

Block

3

Short Fiction

UNIT 1 **97****Short Fiction: An Introduction**

UNIT 2 **109****O' Henry: After Twenty Years**

UNIT 3 **117****Willa Cather: On the Gull's Road**

UNIT 4 **125****Ernest Hemingway: Snows of Kilimanjaro /
Killers**

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Prof. Parmod Kumar IGNOU
Secretarial Assistance: Mr. Shashi Ranjan Alok, Assistant Executive (DP),
SOH, IGNOU

PRINT PRODUCTION

Sh. Y. N. Sharma Assistant Registrar (Pub.) MPDD, IGNOU, New Delhi	Sh. Sudhir Kumar Section Officer (Pub.) MPDD, IGNOU, New Delhi
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CORE COURSE (BEGC-105): AMERICAN LITERATURE

Welcome to CORE COURSE BEGC-105: AMERICAN LITERATURE.

This Course aims at giving you a complete orientation and understanding into the diverse genres and dimensions of American literature. In the first block which is dedicated to Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*, we discuss with you American Drama: An Introduction in Unit 1. *All My Sons* is based upon a true story, which was pointed out in an Ohio newspaper. The news story described how in 1941–43 the Wright Aeronautical Corporation based in Ohio had conspired with army inspection officers to approve defective aircraft engines destined for military use Unit 2 takes up *All My Sons* for a detailed Study so that you are exposed to all the critical interpretations. Unit 3 discusses thematic Concerns in *All My Sons* followed by a comprehensive discussion on the aspects of Characterisation in the last unit of the block.

In the next block, we take up an equally important and interesting text *The Scarlet Letter* is a work of **historical fiction** by author Nathaniel Hawthorne, published in 1850. Set in Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony, the novel tells the story of Hester Prynne who conceives a daughter through an affair and is forced to wear the scarlet letter. *The Scarlet Letter* was one of the first mass-produced books in America and is considered a classic work today. In Unit 1, A Socio Cultural Background of the novel *The Scarlet Letter* is taken up. The art of Characterization as displayed by the novelist is discussed in Unit 2. Unit 3 deals with all the diverse Themes and Their Expression through Imagery as found in the novel. Unit 4 discusses other important issues and aspects such as Structure, Narrative Style and Special Features

Block 3 of this course is dedicated to Short Fiction and you will find it very appealing and interesting. Unit 1 offers you a detailed introduction of Short Fiction. Unit 2 gives you a complete view of O' Henry's *After Twenty Years*. Unit 3 which is centred on Willa Cather's *On the Gull's Road* is good to bring out complex issues. Unit 4 brings out all important themes in Ernst Hemingway's *Snows of Kilimanjaro/ Killers*.

Block 4 is designed and developed in such a way that you are able to understand the complete essence of American Poetry. Unit 1 takes up the poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson: *Brahma, Hamatreya*. Unit 2 takes into account the diverse themes and issues in Walt Whitman's 'O Captain, My Captain' & 'Passage to India' (lines 1–68). Unit 3 explores the poetry of Emily Dickinson with special reference to poems such as *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*, *A Thought Went Up My Mind Today* and *Death Sets a Thing Significant*. Unit 4 deals with the imaginative side of Alexie Sherman Alexie as demonstrated in the poems such as 'Crow Testament' & 'Evolution'.

Have a great time reading the Course.

BLOCK 3 INTRODUCTION

Short Fiction occupies a great role in American Literature.

Block 3 of this course is dedicated to Short Fiction and you will find it very appealing and interesting. Unit 1 offers you a detailed introduction of Short Fiction. Unit 2 gives you a complete view of O' Henry's *After Twenty Years*. Unit 3 which is centered on Willa Cather's *On the Gull's Road* is good to bring out complex issues. Unit 4 brings out all important themes in Ernst Hemingway's *Snows of Kilimanjaro/ Killers*.

Have a great time studying.



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UNIT 1 SHORT FICTION: AN INTRODUCTION

Structure

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- 1.2 Short Fiction/ Story - History And Scope
 - 1.2.1 19th Century American, English & Australian Short Fiction
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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to provide a working definition of short fiction/ story and a basic background to an understanding of this genre. In this unit we shall trace the origins of short fiction/ story in European/ mainstream English Literature, the development of the Australian short fiction/ story and look at some of the important influences on this genre.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Fiction means something made up of or created by an author/ narrator/ storyteller. Today the word means a prose piece based on the imagination of the writer and not on literary facts. Fiction has its roots in ancient myths and folk tales in other words in the oral tradition. In this unit we have used the term short fiction / to essentially mean the short story. As we are aware most novels are long and reading them requires dedication, motivation and time on the part of the readers. **Edgar Allan Poe** (1809-1849) the American short fiction/ story writer believed that a short, concentrated story or what he called a “brief prose tale”, was better suited to the times as people lacked leisure hours. He was also of the opinion that such a story could create a powerful, strong, single impression on the reader. His views made practical sense and prompted many writers to work in the short fiction/story form.

Several writers have collected their works for inclusion in single volumes. Writers like William Faulkner, F Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Guy de Maupassant are good examples of short fiction writers who have also had their stories collected in this way. Let us now take a look at the origin of the short fiction/story in mainstream English Literature.

1.2 SHORT FICTION / STORY - HISTORY AND SCOPE

The short story as a genre defies all attempts at classifications and is extremely elusive. It is a genre that has descended from the myth, legend, parable, fairy tale, fable, anecdote, exemplum, essay, character study, fabliau and the ballad. The short story as a work of 'prose fiction of indefinite length' was developed and established only in the nineteenth century. In 1842, **Edgar Allan Poe** reviewed **Hawthorne's** *Twice Told Tale* and expressed a rather apt precept on the short story, by which meant 'a prose narrative requiring anything from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal of the tale, that, concentrates on a unique single effect and one in which the totality of effect is the main objective,' (J A Cuddens, Literary Terms). The short story has however, achieved such flexibility and variety that its possibilities now seem almost endless. For instance it could be concerned with a scene, an episode, an experience, an action, the exhibitions of a character or characters, the day's events, a meeting, a conversation or a fantasy.

If the attempts of a few Elizabethans like **Thomas Nashe** are not taken into account, the early pioneers of the genre (Sir **Walter Scott**, **Washington Irving**, **Hoffman** and **Hawthorne** deserve special mention here) paved the way for **Edgar Allen Poe**, who, is regarded by many as the first modern short story writer. Poe excelled in the detective story (*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*), the Gothic thriller (*The Pit and the Pendulum*) and a kind of early science fiction tale (*The Gold Bug*). He was greatly influenced by the German Romantics and their Gothic stories, and particularly by **Hoffman**. Another major influence was **Gogol** whose story *The Overcoat* profoundly affected later Russian writers. Between the 1830-40s period and the end of the nineteenth century three other Russian and four French writers gained prominence with their exploration of possibilities with this form. These three Russians were: **Tulgenev**, **Chekov** and **Tolstoy**, while the Four French writers were **Merirnee**, **Flaubert**, **Dardet** and **Maupassant**. However, **Anton Chekov** and **Guy de Maupassant** are generally considered to be the masters of the short story in this period. Let us take a quick look at short fiction in nineteenth century America and England before we talk about Australia short fiction.

1.2.1 19th Century American, English and Australian Short Fiction

In American Literature the period between the Civil War (1861-64) and the outbreak of World War I (1914) may be considered to be the golden age of short fiction or the short story. As in France, Russia, England, in America too the short, effective, single blow storyline began to dominate fictional literature. As in Australia, in America too, four stages may be traced in the development of short fictional story. In American short fiction it owed its

