

**Research Paper**

# An analytical study of development of Short Story in Modern Period of English Literature

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The purpose of this study was to trace out the historical development of short story specifically in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The short story as an independent genre got its publicity in the modernist period of English literature. The short story emerged from the magazines of 19<sup>th</sup> century. This study highlighted the thematic and artistic descriptions of the short stories produced by the modernist short story writers. It also drew attention on their works and collections of the short stories. Moreover, this study would enable readers to be acquainted with the art of short story writing of the writers of 20<sup>th</sup> century such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, D.H.Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield and Fitzgerald.

**Key Terms:** Historical development, Short story, modernist and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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## INTRODUCTION

Short story is one of the latest genres of literature. Cuddon (1999) defines "A piece of fiction shorter than short novel ranging words from 500 to 5000". Edgar Allan Poe defines as narrative that "can be read at one sitting. It has been the part of oral traditions of five to fifty page ranges. It has the beginning, the middle and the end. It posses characters and depends up self-contained events and incidents. It contains plot and other solid components necessary for carrying action forward. It appeared in 19<sup>th</sup> century magazines, popularized by Cekove, and thus has become one of the greatest art forms in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Short stories are not result of slow evolutionary process as a separate genre but rather appeared an independent genre. It has been covered under the subtitles of folklores, tales, anecdotes, subplots, satires, pamphlets, sagas and short narratives. Boccaccio and Chaucer were among the famous literary figures in whose works traces of short stories were found. The main figures of short stories are Flaubert, Maupassant, Chekov, Poe, Melville

and so on. Some of the prominent modernist short story writers are Munro, Somerset Muagham, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, D.H.Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, R.M.James and Fitzgerald.

## DISCUSSION

Short story got its beginning in America. It is believed that true beginning of short story was with the woks like 'Fairy Tales' (824-26) by Grimm, 'Rip Van Winkle' (1819) , 'Twice-Told Tales' produced by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1837, and Allan Poe's 'Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque (1840). Allan Poe, one of the powerful short story writers has also followed Nathaniel in art of short story writing.

In Britain the short story got its publicity by the emergence of magazines and journals that demanded short fictions from the writer and paid them for their

writings. In Britain short story flourished and got recognition with writings of Stevenson, Wells, Bennet, James and Kipling. Prior to them Walter Scot's story 'The Two Drovers' in 1827 had got recognition to be the first in the line but he was a Scottish writer.

In Britain from 1832 to 1849, Edgar Allan Poe began to write stories consisted of elements of mysteries. Some of his stories blended with elements of mysteries are "The Fall of the House of Usher", "The Tell-Tale Heart", "The Cask of Amontillado", "The Pit and the Pendulum", and the starting detective story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue".

In Britain from 1850 to 1900 after popularity of various magazines and journals who asked writers to write short stories of length of 3000 words to 15000 words, the short story got strength and writers turned towards this genre. Various prominent novelists too tried in this new genre. Thomas Hardy wrote "The Three Strangers" (1883) and "Barbara of the House of Grebe" (1890). Rudyard Kipling produced collections "Plain Tales from the Hills" (1888). H.G.Wells stories about science fiction such as "The Country of the Blind" in 1904.

In Britain in the first half of 20th century this genre got its full swing. The two world wars and various experiments in different genres gave ways to the writers to go for this art. Moreover, periodicals such as, 'The Strand Magazine and Story-Teller provided wide range for writing short stories. Hector Hugh Munro, known as 'Saki' provided short stories whose matter was about the England during Edwardian period. Somerset Maugham produced the bulk of hundred short stories on various topics. Wodehouse experimented in comical stories in 1917. G.K.Chesterton, Agatha Christie and Dorothy L.Sayers tried in detective short stories. Virginia Woolf in 1919 wrote about political chaos of England. Her two short stories "Solid Objects and Kew Gardens" are example in this connection. Graham Greene produced around twenty one stories between 1929-1954. V.S.Pritchett, labeled as 'the specialist' of short stories, produced the first collection in 1932.

