythmic or not rhythmic at all | 6. Strict in rhythm or in pronounced rhythmic patterns |
| 7. Patterned by the sentence and paragraph | 7. The phrase, the line, and the stanza determine the pattern |

They also say: "It is impossible to set up rigid rules for separating poetry from prose; perhaps a 'misty mid-region' is necessary. Nevertheless the reader will find some differing features usually applicable."²⁴

Of the seven distinctions given in the table only the last three remain intact, and the sixth is questionable, when we look at the modern short story. The stories of Ernest Hemingway and Katherine Mansfield suggest rather than inform; they concern intuitions, not judgments. The fantasies of A. E. Coppard and Conrad Aiken are not factual, but are highly imaginative; the stories of Wilbur Daniel Steele are tense and emotional. James Branch Cabell and Conrad Aiken use prose rhythm which is very similar to the rhythm of free-verse.

The tendency toward imagism of certain story writers is another bond between poetry and prose. The imagists in poetry, led by Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell, aimed "to present an image, not vague generalities, to employ the exact word in the language of common speech." Imagism may be thought of as "flashing" an image, as opposed to technical description.

24. Ibid., p. 19.

In a poem, A Lady, which is entirely imagistic, Amy Lowell begins:

"You are beautiful and faded,
Like an old opera tune
Played upon a harpsichord;
Or like the sun-flooded silks
Of an eighteenth-century boudoir."

T. S. Eliot in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock compares the evening spread out against the sky to "a patient etherized upon a table."

Among stories using imagism, those of Glenway Wescott, Conrad Aiken, and Katherine Mansfield are outstanding.

Glenway Wescott begins The Runaways:

"The sky rolled from side to side like an animal in animal in pain, outstretched on the soft, saturated trees. Now and again there was a groan of thunder, and lightning played with a glitter of enormous eyes rolling in their sockets."

He uses the following expressions in In a Thicket:

"A great silence arose as a growing plant arises. It spread and shook out its leaves."

"Between the trees, the light clinked like a castanet."

"She saw him quite distinctly, not in person, but as a separate outline as small as her hand, singing to itself, and an embodiment of sadness."

In Silent Snow, Secret Snow, Conrad Aiken speaks of "eyes that swam very brightly like little minnows."

Katherine Mansfield says in At the Bay:

"Then something immense came into view; an enormous shock-haired giant with his arms stretched out. It was a big gum-tree outside Mrs. Stubb's shop."

Before leaving the study of the types of the modern short story it should be repeated that although the various experiments of the last fifteen years have gone under the classification of "short stories" and have been referred to as such by the writer, strictly speaking, the term is a misnomer.

The term short story applies to a distinct literary form which has a certain technique, just as a sonnet is a distinct literary form composed of fourteen iambic pentameter lines with a certain rhyme scheme.

THE STATUS OF THE SHORT STORY

What is the importance of the short story of today? What is its value? Pattee in The Development of the American Short Story says that it has taken a place in America where it threatens all other literary forms. He goes on to ask: "Has our America evolved an inferior form of expression because of our restlessness and our lack of time as readers to devote to the longer and more elaborate forms of art? Has our climate rendered us scant of breath and capable only of short dashes? Can one see life steadily and see it whole if one may look at it only for the space of a conte?" Pattee does not answer these questions. He concludes by saying that it is not the province of the literary historian to discuss or even venture an opinion. However, in his book of

criticism, Tradition and Jazz. we find Pattee in the section on the short story, saying:

"That it (the short story) is a literary form, just as in poetry the ballad is a literary form, is nowhere disputed now. It is evident that a single-number magazine story cannot be a novel, and, even though it be romantic, it cannot be a romance. Like the ballad it is a single stroke, a flash-light upon a single area of life yielding a single glimpse. There can be no study of life as a whole; there is no time for exploring complicated areas; and there can be no development in the characters. But this element of shortness brings difficulty. . . .