origin to the eighteenth century tales that were often colourless, formless, maybe even undramatic, and essentially serving only one function Puritanical propaganda. Stories of this type like *Chariessa, or a Pattern for the Sex* and *The Danger of Sporting with Innocent Credulity*, (Carey's Columbian Magazine, estd in 1786), satisfied the readers for nearly half a century. This stage was followed by the writings of **Washington Irving**, who blended the moral tale with the Addisonian essay skillfully. Irving added to the moral tale of his day, characterization, humour, ambience and literary charm. He was essentially a sentimentalist with great regard for the past. Some of his works are *Salmagundi*, *The Sketch Book* and *Rip Van Winkle*. The popularity of his *The Sketch Book*, his fame in England and Europe. the descriptions of lands across the seas. The romance, the vagueness and wonder of it all captured the imagination of a group of young writers who were to rule the mid century. Out of all these writers Nathaniel Hawthorne stands out. He added depth, poignancy, and soul to short fiction by centering his attention and focus on one single situation while creating the impression of a unified whole. Following Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe was to become the next great short fiction writer. Times had changed and new scientific inventions and awareness created the demand for realism and logical order. This was Poe's contribution to short fiction. He wanted short fiction to be brief but scientific and as yet able to yield a totality of effect at one sitting and within one setting. His stories are all marvelous examples of one swift stroke of the brush type of creativity combined with precise use of diction. Though Poe was a critic and keen observer of the conventions of the age, and sensitive to literary value, he was never really able to write from the heart and his works show a lack of this depth of human understanding. He was more of an artist than anything else who wanted to formulate the best short fiction/story technique of his age. Poe is located ideally in the history of the development of short fiction in America. He was like the prophet peering into the next age, but he was adept at applying his new perfected art to the old sensational material of the thirties. By the early 1850s a great change had come over short fiction writing in America. The decline of the old type of story had set in and a new atmosphere was born. Writers no longer wrote the old Hawthornesque type of stories. This period stood for the dawning of definiteness, of localised reality, of a feeling left in the reader of actuality and truth towards human life and values. **Rose Terry Cooke** (1827-92) was the most significant writer of this period. She being a teacher in a school and experienced with the country districts wrote with a deep knowledge, understanding and conviction of an area of life she knew best. In her long series of short fiction beginning in the forties with unlocalised stories and extending throughout the transition period into the 1870s and 1880s, and ending with her final collection as late as 1891, one may trace every phase of American short fiction in half a century. **Fit-James O' Brien** (1828-62) added the new element of actuality with his short story *What Was It?* The short fiction of **Henry James** however saw the end of the period of transition. With James the short story became an art form, a study of the surface of society, manners. and of human life Beyond the brilliant art of Henry James, and the impressionistic study of situations from a scientific perspective, the American short fiction has never advanced.

Francis Bret Harte was another force to contend with. By the time Harte began writing, America was ready for local colour - and the emphasis was now on the nation rather than on the state. Following the war was an era

of self- discovery. America was full of new and interesting life and the writers were to exploit this newness for the next two decades or more. What Harte added to short fiction apart from local colour was the dramatic element. In the 1870s however, two distinct schools of short fiction emerged: one, the school of unlocalised art, timeless and placeless, as Edgar Man Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne had written, and two, the new “local colour” school of Harte; which was moving more and more towards extremes. The nineteenth century was also a formative period in African-American literary and cultural history. Prior to the Civil War, the majority of black Americans living in the United States were held in bondage. Their literary contribution include numerous poems, short stories, histories, narratives, among other things. Their short fiction as their novels and much of the other writing they produced addressed concerns of women about family, religion and slavery. Enough has been said about the American short fiction let us now try and see if we can find any such parallels or echoes as we go through the stories the themes and the units in this block.

In England it was the period of **Dickens, Thackeray, Reade** and **George Eliot** or what may also be called the golden age of the later Victorian novel, yet, surprisingly the demand for short fiction did not decline. We shall not go into too many details on English short fiction here, as most of us will be well read in this and also aware of British literary trends. However, since American Literature and Australian Literature are new literatures, we have dealt with the former (American Literature) in some detail as for the latter, we will be making references to it throughout this block.

Australian short fiction developed through the centuries. What began as records, diaries, annals, journals of the early settlers later transformed and flourished as various genres of writing like short fiction, novels, biographies, autobiographies and annals? At the time of the first historic landing on Botany Bay in 1788, the men and women of letters were concerned with the immediate landscape. The environment- its differences/similarities to the home country, the seasons, the flora and fauna and the local inhabitants formed their main themes. Even within this vast body of writing some were promoting emigrations to Australia while others were decrying what they believed to be the harsh, hostile environment. When more people from the home **country** came to inhabit the land, other issues became more serious. As most of the transported men and women were convicts, several tales on the convict system were written. Amongst the free settlers were often poor people/ lower class people who would earn their keep as servants. These people particularly the women needed to be taught the values of a good Christian, hence, several didactic stories came to be written. Then the original inhabitants of Australia- the Aborigines were another theme that prompted writing. They were often looked upon as “noble savages” or as sub human beings. As we shall see later on several stories about the capture of white women and children by the Aborigines and vice versa came to be written as well.

The early settlers also had to face a lot of hardships and a harsh, alien, natural habitat. Professor Bruce Bennett in his introduction to **Encounters, Selected Indian and Australian Short Stories** (1986), traces, the development of the genre through four phases. The first phase he calls the colonial phase that lasted until the early years of the 1890s. These stories owed their origin

largely to European and mainstream British models. The second phase occurred when national awareness was generated in the minds of the people of Australia. Earlier on tales of murder, revenge, mystery, supernaturalism, women's romance dominated the literary scenario. However, in this second phase "nationalism" and what was also called "bush realism" (as being truly Australian) dominated the genre. This was the time when Lawson and the bush became inextricably linked together and the bush the symbol of all the hardships that Australia and the Australians endured. Barbara Baynton too wrote during this phase and her stories are told from the point of view of the women in the bush, the hardships they endured and the dominance and cruelty they faced at the hands of the men in the bush particularly in stories like *The Squeaker's Mate*. The Lawson type of "bush realism" however continued to fire the imagination of several writers through the 1940s and 50s as well. The third phase he marks is from about 1940 to 1970 when Australia was a party to World War II and various political activities dragged Australia away from its safe, isolated position into the very heart of international politics and affairs. Certain political activities that occurred then made the Australians realise that they were not isolated and that they too had good friends and neighbours in the far - east. But the aftermaths of World War II made some of the writers nostalgic about the past and made them long for the early pioneering days. Most of them went back to writing about those times. However, cities were springing up along the Australian coast - line and a new urban culture was being created continuously. Many writers dealt with this rising urban culture, their problems and concerns in their short fiction.

In the final and fourth post 1970s phase, we may note a lot of experimentation with both form and content of the short story. The Australian multicultural policy too lent to the spurge of multi ethnic and migrant writing. This period also saw the emergence of Aboriginal writers though not writers of short fiction. Since the 1970s and with changing Australian foreign policies, the people and the writers of Australia have come to realise that they are not that close to Europe and the home country and that there are people to the east of them as well. Hence, we find a lot of migrant writing emerging during this time and addressing the issues, concerns and problems faced by or likely to be faced by the new people who have now come to inhabit this new melting pot of cultures. At this stage it may be prudent to remember that though Australia promoted the migration of people of Anglo Saxon descent earlier on from the early 1970s they opened their doors to multi ethnic and multi cultural migration on a large scale and Australia became a new melting pot of cultures the title America held earlier on **Frank Moorhouse** and **Michael Wilding** are the representatives of the changes taking place in Australian society since then. They have experimented with both form and content and their stories are sometimes surrealistic and sometimes discontinuous. Women writers too contributed to the development of the genre. Notable among them are **Elizabeth Jolley**, **Fay Zwicky** and **Thea Astley**.

Let us now take a look at the origin and development of the Australian short fiction/story.

1.3 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIAN SHORT FICTION / STORY

Australia provided the writers with ample material. For instance the fact that the island continent was meant for transporting convicts from the mother country¹ (in other words) the convict system, the bushrangers, the Aborigines, the country itself, with its forbidding bizarre and extremely fascinating nature. For convenience sake **Cecil Hadgraft** has used chronological divisions for the development of short fiction before Lawson, which we shall adopt as well. The time period shall be 1830-1860, 1860-1880 and 1880-1893.