In the early 20th century the American magazines 'The Atlantic Monthly, Harper's Magazine, The New Yorker, Scribner's, The Saturday Evening Post, Esquire, and The Bookman drew attention of several writers from the different parts of the world. These magazines paid to the writers. F.Scott Fitzgerald wrote short stories in some of those magazines for money. He produced his starting collection "Flappers and Philosophers" in magazines. Ernest Hemingway wrote "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" (1926). Dorothy Parker wrote "Big Blonde" in 1929. Katherine Mansfield wrote in 1912.

Most of the short stories produced in the early 20th century dealt with issues like Industrialization. People migrated to urban areas and thus cities were over-populated and many social problems arose. Some of the short stories highlighted labor issues and pin-pointed

hard problems of working class. Many of short stories were influenced by the aftermaths of two world wars.

James Joyce was the psychological writer of novels but he also greatly contributed in the field of short fiction. It is generally believed that Joyce's 'Dubliners' (1914) is the first short story to be counted in the line of short fiction in modern period. This short story contains Joyce's psychological principles that he practiced in novels. It is also said that Joyce wrote short stories for money on advice of Russel, a writer and his friend. His short story, 'sisters', in which he brings out the elements of high-modernism is famous. It is full of aesthetic possibilities. It was without any specific consideration of plot. It is written in open-ended narrative structures without having plot. We do not find any conventional ending of the story. The theme of the story is based on moral ambivalence. Joyce does not focus on resolving day to day puzzles and curies but his main target remains how man falls and how he is responsible for his downfall.

M.R.James (1862-1936) was one of the prominent British short story writers. He was recognized as the scholar of medieval. His most of short stories are enriched with ghosts and are realistic in nature. His some of short story collections are "Ghost Stories of an Antiquary (1904), More Ghost Stories (1911), A warning to the Curious and Other Ghost Stories (1925) and The Collected Ghost Stories of M.R.James (1931)". His other stories are "Number 13, The Rose Garden and A warning to the Curious".

H.G.Wells (1866-1946), was the most known novelists. He was best known for his science fiction. He contributed also in the genre of short stories. His short stories mainly are written on science fiction. His short stories collections are "The Country of the Blind and Other Stories (1911) and The Short Stories of H.G.Wells (1927)". His some of other stories are "The Man who Could Work Miracles and The Country of the Blind".

Saki H.H.Munro (1870-1916) was one of the specialists of short stories. His short stories are social satires. He opposes societal conventions in his short stories. The ending of his short stories consist of surprise or twist endings. His some of short story collections are "Beats and Super-Beats (1914) and The Short Stories of Saki (1939)". His other short stories are "The Mouse, The Storyteller and The Open Window".

W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) was a famous British novelist and short story writer. His short stories deal with the issues of colonialism. He exposes features of British colonies specifically in Far East countries. His short stories collections are "The Trembling of Leaf (1923), The Causarina Tree (1926) and The Complete Short Stories of Somerset Maugham (1951)". His some other short stories are "Rain, Footsteps in Jungle and The Outstation".

D.H.Lawrence (1885-1930) was one of the well known novelists. His most of the novels deal with themes of love

and relationship. His best known novel is 'Sons and Lovers'. His short stories too show the same themes as of his novels. He explores England in World War I in his short stories and relationships of people. His short story collections are "The Prussian Officer and Other Stories (1914), England, My England and Other Stories (1922) and The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories (1928)". His some other short stories are "The Horse Dealer's Daughter and The Rocking-Horse Winner".