"If one is forbidden lengthy expositions, one must get one's effects by suggestion, by subtle hints and nuances that lead the reader himself to complete pictures and assign consequences. Brevity demands perfection. The sonnet is a supremely difficult poetic form, chiefly because it is so short that even the slightest defect can be detected at a glance. There is hardly a requirement laid down for the short story that is not also a requirement for longer forms of story-telling, but in the short story the requirements are all in the imperative mood."²⁵

Katherine Fullerton Gerould agrees with Pattee concerning the exacting requirements of the short story. She says that it is obviously much more difficult to write a great short story than it is to write a great novel. "The astonishing thing about the contemporary short story in America," says Mrs. Gerould, "is that there is so much of it, and that it is, on the whole, so clever."

"By reading the short story as critically as we do the novel, by applauding it as sincerely when it is successful, and condemning it as vigorously when it is not; by demanding from the short story writer as high a quality of prose as we demand from any other writer of fiction--we, as readers, can do much to place it where it belongs, and to clear the air of

25. Pattee, Fred Lewis, Tradition and Jazz, p. 155

suspicion: of the utterly false suspicion that it is, in itself, cheap or ephemeral, or inadequate to the serious portraiture of life."²⁶

The modern short story has been criticized on the score that it has developed into a mere formula of paradox and journalistic smartness; it has been criticized for "magazinitis" (mechanization) on the one hand and for its formlessness on the other.

Clayton Hamilton believes that a novel may be built in any of a number of ways. "The selection of method depends more upon the temperament and taste of the author than upon inherent logical necessity. But in a short-story the problem of the author is primarily structural; and structure is a matter of intellect instead of a matter of temperament and taste. . . . Hence, although the planning of a novel must be left to the individual author, the structure of a short story may be considered as a matter impersonal and absolute, like the working out of a geometrical proposition."²⁷

As opposed to Mr. Hamilton's theory of the construction of the short story, we find Frances Newman saying that Sherwood Anderson is an illustration "that an American genius, like a Russian genius, cuts a new pattern for every story he writes."

26. Gercould, Katherine, Who Are Our Best Short Story Writers, Current Opinion, 77:160.

27. Hamilton, Clayton, A Manual of the Art of Fiction, p.205.

In true "journalistic smartness" Edna Ferber expresses her views on the story of the past, and of the present day:

"He is vanishing--that exquisite craftsman who, in white cap and apron, used to ply his trade for all to see and admire through the plate-glass window of the chain restaurant. With what grace he poured the creamy batter, with what dexterity he jerked back the wide-lipped pitcher; what a sense of timing in the flip of the wrist that turned the bubbled surface to reveal the golden-brown under side of the hot pancake. . . .

"The American short story of a passing generation was the hot pancake of literature. The same deft pouring of the batter, the same expert jerk, the same neat flip of the wrist at the end. . . .

"Five-six-ten years ago the clever short story, the story with the snapper at the end, was in vogue. Disciples of that school sprang up by the thousands. They seem strangely old-fashioned and unconvincing now. Yesterday's short story may have, for that matter, a hollow sound today, if its subject matter has a timely briskness. Today's fiction writer who writes of his own time, using surface occurrences rather than fundamental human emotions, is likely to find himself in the position of Alice when she found herself running through the wood with the Red Queen in Through the Looking Glass.

"Hot, weary, dishevelled, Alice protested, panting, that though they had been running and running and running they seemed to be getting nowhere; that they were, in fact, just where they started.

"In this country," snapped the Red Queen, "it takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place."²⁸

Some writers believe that to give a true picture of life, an artist must utilize fragments as well as the fully developed story--that he must present "slices of life" as well as its dramatic moments:

"The artist may use fantasy as his medium but his art takes its validity from a realistic observation of the af-

fairs of men. And the affairs of men will not invariably fit into a pretty package just so wide and just so long. There are situations that end in hope, in irony, or in resignation; events that come to no stirring climax, but break off as life breaks off. These are stories, too, and they want telling. Whether we lay them down with a sigh or a smile we are wiser and fuller for having read them. They add to the sum of our experience and illuminate the dark and troubled places of our own hearts."²⁹

Others believe that these fragments which present characters without conflict and stories without drama, defeat their own purpose and are read only by their authors or by similar writers:

"Experimental writers--who perforce brought the experimental magazines with them, for they had to be published somewhere--freed themselves of hampering ideas of structure. . . . About all that was left of the old short-story form was the fact that it was short. But the error lay in the naive supposition that dullness without 'form' was any better than dullness with 'form.' After all, looseness itself is a kind of form. The image-breakers went on staging their little behavioristic pictures without any dramatic moments until they began to discover that they were writing chiefly for their own circle, and that doing without the 'strongest dramatic sequence' . . . laid a rather heavy burden on the content of the story. Paradoxically it is possible for even the new freedom to be 'slick.'"³⁰

In England we find much less controversy over the form and substance of the modern short story, in fact much less attention is paid to the short story as a distinct literary form.