1.3.1 Short Fiction in the 1830s -1860s

John Howison's *Tales of the Colonies* was the earliest to appear in 1830. Most of his stories are set in Ireland and the West Indies. But one story *One False Step* is set in Australia. This story bears visible resemblance to English tales of adventure and crime and is exciting and rather fast moving with a lesson to be taught at the end of it all. However, David Burn of the *Our First Lieutenant and Fugitive Pieces in Prose* (1842) fame is better known than Howison. Burn's was a playwright and his longest piece *The Three Sisters of Devon* is much like the eighteenth century picaresque novel but he had a flamboyant style and he wrote by circumlocution and evasiveness. His style was very euphemistic. For the next fifty odd years most writers of short fiction followed Burn's style of writing. Between Burn's *Our First Lieutenant and Fugitive Pieces in Prose* and John Lang's *Botany Bay*, in 1859, about fifteen volumes of tales set in Australia or with Australian themes were published. Popular writers of those days were Mrs Vidal (*Tales for the Bush*, 1845), Mrs Charles Clancy (*Lights and Shadows of Australian Bush Life*, 1854), and Henry Giles Turner (*The Confessions of a Loafer and the Captive of Gippsland, Tales of the Colon*, 1857). Mrs Vidal wrote for the lower classes or the servants and being the wife of a person, was prone to didactic preaching in her stories. *The Black Troopers* (1850?) by an anonymous writer is worth mentioning as it deals with the pursuit of an Aboriginal criminal by troopers of his own race led by a white Lieutenant. and has been compared to **Thomas Kenelly's** 1972 novel, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. It is memorable for such an account of the pursuit of an individual is not to be found anywhere else prior to this work. Mrs Clancy's stories on the other hand are about people who are either moving from England or have just arrived in Australia. She appears to be promoting emigration to the colonies. The tales told by Turner appear to be a catalogue of disasters and could have been written as a response to the propaganda of the guidebook novels of the 1840s and 1850s. John Lang is one of the first Australian writers before Lawson who dealt with events in the history of the colonies. It is possible to gain some insight into the life of the period through his stories. Lang gives glimpses of customs and regulations of the convict period, but while he does not provide an elaborate social history of the times, he does convey a sense of the atmosphere of Sydney and other parts of New South Wales during those early years of the settlement of the colony. His descriptions of the landscape, flora and fauna are essential to the story and not mere descriptions. Moreover he does not moralise as women writers were prone to doing. His stories were published in

one volume entitled *Botany Bay* in 1859. Though Australian short fiction writers did not have any good models of short stories to emulate from, the age-old habit of preaching through stories trickled down through to the antipodes as well. Apart from these moral tales, stories about Aborigines -the relationship between white settlers and black Aborigines, the massacre of whole Aborigine tribes etc were also written.

Other themes dealt with were inter-related to the Aboriginal theme- those of the kidnapping and capture of white women/ children by Aborigines or of the Aboriginal child in the custody of the whites. A third genre that had begun to emerge by the 1860s was the story based on historical facts. Amongst this category of writers mention must be made of John Lang, Marcus Clarke, W H Sutton and Thomas Walker. The most popular works of this period were Lang's *Botany Bay*, and Clarke's *Old Tales of a Young Country*. Prince Warung (William Astley) was the furthest away in time from the convict system than the other writers but he produced the most vivid and readable stories of them all.

1.3.2 Short Fiction in the 1860s-1880s

Between 1859 and 1880 eighteen volumes of short stories were published in Australia. Three writers were prominent during this period - Horace Earle, James Skipp Borlase and J R Houlding. Earl was prone to writing the guidebook novel (that we talked about earlier) and dealt with the flora and fauna of Australia. HIS short fiction was collected in *Ups and Downs* (1861), most of his short stories are set in the bush. James Borlase' collection *Darling Deeds* (1 868) are stories of adventure but are also sadly lacking in characterisation. J R Houlding (*Old Boomerang*) was one of the moralist writers. The stories in his *Australian Tales and Sketches from Real Life* (1868) are relatively more indirect in their preaching than that of other writers. The most important writer of the period was however. Marcus Clarke. Clarke was a pivotal literary figure then. Though there were some good stories written before him and even after him these stories rise only occasionally to his level. During this time several detective stories as well as tales of mystery were also being written. From 1887 onwards, tales of mystery intrigue and detection became very popular. At the same time fictional accounts of children lost in the bush were also written. This theme provided the writer with a vast canvas. She could write about the virtues of obedience and the dangers of disobedience. They could also explore the wild, untamed Australian bush, the presence of Aborigines in the bush or delve into human relationships particularly those marital relationship and the effects of such a loss on husbands and wives. Lawson's *The Babies in the Bush* is a good example of such a story.

1.3.3 Short Fiction in the 1880s-1890s

While the nineteenth century saw industrial, and material growth and the loss of pastoral lands, (as is lamented by Christina Stead in *The Old School*), even saw the after effects of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, supernaturalism too found a place in the fiction of the times. Tasma (Jessie Couvreur) wrote ghost stories like *The Rubria Ghost*, other writers used ghosts in a serious manner like **P J Holdsworth** in *A Tale of New Year's Eve* or *Brushwood Grange*. Good short stories continued to be written after 1880 but Marcus Clarke was one of the best writers and none were there before Lawson to

counter Clarke's position. The manner in which language was used then and the way it is used now are quite different. Even the use of certain words like 'mate' had acquired a different connotation, as you will observe when you read the stories in this block. As Cecil Hadgraft rightly points out, the term 'mate' as address was less frequent: it occurs in the third person, not so much in the second," (Hadgraft, p.33). Though the author made a definite move towards modern prose and less stereotypical themes, the past still influenced them, even as late as the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Love, however, was one theme that influenced writers and they used it throughout the century and all across the globe.

The short story writers we have discussed here dealt with most of the themes that writers after Lawson's were to deal with in the 1890s. While the novelists concentrated on a few themes like rural life, the convict system, and the bush, they did not really deal with urban life. This theme was utilised by **Rosa Praed**, Tasma, and **Ada Cambridge**. But the writers of short fiction were able to produce different genres like tales of murder and mystery, detective tales, historical, didactic, encounters with Aboriginals, to name a few. As Hadgraft points out however, even within this diversity no development in the history of short fiction really occurred. For instance if we look at the vast body of literature surrounding the convict system, we will discover that though there is so much material on this one topic, it does not develop into a genre by itself. Having said all this by way of introduction let us try and discern for ourselves whether this is true or not as we deal with Marcus Clarke (*Seizure of the Cyprus*), Henry Lawson (*The Drover's Wife*, and *The Union Buries Its Dead*), Barbara Baynton (*The Chosen Vessel*), Steel Rudd (*Cranky Jack*) and Christina Stead (*The Old School*). These stories and the authors belong to different ages and have used different themes. Moreover the manner in which they have handled these themes, and their writing styles will bear testimony to the development of the short story as a genre. However, this does not mean that the short story as a genre did not develop, what Cecil Hadgraft indicates, is the fact that unlike the (picaresque, regional, stream-of-consciousness, to name a few) novels, these independent Australian short stories (on the convict system, on the harsh hostile natural habitat, etc.) did not develop into independent genres. This detailed introduction makes clear the wide variety of writers and writing involved. In arguments that later followed - Keryn Goldsworthy amongst others, it is generally considered that some of the best pre-Lawson writers were those who better known novelists like Marcus Clarke and Rosa Praed. Having paved the way for the study of Australian short fiction: let us now take a quick look at the development of Australian short fiction, story during the **Bulletin** years.

1.4 THE BULLETIN YEARS

The short story gained popularity because it was published regularly in the *Sydney Bulletin* of the 1890s. The writers who were normally associated with the **Bulletin** were **Henry Lawson** and **Barbara Baynton** along with **Edward Dyson**, **Ernest Fawcett**, and **Prince Warung**. Lawson as mentioned in the introduction to the period wrote poignant stories about male bonding, virtues like endurance, courage and honesty against a harsh environment, an unfriendly even hostile outback. (for instance his stories *The Drover's Wife*, and *The Union Buries Its Dead*). Barbara Baynton's

vision of human nature ranges from the stem to the hopeless. Those of her characters who were not weak, dishonest, cowardly, cruel or downright evil were always dominated by those who were, and the manner in which she draws on the Australian outback is remarkable. She frequently presents it as not only bleak and harsh but as in her terrifying story *The Dreamer* - as actively malign, the stuff of nightmares.

Henry Handel Richardson wrote numerous short stories that were collected and published as *The End of Childhood* in 1934. Her most notable stories are *-And Women Must Weep*, *Two hanged Women*, and *The Bathe: A Grotesque*. The latter involves female characters “with a fear of sexual maturity”. She is however much better known for her novels, particularly *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. Individual stories published from the 1920s through the 50s had a large number of titles to do with nature: landscape, weather and animals. The best-known short story writers of the period are - Katherine Susannah Pinchard, Vase Palmer, ‘Brian James’ (**John Tierney**), **Frank Dalby**, **Gawin Casey**, **Dal Stivens** and **Peter Cowan**. **Keryn Goldsworthy** has compiled a list of the names of animal tales that reads like this: *The Dog*, *Ihe Cow*, *The Bull Calf*; *The Jackms*. But these stories are not mere animal fables; instead metaphors of birds and animals are used to denote the goings on inside the minds and hems of their human characters. From the prior mentioned group of writers **Dal Stivens** and **Margaret Trist** were exceptions. The former was more of a fabulist than a realist writer as was the tendency of the age, while the latter did not entitle any of her fifty-two stories with any animal references at all. These stories and their titles are indicative of the preoccupations typical of the age, with the external, physical and the rural world. The use of the exterior landscape of the natural world as a simple and straight forward parallel to the internal landscape of human dilemma was also a common practice. They are characterised by a small parcel of often-related qualities a realist mode; a rural or suburban setting, an implicit moral stance which demonstrates or upholds or mourns the lack of various human virtues, more often like those of honesty, egalitarianism, kindness and courage. Let us take a look at Australian short fiction/story in the twentieth century.