Virginia Woolf, a writer of psychological novels also contributed in the genre of short stories all along her career. She experimented with voice and characterization. She gave short stories like 'Phyllis and Rosamund' (1906), 'The Duchess and the Jeweller' (1938), 'The Shooting Party' (1938) and 'Lapping and Lapinova' (1939). Her other stories were: 'The Mark on The Wall', 'Kew Gardens', 'The Evening Party', 'Solid Objects', 'Sympathy', 'A Haunted House', 'Monday or Tuesday' and so on. She was very technical writer. She had the art of turning her earlier essays into short stories. She carried on argumentative type of unconventional plot in most of her short stories. The main purpose she exposed in her short fiction was to highlight relationship between what mind holds and what experience is gained and the way writer expresses that experience in such narrative form.

Woolf's short stories 'The Mark on The Wall', 'Kew Gardens', 'Solid Objects', and 'Unwritten Novel', convey the main concept of writer of ideological resistance to scientific determinations with rationality. Among these stories 'The Mark on The Wall', circles around one question that the writer puts up on the wall and leaves unresolved throughout her short story. This question attracts attentions of the readers and readers become curious to find the answers that they expect from the beginning but they do not get answer till the end. She gives priority of her characters not to the plots. Thus, she practices this exercise in her all short stories.

Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) was grown up in colonial New Zealand. She was entitled as one of the best of short writers of the time. Chekov was said to be her influencing writer. She produced collections such as "Bliss and Other Stories (1917), The Garden Party and Other Stories (1922) and The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield (1937)". Her other popular short story is The Doll's House. She has revolutionized short story by freeing plots by expansiveness of the interior conflicting life. She takes up the questions of identity, desire and uneasiness. Her masterpiece stories are 'At the Bay' and 'Prelude' in which she gives life account of her childhood in New Zealand. She writes with nostalgic style. She also wrote against increasing industrialization in her short stories. She was genius modernist, an innovator, notable contributor and experimenter in her own account (Bates, 1943). She delineated landscape of her territory with subtle psychoanalysis.

H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937). He was famous writer of science fiction. He also contributed in writer short stories of horror and fantasy. He is entitled as the most impressive writer of horror short story writer of 20th century. He contributed in the forms of collection of short stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories (1899), The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories (1901) and The Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories (1905)". Apart from collections he also wrote short stories such as 'The Colour out Of Space and The Shadow out Of Time'.

Agatha Christie (1890-1976) was popular for writing novels on crime. She was recognized as the best selling short story author of all time. Her collections of short stories "Poirot Investigates (1924), The Mysterious Mr. Quin (1930) and Thirteen Problems (1932)" were the best selling collections of the time. Besides these collections her contribution was greatly by producing short stories like "The Adventure Of the 'Western Star' and The Tuesday Night Club".

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) was best known for his the best novel 'Great Gatsby' (1925). He contributed by writing many short stories specifically set in the period of 'Jazz Age'. His major collection of short stories is "Tales of The Jazz Age (1922), All the Sad Young Men (1926) and Taps at Reveille (1935). Other stories are 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button', 'Winter Dreams', 'The Ice Palace', 'The Sensible Thing' and 'Last Kiss' and so on. His narration as a short story writer exposes before readers the ambitious reflection on frailty of mankind (Bowen, 1950).

William Faulkner (1897-1962) was the writer of psychological novels. He is writer of South America. His novels as well as short stories are written with technique of 'streams of consciousness'. His collection of short stories is "These 13 (1931). He also wrote separate stories like "A Rose for Emily, Read Leaves and That Evening Sun". The narrative devices reflect psychological amalgamation so far his characters and settings are concerned. He gives description of his characters along with setting objects in his short stories (Connor, 1967).

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) initiated his career as a writer of short stories but turned towards novel writing and became a well known novelist of his time. Understatement is one of the major characteristics of his writing style. His best collection of short stories is "In Our Time" (1924). He also produced short stories like "Old Man at the Bridge, Soldier's Home etc."

John Steinbeck (1902-1968) was the writer of domestic short stories. His collection of short stories was "The Long Valley (1938)". His other short stories are "The Red Pony, The Murder and so on". He portrays issues of household and family in his short stories.