"English writers have never tended to regard the short story as the intricately articulated form that Americans have been conscious of. Indeed, English writers have had

29. Whitney, Parkhurst, Concerning an American Industry, Outlook, 147:347.

30. Bates, Sylvia Chatfield, Twentieth Century Short Stories, introduction, p. VIII.

far less reason to be conscious of the short story as a separate form at all. For one thing there has not been the stimulus to develop it independently that there has been in America; there has not been the vast popular-magazine reading public to be served. Again it is possible that a difference in temperament has not disposed the Englishman to devote himself to a form that is primarily nervous and staccato. At all events there has not grown up in England a group of professional short story writers at all comparable in size to that in America.

"Again and again in reading short stories by contemporary English writers one is made conscious that organic form is largely subordinated. Sometimes it hardly exists at all. The writer happens to become engaged upon a theme that requires less expansive treatment than is needed to fill a novel. He begins to write and he tells his story, as far as it goes, and then he stops. Sometimes he has produced what to the American reader seems an 'incident,' sometimes a 'character sketch,' sometimes a portion of a novel. The Englishman calls it a 'short story.' 'Short fiction' would be a better name, if we use short story in the American sense of the word."³¹

In both England and America we find searching criticism condemning the trends of violence, naturalism, Freudism, and objective realism.

The London Times Literary Supplement in reviewing the English volume of short stories, Charles Wain (1933), indicates that stories of cruelty and torture have overstepped the boundaries of art, as does the naturalism in the American short story.

"In all four stories and in several others in this American volume (O'Brien, Best Short Stories of 1933) one detects the unmistakable influence of Mr. Sherwood Anderson expressing itself in a degree of naturalism which is in dan-

31. Robinson, Kenneth Alan, Contemporary Short Stories, Preface, p. VII.

ger of ceasing to be art."³²

Phyllis Bentley, British novelist, when interviewed on her arrival in America in February, 1934, contended that romantic fiction is coming back into favor, replacing the "raw, glittering novels that flooded the world's bookshelves after the war" which were "simply a reaction to the squeamish reticence of the Victorian novel."

In explaining her criticism of objective realism, Edith Wharton says that the writer exchanges his creative faculty for a kodak. Details of dress, mannerisms, and bodily peculiarities replace the drawing of character.

"The 'realists' had hit on a convenient device; they had discovered that it is much easier, whenever a given character appears, to put the same phrase on his lips, or to call the reader's attention to the same physical infirmity, a squint, a stammer, an odd pronunciation (a means of identification cruelly overused by Balsac) than to build up, stroke by stroke, the shape and growth of his soul. . . . They reduce to the vanishing point any will to action and their personages are helpless puppets on a stream of fatality."³³

Clayton Hamilton objects to the one-sidedness of naturalism which chooses to picture only the sordid, and turns away from the uplifting or beautiful in life.

"Realism . . . has shown a tendency to degenerate into so-called 'naturalism,' a method of art which casts the unnatural emphasis of photographic reproduction upon phases of actual life which are base in themselves and insignificant

32. The London Times Literary Supplement, Jan. 11, 1934, p. 24.

33. Wharton, Edith, Tendencies in Modern Fiction, The Saturday Review of Literature, Jan. 27, 1934, p. 433, 434.

of the eternal instinct which leads men more naturally to look upward at the stars than downward at the mud. The naturalistic writers are deceived in thinking that they represent life as it really is. If their thesis were true, the human race would have dwindled to extinction long ago. Surely a photograph of a slattern in the gutter is no more natural than a picture of Rosalind in the Forest of Arden; and no more accuracy of imitated actuality can make it more significant of truth."³⁴

The same idea is expressed by Zona Gale:

"Realism does not deal with enough of life. The creative writer must do more, be more, evoke more from his reader. He must go beyond realism or he has betrayed his power.