1.5 AUSTRALIAN SHORT FICTION IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The 1960s appear to be the most important period of transition in the history of Australian literature. This period marks the beginning of a reaction away from what had until then been firmly constructed and reconstructed, in a self-perpetuating process whereby critics and editors went on demanding a certain kind of writing which writers went on supplying as the Australian Tradition’, or the ‘Lawson Tradition’

1.5.1 Short Fiction in the Latter Half of the 20th Century

The 1950s was notable for the writings of **Frank Hardy** *The Man From Clinhyella* and other Prize -- Winning Stories (1951): Judah Waten’s *The Alien Son* (1952). Judah Waten anticipated ‘migrant writing’ by some thirty years. These two writers are closely linked by their overtly political motivation and their concentration on characters from disadvantaged social groups, another contemporary John Morrison was also in the same league.

In 1972 the censorship ban was lifted, the first issue of the short story magazine *Tabloid Story* was published and the government supported the arts in a new and fresh manner for the first time. Frank Moorhouse and Michael Wilding gained prominence during this period with the quality and innovativeness in their fiction and in relation to the *Tabloid Story*. The new fiction of the 1970s was characterised by a schism from the hitherto realist and nationalistic stories, though **Patrick White** and **Hal Porter** in the 60s had already broken off from this tradition to a great extent as had Dal Stivens who wrote in the fabulist mode. The fabulist mode was swiftly becoming the dominant trend, and had started as far back as the 1930s.

Peter Cowan with *The Tins and Other Stories* (1973) and *Mobiles* (1975) experimented continuously with the short story form in which he exposed the frustrations, betterness and futility in contemporary living. Christina Stead was yet another force to contend with. Elizabeth Webley comments on Christina Stead's *The Salzburg Tales*: "The vitality and stylistics and formal variety of Stead's stories would, I think, be quite a revelation to younger Australian writers who would be staggered to discover her anticipation of the current fabulist mode" The 'new' fiction was largely influenced by contemporary European and American writing, and incorporated such elements as fantasy, surrealism, experiments with narrative chronology and narrative voice, a new awareness of the role and status of the author in the story and a generally enlarged consciousness of fiction as fiction. of a story as an artefact rather than a simple reflection of 'life'. Common to **all** the Australian writers of this period of Australian short fiction is an acute and articulated awareness of there being no simple, uncomplicated relationship between language and the experience.

Brian Kiernan's *The Most Beautiful Lies* (1977) is an anthology of stories by five writers - **Murray Bail**, **Peter Carey**, **Morris Lurie**, Frank Moorhouse and Michael Wilding. All five of them shared the same preoccupation. Of these five writers Peter Carey was the most concerned with fantasy and surrealism. Bail was preoccupied with the nature of language and writing. Moorhouse with narrative experimentation and ways of writing frankly about sex, while Wilding shared all the above preoccupations.

Keryn Goldsworthy observes that they tended 'to present' their stories "self consciously as 'fiction, to be less mimetic. less concerned with characters and social situations and more with style and form as part of the stories' content. they also- tried to employ less usage of realistic forms and science fiction tales. Women were writing in the 70s as well. Elizabeth Jolley sent stories repeatedly to magazines but they were continuously rejected **Thea Astley's** *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* (1979) was however well received and taken very seriously by both literary critics and commentators. But Thea Astley had already been established as a successful novelist. Numerous anthologies since then have appeared through out the 80s and 1990s. Three important ones that were published during this decade have the collected works of 84 writers. These anthologies were " "The State of the Art: The Mood of Contemporary Australia in Short Stories" (ed) Frank Moorhouse, 1983; "Transgressions: Australian Writing Now" (ed) Don Anderson, 1986; "Coast of Coast: Recent Australian Prose Writing" (ed) **Keryn Goldsworthy**. 1986.

Out of the 84 writers in these three writers - Frank Moorhouse, Helen Garner and Gerard Windson - appear in all three. Kate Greenille, Olga Masters, Elizabeth Jolley, Tim Winston, David Malouf, Maria Eldridge, Angelo Loukakakis, Michael Wilding, Ania Walzic and David Brooks appear in two anthologies out of three. Of these thirteen only Frank Moorhouse, Michael Wilding and David Malouf have been well known for more than a decade. Short fiction in the 1980s dealt with growing taste in women's and in migrant writing. Not much is available as far as the Aboriginal writers of short fiction go. Kath Walker, Jack Davis and Colin Johnson the three well known Aboriginal writers had made names for themselves as novelists, poets and dramatists. Aboriginal short fiction writers then had not managed to carve a niche for themselves and instead concentrated on drama, novel writing and the writing of autobiographies like Sally Morgan for example.

1.6 EMERGENCE OF MIGRANT AND ABORIGINAL WRITING IN SHORT FICTION

Archie Weller's collection of stories *Going Home* (1986) is the first by an Aboriginal. This could probably be due to the fact that the shape and language of Aboriginal story telling did not easily fit within the short story mode. **Stephen Murecke, Krim Benterrack and Paddy Roe's** *Reading the Country*, (1984) demonstrates the difference quite accurately. During this period experimental writing and a migrant might, in its effects on one's use and perceptions of language liberate the writer into an experimental mode of fiction. **Beverly Farmers** *Milk* (1983) and *Home Time* (1985) are examples of Greek stories that invert the migrant experience and reflect the cultural and social vertigo of Australians in Greece. Gerard Windson's *The Harlots Enter First* (1982), *Memories of the Assassination Attempt* (1985) gained critical notice. Helen Gamer's *Postcards From Surfers* (1985) has her famous piece on 'The Life of Art'. Frank Moorhouse moves away from charting the moods and movements of a counter culture and towards a closer attention to individual experiences, travel and transgressions; with the publication of his three later works: *The Everlasting Secret Family* (1980); *Room Service* (1985) and *Forty Seventeen* (1988). In these works his concerns with narrative structure, narrative voice and the relationship between experience and language is maintained and balanced.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

There was a marked shift over the last fifteen - twenty years in the literary community's focus of interest. Hitherto the focus was on 'Australianness' and towards a more locally based 'vision of place'. Thereafter the focus shifts drastically. An examination of the works of David Malouf amongst others will make clear the manner in which this shift takes place. By writing his fictional, autobiographical works in the manner he does and through his native Brisbane, David Malouf, has arrived at an -aesthetics of locale. His 12 *Edmondstone Street* (1985), a collection of autobiographical essays, presents insight on of the relationship between places and the self and the ways in which that relationship can not only be expressed but constructed

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and re-created throughout writing. Malouf's Brisbane, Gamer's Melbourne, Astley's North Queensland, Jolley West Australian wheat fields and Winston's South West Coast not only highlights the relationship between characters and places but also suggests new 'regional ways' of reading fiction of earlier writer. Regional Anthologies since then have been abundant: Queensland's "Latitudes" (eds.) Susan Johnson and Mary Roberts and South Australia's «Unsettled Areas" (ed) Andrew Taylor (1985). Regionalism can be seen as yet another experimental mode that is continuously moving away from an over-simple preoccupation with 'nation'. It is another way of classifying, thinking about, and most importantly writing stories.

Writers of that Age

Their Works

Elizabeth Jolley

Five Acre Virgin (1976)

The Travelling Entertainer (1979)

Woman in a Lampshade (1980)

David Malouf
Olga Masters

Antipodes (1985)

The Home Girls (1982)

A Long Time (1985)

Kate Greenville

Bearded Ladies (1984)

Tim Winston

Scission (1985)

Minimum of Two (1987)

Barry Hill

A Rim of Blue (1978)

Headlocks (1983)

(His themes are politics and family relations or as Keryn Goldsworthy puts it 'the politics of family relations').

Joan London

Sister Ships (1986)

(This book won the Age Book Award the same year).

These are just a list of some of the writers of that age and should not be regarded as a comprehensive list.