"The Winter Dream", is a beautiful short story produced by Fitzgerald, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century writers. This short story first time was published in a magazine

named 'Metropolitan Magazine' in 1922. The plot of the story revolves around the protagonist Dexter, son of grocery store in Minnesota. He lingers between his status and his desire. He studies at school and university. He tries his luck in a business. He keeps partnership in laundry. Luckily, he becomes the owner of laundry. He does not seem satisfy with his current business. Therefore, he sells it and migrates to New York.

In New York he meets with Judy, a girl who attracts him. He thinks that men's success in this part of the country is due to Judy's involvement. He develops relationships with her and tells he is going to be one of the topmost rich men. He falls in love with Judy. Both get loved in each other. Judy does not marry him. She keeps affiliation with someone else. Dexter gets desperate and mourns on his past. Instead of detachment from Judy he gets wealthier but does not avoid controversial identity. Being rich he is indulged in web of confusion and discomfort. It might be his inherited habit that he put obstacles on his way of progressing.

His wealth does not make him happy but rather stretches his desire for unattainable goals in the form of reclaiming Judy to be his part. He is blindly pursuing his passions for Judy which make him alienated. For him Judy is only woman on the face of earth with whom success lies which seems to be only fancy.

Thus, 'The Winter Dreams', represents the darkest side of the American dream that Dexter had. Dexter is an epitome of those Americans whose purpose was to aggregate money and enjoy lives. He is self-centered and proud. He is precarious and does not respect for the lower class. He has proud on his self-made status. Thus, Fitzgerald, in the form of Dexter discloses the emptiness and flawed dream of Americans.

This short story, allegorically, represents tussle between reality and idealism. Dexter is suffering from fantasies that seem never to come to be true. He dreams of Judy and considers her to be an epitome of success and perfection. He bleaks his idealistic vision regarding Judy.

Fitzgerald has shaped this short story with specific structure and narrative voice. This short story is the voice of Fitzgerald in which he plays the role of critic. His characters lack sensibility and competitiveness. They remain busy in search of happiness and money. There are six sections in this short story. Each section has different length with characters Dexter and Judy and their relationships in the form of love affairs and betrayal. We do not find coherent flow of action. Dexter is result of fragmentary experiences.

Fitzgerald opts the technique of direct address to the readers. He as well as he characters narrate the story. Judy's position among her admirers is also addressed directly. Fitzgerald's narration suggests an objective to write such story. Amidst of story of Dexter and Judy, the

writer is warning to the readers to keep at distance of believing in totally idealism.

Fitzgerald's this story revolves around the time of less than two decades. Dexter's illusion and Judy's complex nature are raw material of this story. Dexter has intricate nature and past is meaningful for him. Fitzgerald articulates the history of hopes and disparity that rises and falls in the drama of human life. There is temporal time shift. The story takes place when Dexter attains the age of 14 years. There is fast move of his rise in the story. The story ends when he attains the age of 32. The story flashes back from his age of 32 to 23 and he is indulged in golf round. There is fluid time sense in his short story in fragmentary snaps.

Fitzgerald's 'Winter Dreams' is based on the critical remarks on the American people in 20<sup>th</sup> century. The writer has portrayed scenes of the Jazz age and roaring twenties. He has highlighted the conditions and ideology of the American people after the First World War. The people of America were indulged in accumulating wealth by unfair means of earning.

## CONCLUSION

The development of the short story in 20<sup>th</sup> century witnesses various modulations in the form. It was experimented not only the form but also in content. Influences of many theories either psychological or scientific are manipulated. The art of short story writing was expedited by the most of the novelists. Subtle traces of psychology and the technique of stream of consciousness made the genre more unique and unconventional. The writers not only wrote individual stories but also produced in collections which show that the art was popular in the era. Writers like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, D.H.Lawrence, H.P.Lovecraft, Katherine Mansfield, Somerset Maugham, William Faulkner, Hemmingway and Fitzgerald revolutionized the art in 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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