"In a word, your realist is a wizard at describing grub and cocoon, but the creative writer interprets to you Psyche, the butterfly. To be sure, all these are facts--grub fact, cocoon fact, fact of wings. I grant the grub, I grant the cocoon, but I insist that the one who writes about them sees more than these. . . .

"Why then, in the midst of life and death, should that form of art called fiction concern itself chiefly with sex, abnormal psychology, and the adventures of drunkenness? In the midst of life and death!

"There are these two streams of tendency in modern fiction: one bowing to that which is merely an effort to be modern--the mere period reaction--and the other dealing with that which is basic and fine."³⁵

The trend of violence has been repudiated chiefly on the grounds that it is outside the pale of art and that it is meaningless when it is an end in itself.

"Great literature is full of tragedy and pain. But the difference between these cruelties and Paulkner's dead men, and ghoulish eyes, or Jeffers' pathological demons, hurt hawks, and hibidinous symbolism, is the measure of the gulf between end-point in poetry and prose when the purpose is to

34. Hamilton, Clayton, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

35. Gale, Zona, Period Realism, Yale Review, Autumn, 1933, p. 111.

administer a shock, and the limitless extension possible when the aim is to exalt the astonishing power of human beings for courage and fortitude and nobility in the face of the inescapable evils of life which bear men down. The one sees the elements of terror and destruction and dwells on them for their morbid fascination; the other fastens attention on the indestructible quality of the human spirit which even in defeat arises in triumph over the brutal forces with which the world confronts it. One is authentic and permanent; the other is ephemeral and will pass as before into a paragraph or a footnote. . . .

"The limitations of objective realism are clear; the hard-boiled chronicle of the war is in; Freud has been nominated for oblivion. The focus continues to shift. And one has the right to demand of any author who purports to assault him with tragic terror that he have one of two purposes: the proportional representation of life as it appears to the writer, or the nobility of the struggle, even in defeat³⁶

The consensus of opinion, then, is that true realism is desirable; it is the extreme and biased realism which is objectionable. The best of modern fiction is an effort to make a true record; it is honest, sincere, direct, and "tends away from the subjective, away from the exhibitionism of its author."

In regard to technique and form the dictum is that the hope of the short story is primarily in the presentation of fresh material within the limits of the established form, and then, in the achievement of distinction outside the conventions of subject matter and technique, to keep the short story from becoming static.

36. Hatcher, Harlan, The Torches of Violence, The English Journal, Feb. 1934, p. 98, 99.

CONCLUSIONS

A study of the types of the short story for the past fifteen years has shown that those in England and America are the tale, the sketch, the scene, the anecdote, the fantasy, the "stream of consciousness" story, and the conventional short story. Strictly speaking, none of these types except the last is a "short story"; the other forms are "short fiction." The tale, the sketch, and the anecdote are more prevalent in England, while the most popular form in America, in spite of experimentation in form, is the conventional short story.

Instead of supplanting the conventional short story, the newer forms have taken their place by its side, giving the story writer a greater variety from which to choose. Some follow the form which is now traditional, with effectiveness; others are effective with experimental forms, showing that story writing is still a vital art--that it has not become static.

The short story is a recognized and established literary form of expression used extensively in America and to a lesser degree in England. Most of the short story writers of England are better known as novelists. In America the majority of writers of the short story are more outstanding in that branch of literature than in any other.

The trends found in the American short story are romanticism, realism, Freudism, impressionism, naturalism, and violence. The English short story exhibits parallel trends, with less emphasis on naturalism and violence.

Interest in literature of violence, in naturalism, and in objective realism is diminishing. There has been much criticism, especially within the last two years, repudiating it and pointing out its deficiencies. Not only the magazine-reading masses but also discriminating readers are demanding romantic fiction and that of the better type of realism.

History shows that extremes have always been followed by a movement toward the opposite direction. Romanticism appeared in the eighteenth century as a revolt against a classical period which had lasted a hundred years. When, in the Victorian Age, romanticism developed into sentimentality, realism was introduced as a protest against it. Now that realism has run the gamut, having gone to such an extreme that it dwells on the elements of terror and destruction, portrays life as futile, and human consciousness as a mistake, a reaction seems inevitable. No one can go on "mining in a vein which is exhausted; newer writers can find no inspiration in a mode outrun."

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