1.8 QUESTIONS

- (1) Who would you credit for the establishment of short fiction as a genre?
- (2) What were some of the types of short fiction produced in Australia? Which of these types appeal to you? Give reasons to support your answers.
- (3) What were the prominent themes that captured the imagination of writers of short fiction in Australia? Discuss.

1.9 SUGGESTED READING

- (1) The Australian Short Story Before Lawson, (1986): Cecil Hadgraft (ed), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Australia.

UNIT 2: ‘O’ HENRY: AFTER TWENTY YEARS

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Text of ‘After Twenty Years’
 - 2.2.1 Text
- 2.3 Plot
- 2.4 Characters
 - 2.4.1 Jimmy Wells
 - 2.4.2 Bob
- 2.5 Background
- 2.6 Prose Style
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Answers to Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- delineate the plot of ‘After Twenty Years’;
- describe O. Henry’s technique of characterisation;
- outline the background and atmosphere;
- analyse O. Henry’s prose style.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit we shall discuss a short story by O. Henry, an American writer. The author’s real name was William Sidney Porter: O. Henry is his pseudonym. His first book, *Cabbages and Kings (1904)* is a series of stories about his experience in Texas, U.S.A. The rest of his stories are mostly about people in New York City. O. Henry had a good sense of humour and saw life as a series of short episodes and surprises. His unexpected story endings became his trademark. In the following sections we shall discuss his short story ‘After Twenty Years’.

2.2 TEXT OF ‘AFTER TWENTY YEARS’

Now let us turn to the text. Read the text carefully at least twice.

2.2.1 Text

The policeman on the beat moved up the avenue impressively. The impressiveness was habitual and not for show, for spectators were few. The time was barely 10 o'clock at night, but chilly gusts of wind with a taste of rain in them and well nigh depopled the streets.

Trying doors as he went, twirling his club with many intricate and artful movements, turning now and then to cast his watchful eye the pacific through fare, the officer, with his stalwart form and slight swagger, made a fine picture of a guardian of the peace. The vicinity was one that kept early hours. Now and then you might see the lights of cigar stores or of an all-night lunch counter; but the majority of the doors belonged to business places that had long since been closed.

When about midway of a certain block the policeman suddenly slowed his walk. In the doorway of a darkened hardware store a man leaned, with an unlighted cigar in his mouth. As the policeman walked up to him the man spoke up quickly.

'It's all right, officer,' he said, reassuringly, 'I'm just waiting for a friend: It's an appointment made twenty years ago. Sounds a little funny to you, doesn't it? Well, I'll explain if you'd like to make certain it's all straight. About that long ago there used to be a restaurant where this store stands 'Big Joe' Brady's restaurant',

'Until five years ago,' said the policeman. 'It was tom down then. The man in the doorway struck a match and lit his cigar. The light showed a pale, square-jawed face with keen eyes, and a little white scar near his right eyebrow. His scarfpin was a large diamond oddly set.

'Twenty years ago tonight', said the man, 'I dined here at "Big Joe" Brady's with Jimmy Wells, my best chum, and the finest chap in the world. He and I were raised' here in New York just like two brothers, together. I was eighteen and Jimmy was twenty. The next morning I was to start for the West to make my fortune. You couldn't have dragged Jimmy out of New York; he thought it was the only place on earth. Well, we agreed that night that we would meet here again exactly twenty years from that date and time, no matter what our conditions might be or from what distance we might have to come. We figured that in twenty years each of us ought to have our destiny worked out and our fortunes made, whatever they were going to be'.

'Well, yes, for a time we corresponded,' said the other. 'But after a year or two we lost track of each other. You see, the West is a pretty big proposition, and I kept bustling around over it pretty lively. But I know Jimmy will meet me here if he's alive, for he always was the trust, staunchest old chap in the world, He'll never forget, 'I came a thousand miles to stand in this door tonight, and it's worth it if my old partner turns up'.

The waiting man pulled out a handsome watch, the lids of it set with small diamonds.

“Three minutes to ten,” he announced. “It was exactly ten o’clock when we parted here at the restaurant door”.

“Did pretty well out West, didn’t you?” asked the policeman. “You bet! I hope Jimmy has done half as well. He was a kind of plodder, though, good as he was. I’ve had to compete with some of the sharpest wits going to get my pile. A man gets in a groove in New York. It takes the West to put a razor-edge on him”. The policeman twirled his club and took a step or two.

“I’ll be on my way. Hope your friend comes around all right. Going to call time on him sharp?”

“I should say not!” said the other. “I’ll give him half an hour at least. If Jimmy is alive on earth he’ll be here by that time. So long, officer”.

“Goodnight, sir,” said the policeman, passing on along his beat, trying doors as he went.

There was now a fine, cold drizzle falling, and the wind had risen from its uncertain puffs into a steady blow. The few foot passengers astir in that quarter hurried dismally and silently along with coat collars turned high and pocketed hands. And in the door of the hardware store the man who had come a thousand miles to fill an appointment, uncertain almost to absurdity, with the friend of his youth, smoked his cigar and waited.

About twenty minutes he waited, and then a tall man in a long overcoat with collar turned up to his ears, hurried across from the opposite side of the street. He went directly to the waiting man.

“Is that you, Bob?” he asked, doubtfully.

“Is that you, Jimmy Wells? cried the man in the door. “Bless my heart!” exclaimed the new arrival grasping both the other’s hands with his own. “It’s Bob, sure as fate. I was certain I’d find you here if you were still in existence. Well, well, well!-twenty years is a long time. The old restaurant’s gone Bob; I wish it had lasted, so we could have had another dinner there. How has the West treated you, old man?”

“Bully; it has given me everything I asked for. You’ve changed lots, Jimmy. I never thought you were so tall by two or three inches”.

“Oh, I grew a bit after I was twenty”.

“Doing well in New York, Jimmy.”

“Moderately. I have a position in one of the city departments. Come on, Bob; we’ll go around to a place I know of, and have a good long talk about old times!”

The two men started up the street, arm in arm. The man from the West, his egotism enlarged by success, was beginning to outline the history of his career. The other, submerged in his overcoat, listened with interest.

At the corner stood a drug stow, brilliant with electric lights. When they came into this glare each of them turned simultaneously to gaze upon the other’s face.

The man from the West stopped suddenly and released his arm. ‘You’re not Jimmy Wells’, he snapped, ‘Twenty years is a long time but not enough to change a man’s nose from a Roman to a pug’.

‘It sometimes changes a good man into a bad one,’ said the tall man. ‘You’ve been under arrest for ten minutes, “Silky” Bob. Chicago thinks you may have dropped over our way and wires us she wants to have a chat with you. Going quietly, are you? That’s sensible. N6w, before we go to the station here’s a note I was asked to hand to you. You may read it here at the window. It’s from Patrolman Wells’.

The man from the West unfolded the little piece of paper handed to him. His hand was steady when he began to read, but it trembled a little by the time he had finished. The note was rather short. ‘Bob, **J** was at the appointed place on time. When you struck the match to light your cigar I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago’ ‘Somehow I couldn’t do it myself, so I went around and got a plainclothes man to do the job.’

2.3 PLOT

Jimmy Wells and Bob were both brought up in New York and were close friends. One day Bob decided to go to the West to make a fortune. The previous day the two friends--Jimmy and Bob--met at 10 O’clock at night in a restaurant called “Big Joe” and decided that they would meet at the same place exactly twenty years from that day and time-- no matter what their conditions might be or from where they might have to come.

The story begins when Bob--after twenty years--came to the spot where “Big Joe” used to be and waited anxiously for his friend, Jim. A policeman on his beat met Bob there and was told by the latter about the appointment made twenty years before.

While talking to the policeman, Bob mentioned that he had become rich in the West and he wondered whether Jimmy did half as well. The policeman proceeded on his beat. After Jimmy had waited for another twenty minutes for his friend, a tall man in an overcoat came directly to Bob and told him that he was Jimmy. Looking for a place to sit and talk, the two men started walking up the street. When they reached a drug store, Bob--in the glare of electric lights--found that the other person was not Jimmy.

The story reaches a climax or a point of revelation when the other person revealed his identity as a policeman and informed Bob that he was there to arrest Bob, the gangster--who was wanted by the Chicago police. This revelation is followed by another revelation when Bob, from the little piece of paper handed over to him, comes to know that the patrolman whom he had met first at the appointed place was Jimmy, who had come to keep the appointment. But recognising his old friend Bob as gangster wanted by the police, Jimmy did not have the heart to arrest him. Nor could he let him go. So he sent a plainclothes man to do the job. With this revelation the story ends. While going through the story, you must have noticed that it is based on action. So, words which denote action are used throughout the story. (We shall give the details in Section 17.5.1). The dramatic quality of

the story is revealed not only through action but suspense as well. We shall discuss this aspect now:

- i) First, when the patrolman meets the person (waiting at a hardware store), there is suspense-which makes the reader to go through that portion anxiously to know the outcome' of the meeting.
- ii) Suspense is sustained by not revealing the outcome of the meeting immediately. Bob as well as the readers have to wait for the arrival of Jimmy.
- iii) The arrival of Jimmy is not announced immediately. Instead we are told that a tall man in a long overcoat approaches and addresses Bob. Suspense is sustained through Bob's expression of doubt whether Jimmy was as tall as the person in the long overcoat.
- iv) The suspense is heightened further when Bob comes to know that the tall man is not Jimmy. Here it reaches a point of intensity regarding the identify of the impersonator and the criminal background of Bob.
- v) Even now the suspense continues as there is still a question in-the minds of the readers which is not yet answered: Where is Jimmy Wells? When Bob reads the rote given to him, he and the readers come to know that the first patrolman is Jimmy himself. Thus the accent on action and the gripping suspense contribute to the dramatic quality of the story. Moreover, the same elements make the plot well-knit we shall ask you a simple question now: Who is the narrator of the present story? We are sure that you know the answer: the author himself is the narrator.

Having described the plot, we shall now proceed to the next important aspect of a short story - characters.

2.4 CHARACTERS

Characters, as we mentioned in the earlier units, contribute to the development of plot. As you might have noticed, the emphasis in the present story is more on action than on characters. We shall, however, in the following sub-sections, discuss the two main characters - Jimmy Wells and Bob. You should write a sketch of the minor character in the story - the tall man in the long overcoat.

2.4.1 Jimmy Wells

At the beginning of the story, the author introduces Jimmy Wells: He is a policeman with an impressive walk. He has 'stalwart form and slight swagger' and he looks like the picture of a guardian of the peace. It is, indeed, the description of conscientious and impressive policeman. After giving the above description of Jimmy Wells, the author tells us more about him through the words of another important character, Bob. According to Bob, Jimmy is 'the finest chap-in the world' and he is 'always the truest, staunchest chap in the world'.

Moreover, Jimmy’s character is revealed through action. Jimmy-true to Bob’s trust in his close friend - comes to the appointed place exactly on time. It means that Jimmy not only remembers the appointment but keeps the friendship with Bob alive even after twenty years by coming to the appointed place. Jimmy’s affection for Bob is revealed in another incident: when Jimmy recognises Bob’s face as that of the man wanted in Chicago, he hasn’t the heart to arrest him himself as the latter is his close friend. Nor does he fail in his duty as a policeman. He makes another policeman (a plainclothesman) arrest Bob, the wanted gangster.

Thus, the author reveals the character of Jimmy through description, dialogue, and incident.

2.4.2 Bob

The same technique-the technique of delineating a character through description, dialogue, and incident-is employed by the author with regard to Bob as well. When Bob lit his cigar, ‘the light showed a pale, square-jawed face with keen eyes, and a little white scar near his right eyebrow’. His scarfpin was a large diamond, oddly set, indicating his acquired affluence. Through Bob’s words about himself, we come to know more about him: He competed with some of the sharpest wits in the west and became rich.

Even though he is successful in the West, Bob never forgets his friend, Jimmy and the appointment with him. We see the positive side of his character-his belief in friendship and his affection for his friend-when he comes after twenty years to the appointed place. As we know, every person has several traits-positive as well as negative. Along with Bob’s loyalty as a friend we also find but about his criminal record in the West, when the person in the long overcoat arrests him. Having discussed the two important characters, we shall now proceed to a discussion on background and atmosphere.

Check Your Progress I

- i) Write a brief note (in about 75 words) on the suspense and the moments of revelation in ‘After Twenty Years’.

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- ii) “Jimmy Wells is a sincere friend and conscientious policemen”. (in about 75 Justify the above comment.

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- iii) Write (in about 75 words) how the character of Bob is revealed through description, dialogue, and incident.

.....

2.5 BACKGROUND

In the story, the physical atmosphere is described as follows: It is 10 O'clock at night; the streets are developed due to the chilly gusts of wind with a taste of rain; majority of the business places are closed. The story is set in this atmosphere indicating that it deals with policemen and criminals. Also, the patrolman- Jimmy-meets Bob in the doorway of a darkened hardware store which foretells us about the dark and hard nature of the person standing there.

Further, lights or the lighted cigar reveal the identity of the persons in the story, when Bob lights his cigar, Jimmy comes to know that Bob's face is that of the person wanted in Chicago. In the lights at the drug store, Bob realizes that the tall man with a pug nose is not Jimmy. This interesting play of light and shadow adds a symbolic dimension to the story. Twenty years ago there was light in the lives of both friends.

Now Bob has strayed into the shadowy world of crime.

Moreover, the nostalgic yearning for the past denotes the craving of the persons especially Bob-to regain the innocence which is lost.

We shall discuss the prose style in the following sub-section.

2.6 PROSE STYLE

The nostalgic yearning-which we referred to in the previous section-is indicated by the repetition of the term, 'Twenty Years'. After twenty years, many things change. In the place of lively restaurant, 'Big Joe', you will find a hardware store. As a young man, Bob becomes a criminal. But the friendship between Bob and Jimmy and their affection for each other remains the same. Here lies the significance of the title, 'After Twenty Years'.

Further, in the discussion on plot, we have mentioned that the present short story is based on action. The following words and expressions, which denote action, are used to indicate the quick pace that the story takes on:

"The policeman on the beat move up" twirling his club with many intricate and

artful movements, turning now and then".

"the policeman walked up to him"

"I kept bustling around"

"The policeman twirled his club and took a step or two"

"Passing on along his beat, trying doors as he went"

Moreover, a discussion on prose style is not complete without an analysis

Short Fiction

of the literary devices used in the story. As we discussed the literary devices and their application in the earlier units, we want you to locate the literary devices used in the present story. Of course, we shall help you by giving a clue or two:

- i) In the lights at a drug store, Bob comes to know that the tall man is not Jimmy but he is an impersonator, But this revelation ironically leads to a bigger revelation about the identity of Bob as a criminal.
- ii) Bob comes to meet his friend from a thousand miles after twenty years. Ironically, the same friend becomes responsible for his arrest. The irony present in the above two instances is called ‘cosmic irony’ (or irony of fate).

Check Your Progress II

- i) Write a paragraph on the physical atmosphere in ‘After Twenty Years’ (100 words)

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- ii) Write briefly (in about 50 words) on the prose style of O, Henry as reflected in ‘After Twenty Years’.

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

Jimmy being a conscientious policeman got his friend Bob arrested. It is a poignant story and contains a lot of suspense. The major characters – Jimmy Wells and Bob- are delineated through description, dialogue, and incident.

2.8 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Check Your Progress I

Please refer to sections 2.2 and 2.4

Check Your Progress II

Please refer to sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.1

- 3) A B
- 1) gusto sudden, violent rush
- 2) twirling turn around quickly
- 3) proposition statement
- 4) submerge put under water

UNIT 3 WILLA CATHER: ON THE GULL'S ROAD

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Willa Cather: Life and Works
- 3.3 Willa Cather- on The Gull's Road
- 3.4 Major Themes and Aspects of Study
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Exercises
- 3.7 Further Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall study the core features of the short story in general and the American short story in particular in linkage with Willa Cather's stories. To this end, besides a few initial broadsides on positioning the short story in chronological history. The unit examines several major definitions of this genre and will examine the story *On the Gulls' Road* by Willa Cather with an analysis of major aspects of its contents and forms. This discussion will be helpful to you in further strengthening your understanding on American Literature in general and its short fiction in particular.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The short story, it needs to be affirmed even at the risk of mouthing a cliché, is at once old and new. It may be as old as the adventure tales of the *Odyssey* or the religious/moral tales of the Bible. Nearer home, it may be as old as the stories woven into the *Mahabharata* or those included in the *Panchatantra*. But as a distinct art form. i.e., as a highly organized and deftly executed short narrative, it is 'a young art' which emerged in the nineteenth century and which has fast come of age. The short story, therefore, is as old as the human instinct to tell and listen to a story and as new as man's/ woman's craft of writing it.

The ascendancy and the subsequent establishment of the novel towards the end of the eighteenth century is quite possibly encouraged, by example, the growth of shorter fiction as an autonomous genre of English literature. More important, however, was the speedy emergence of periodicals and magazines during the first quarter of the nineteenth century whose readers made insistent demand for short and compact fiction, completed in one issue. The editors of these magazines and papers, keen to boost their circulation and sales, made handsome payments to those writers who could meet their requirements. The short story thus registered its *raison d'être* and smoothly stepped into a space of its own.

Short Story holds great meaning as it provides us with a little world we can get a glimpse of and think about on a scale that's much smaller than that of a novel. Through this discussion, we'll generate an understanding about some of the techniques that short story writers use in the context of American short fiction. Willa Cather's 'On the Gull's Road' is a short story that was published in McClures in 1908. The piece centers on the life of the unknown narrator wherein there is a flashback during the time when the person met Alexandra Ebbeling, a married woman in the ship. In seeking to convey the story to readers, Cather utilizes a powerful narrative that uses both symbolisms and literary devices such as metaphor to highlight themes related to love, obligations and longing. By bringing together these elements, the story is able to tap and reinforce the emotions that have been instrumental in shaping the character of the anonymous author. The story starts off with the narrator meeting someone. They each talk about the arts, and with this conversation, the narrator has a flashback. In the flashback he meets a beautiful woman, and over time they start to develop feelings for each other. But, the woman is married. They agree to go their separate ways, and over time she dies.

3.2 WILLA CATHER: LIFE AND WORKS

Willa Sibert Cather was born on December 7, 1873, in Back Creek Valley, Winchester, Virginia. When Cather was nine years old, the family moved to Nebraska. They lived in a small town of Red Cloud, and Willa began attending school for the first time in her life. Her early work was published in the town's local newspaper. Cather was the oldest of seven children to her parents. Cather later attended the University of Nebraska. She lived and worked in Pittsburgh for ten years, supporting herself as a magazine editor and high school English teacher. Graduating from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln in 1895, Cather went east to work as a muck-racking journalist. She gained considerable attention and fame at the notorious but popular McClures and she gave herself fulltime to her fiction in 1912.

Cather's first collection of short stories, *The Troll Garden*, was published in 1905 by McClure, Phillips, and Company. It contains several of Cather's best-known stories—"A Wagner Matinee," "The Sculptor's Funeral," and "Paul's Case."

Her many works include: *April Twilights* (1903); *Alexander's Bridge* (1912); *O Pioneers!* (1913); *The Song of the Lark* (1915); *My Ántonia* (1918); *Youth and the Bright Medusa* (1920); *One of Ours* (1922; for which she won the Pulitzer Prize); *A Lost Lady* (1923); *The Professor's House* (1925); *My Mortal Enemy* (1926); *Death Comes to the Archbishop* (1927); *Shadows on the Rock* (1931); *Obscure Destinies* (1932); and *Lucy Gayheart* (1935).

Willa Sibert Cather began publishing her written works in the *Nebraska State Journal* and became a regular contributor. She also worked as the managing editor of her Universities student newspaper. After her success as a writer, Cather changed her major from science to English and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1894.

Cather once remarked that the most important impressions one receives come before the age of fifteen, and it seems clear that she was referring particularly to her own experiences on the Nebraska prairie. She did use some Virginia memories in her work, but only sporadically, in a few early short stories, before turning to them in her last published novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. In her “Nebraska works,” it is not only Nebraska that Cather evokes, but it is, also, what Nebraska symbolizes and means, for she is not simply a regional writer. The range of her work is as broad as the range of her experience, and Nebraska represents the westward necessity of her life. Wherever in her work the pull of the landscape is felt, there is Nebraska—whether the setting is Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, or even rural Pennsylvania or frontier Quebec.

Although her setting is often the American western frontier, she masterfully locates the universal through the specific, and her literary reputation transcends the limitations of regional or gender affiliation. In her exploration of the human spirit, Cather characteristically defends artistic values in an increasingly materialistic world, and she is known for her graceful rendering of place and character.

More than her contemporaries and those figures from the generation which succeeded hers—most especially Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway—Cather’s fiction creates a personal intimacy between writer and reader which both creates a deep bond and feels authentic, special. Willa Sibert Cather published her first novel *Alexander’s Bridge* as a serial in McClure’s in 1912. Her first novel garnered a lot of attention and critical praise. Her next work was the famous *Prairie Trilogy*- *O Pioneers!*, *The Song of the Lark* and *My Antonia*. These three works, published in 1913, 1915 and 1918 became her most famous and critically acclaimed works.

During the next years, Cather established herself as one of the major American writers. Her novel *One of Ours* received the Pulitzer Prize in 1922. However, during the 1930s, her career experienced a slump, since critics claimed her work was too idealistic and lacked social relevance. Despite the critics’ opinions, Carter’s 1931 book *Shadows on the Rock* became the most read novel in the United States and her novel *Lucy Gayheart* was the number one bestseller in 1935.

3.3 WILLA CATHER: ON THE GULL’S ROAD

On the Gull’s Road (1908) from Willa Cather is a touching memoir of unrequited love with Alexandra Deppling on a ship from Genoa to New York City, her compelling beauty despite illness and a dandy of a husband. She gives him a mysterious box she asks that he not open until she writes, which along with his drawing of her, symbolize their love twenty years past. “Vanity sometimes saves us when nothing else will, and mine saved you.”

Plot summary

One day a painter comes to the narrator’s house on a business matter but stops when he sees the painting of Alexandra Ebbing. The painter is astonished when he sees how beautiful she is. The narrator then flashes back

to the time that he met her. He is boarding from Italy to New York when He sees Mrs. Ebbing. Captured by how beautiful she looked he watched her and her daughter, Carin, all day. He enjoys talking to her and trying to find out what she is thinking about when she stares at the ocean all day. One day Lars Ebbing thanks the narrator for talking to his wife then the narrator says that if Lars stayed any longer he would have punched him. Then the narrator draws Mrs. Ebbing. Slowly They talk even more about even deeper things. Then one day the weather was picking up so everyone went into the cabin except Mrs. Ebblin and the narrator and he asked him to run away with him. She explains that she gave him love and that is enough. She then gives him a box and tells him not to open it until he hears from her. About a year later He got a letter which said that Alexandra Ebbing died and with it a second later which told him that he could open the box. Inside it was a piece of her hair, a withered magnolia flower and two pink sea shells. The narrator remembers Alexandra Ebbing. Twenty years ago he met her on a boat. Slowly his love grew for her. But Alexandra Ebbing has a bad heart valve... and husband. He wants to run away with her but she says she can't. She gives him a box for him to remember her by and he never sees her again.

A closer analysis of the characters is relevant at this point of time.

The first character is the Narrator/Male Lover. He is the one who loved Mrs. Alexandra Ebbing. They both dearly loved each other, even though they did not know each other for a long time. Overall, they decide to go their separate ways. The narrator is a classic example of the **lovesick** young man. Just 25 years of age when he is aboard the ship and meets Mrs. Ebbing, he is immediately drawn to her and cannot get her off his mind: "I could not help thinking how disappointed I would be if rain should keep Mrs. Ebbing in her cabin tomorrow." That admission comes after the pair's very first encounter.

One could describe the narrator as **naive**, his lack of worldly experience making it seem possible to overcome the roadblocks in his way (Ebbing's husband, daughter and illness) in pursuit of what he wants: a relationship with Ebbing. He practically pouts when she turns him down: "And yet you will do nothing, I groaned. You will dare nothing. You will give me nothing."

Mrs. Ebbing is the star of the story. She is described as having a "splendid, vigorous body," with red-gold hair "drenched with sunlight." The narrator pores over her high cheekbones, gentle chin and "the singular loveliness of the mouth." The narrator is smitten with her, even though she is married and has a child. Despite that, she appears to spend a good portion of her time aboard the *Germania* alone, looking at the water and enjoying the sunshine, and is content to do so. That maturity might be attributed to her failing health: "She had a bad heart valve, he added, and was in a serious way," or it could be her **worldliness** in having traveled a good portion of her life. ◊ Her uncle was a skipper on a coasting vessel, and with him she had made many trips along the Norwegian coast. But she was always reading and and thinking about the blue seas of the South."

We also see her maturity bloom when refuting the narrator's advances. He is clearly consumed by her, even suggesting that the two run off together. Yet, she rebuffs him multiple times: "She had been held too long and too closely in my thoughts, and she begged me to release her for a little while."

Although her husband, an engineer aboard the ship, seems to treat her well, she appears **lonely** and defeated. It seems unlikely that she has not noticed her husband's advances toward other women, yet she tells the narrator she is grateful to him.

By her own admissions, we discover that Mrs. Ebbing is **vain**, the trait that stops her from pursuing a relationship with the narrator: "I had much to give you, if you had come earlier. As it was, I was ashamed. Vanity sometimes saves us when nothing else will, and mine saved you."

Mr Lars Ebbing, Alexandra's husband who is Norwegian too has some influence on the set of events of the story. Carin, the Ebbings's daughter also appears in the story and you may watch out about her presence. The Doctor, 'an Italian naval officer, and the commodore of a Long Island yacht club.' Other characters which call for attention are Dame Ericson, a woman who used to live in Alexandra's village and Niels Nannestad, Alexandra's father.

3.4 MAJOR THEMES AND ASPECTS OF STUDY

Out of all the themes in the narratives, the theme of love needs to be probed between the characters. Arguably, as the narrator allows readers to understand his past, it demonstrates the encounter where he felt a love that should not happen. It shows his journey with Alexandra Ebbing that cannot come into place due to his marriage with Lars Ebbing. Despite having the same feelings with one another, the narrator feels heartbroken that Alexandra declined his request to elope due to her degrading health condition and the fact that she is married (Roberts 1).

Altogether, the story presents a reminiscent time when the narrator was young and felt he had experienced true love like no other. By using flashbacks, Cather is able to emphasize on these emotions and examine how complications impeded true love.

Another evident theme portrayed by Cather in the story corresponds to strict adherence to norms and standards. This can particularly be seen with the reactions of Alexandra Ebbing as she continues to find ways to stick with her duties to her husband Lars. Despite the supposed extra-marital affairs and lack of romantic flame between the couple, Alexandra continued to fight for the sanctity of their marriage. Equally, readers often associate Alexandra's marriage to be arranged and do not necessarily reflect what she feels. Cather mentions this in the story by highlighting, "sometimes it is given in marriage, and sometimes it is given in love, but often it is never given at all" (151). This quote surmises how Mrs. Ebbing feels about her priorities, including marriage. Altogether, despite the temptations of eloping with the narrator and her personal feelings, Alexandra chose to stick to her obligation and duty as a wife.

The use of the water as a metaphor for budding romantic emotions of Alexandra is utilized by Cather in the story. Using this symbolism enables readers to recognize the developing feelings emerging between the main characters in the story. Woodress provides that “Cather suggests sexual passion by associating Mrs. Ebbeling continually with the sea, as though she were Venus, emerging on her scallop, describing her with metaphors of sea” (201). By associating Alexandra’s feelings with the sea, it allows readers to recognize its depth and arguably its intensity when triggered. From the perspective of the narrator, he felt this emotion rise during his interaction with Alexandra in the ship.

Overall, Cather’s ‘On the Gulls Road’ remains to be reminiscent of the narrator who has experienced love but had to succumb due to complexities and circumstances. With the author’s ability to provide powerful storytelling, she is able to convey depth and meaning to readers and express strong emotions related to sadness, longing and a love that failed due to existing obligations. As the story provides a flashback of a romance that happened in the past, it enables the promotion of a nostalgic feel where the persona had to recall the one that got away and showcase that amidst the years that passed, the emotion and sense of longing continues.

Cather’s work stands as something of an emotional autobiography, tracing the course of her deepest feelings about what is most valuable in human experience. For Cather, what endured best, and what helped one endure, were the values contained in the land, and in humanity’s civilizing impulses, particularly the impulse to art. What is best in humanity responds to these things, and these things have the capacity to ennoble in return. Sometimes they seem mutually exclusive, the open landscape and civilization, and some characters never reconcile the apparent polarity. Cather says, however, that ultimately one can have both East and West. For her, the reconciliation seems to have occurred mainly in her art, where she was able to love and write about the land if not live on it. A conflict such as this can be resolved, for it involves a tension between two things of potential value. Thus, in her life and her art it was not this conflict that caused Cather to despair; rather, it was the willingness of humanity in general to allow the greedy and unscrupulous to destroy both the land and civilization. At the same time, it was the bright promise of youth, in whom desire for the land and for art could be reborn with each new generation, that caused her to rejoice. Cather is particularly appealing to readers who like wholesome, value-centered art. She is held in increasingly high regard among critics and scholars of twentieth century literature and is recognized as one of the finest stylists in American letters.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

On the Gulls Road is yet another beautiful story by Willa Cather. If we look at the characters, the writing, the story, all of it has created massive public appeal. Love at first sight; not just visual and physical, but mind melding, heart melding, love at first sight. But there is a catch, and it’s the catch that will give you a big sigh, and maybe even cause you to shed a tear

Her novels on frontier life brought her to national recognition. In 1923 she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for her novel, 'One of Ours' (1922), set during World War I. She travelled widely and often spent summers in New Brunswick, Canada. In later life, she experienced much negative criticism for her conservative politics and became reclusive, burning some of her letters and personal papers, including her last manuscript.

It is not a surprise that she was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1943. In 1944, Cather received the gold medal for fiction from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, an award given once a decade for an author's total accomplishments. Willa Cather will always be remembered for her art of storytelling and her thematic intensity.

3.6 EXERCISES

Study questions:

1. Do you agree with the view that the twentieth century short story primarily offers perceptions on human characters? Give reasons in support of your answer.
2. Do you agree with the view that the twentieth century short story primarily offers perceptions on human characters? Give reasons in support of your answer.
3. At the beginning of the story the narrator reflects (about Mrs. Ebbing), "Out of all that is supposed to make for happiness, she had very little." What relationships do the things that are "supposed to make for happiness" have with actual happiness? Where does beauty fit in?
4. Throughout the story, Cather offers us images of water. How does the story use water as a metaphor for life and self-determination?
5. "On the Gulls' Road" offers readers competing depictions of courage. Which portrayal captures the nature of courage most accurately? Why?

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Online Resources:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/on-the-gulls-road-summary-analysis.html>

UNIT 4 ERNEST HEMINGWAY THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Ernest Hemingway: Life and Works
 - 4.2.1 Chronology
 - 4.2.2 Themes and Concerns
 - 4.2.3 Modes of Writing
- 4.3 Ernest Hemingway: The Snows of Kilimanjaro
- 4.4 Major Themes and Aspects of study
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 Exercise

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are aiming at a close reading of the distinctive features of both Hemingway the short story writer and his short story “**The Snows of Kilimanjaro**.” It begins with a select chronology, and moves on to discuss and evaluate the author’s major themes and concerns, his mode of writing, autobiographical predilections, artistic objectivity, code of conduct, and narrative techniques, especially those of symbolism and irony. The text of “**The Snows of Kilimanjaro**” is critically examined and assessed largely in the context of these tropes. The twin objectives foregrounded in this unit, then, are to assist you in realizing the kind of short story writer Hemingway is the kind of short story “**The Snows of Kilimanjaro**” makes.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Ernest Hemingway is widely treated as one of the most significant fiction writers of the 20th century. He is famous for his specific style of writing, the so-called iceberg theory, which is clearly seen in his short stories and novels. Undoubtedly the unique thing that makes his short stories so special is the fact that after you read them you get the main idea but there are many things that remain unspoken or have a deeper meaning. You have to reread the text and use your imagination to get the whole picture of the text. Hemingway accomplishes that outcome by making use of his iceberg theory - the ability to omit as much as possible from the context and interpretation of the story, leaving the reader to intuit its entire meaning. A detailed description of the story *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* will help you to understand the art and ideas of Hemingway further.

4.2 ERNEST HEMINGWAY: LIFE AND WORKS

4.2.1 Chronology

The following chronology, largely based on the one made out by Earl Rovit, offers a concise biographical perspective on the major events in the life of Ernest Hemingway. It is of course selective, not comprehensive; and during the course of your readings on this author you may notice several other milestones in his life. You may then draw up your own chronology of events relating to Hemingway's life and works. The period also saw a lot of avant-garde writing involving experiments in painting and literature. A background study will help us understand the climate in which Faulkner wrote his novels and put him in a proper perspective. It is also necessary that you should be generally acquainted with the other great writers of the period. The themes and issues which dominated the period gave rise to new forms and techniques. Since this period followed the First World War, which caused unprecedented devastation and mauled a whole generation physically and psychologically, a close look at this period and its concerns will be a rewarding experience.

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|---------|---|
| 1899 | Born on July 21 in Oak Park, Illinois, son of Dr. Clarence E. and Grace Hall Hemingway. |
| 1917 | After graduation from Oak Park High School, worked as a reporter on the Kansas City Star. |
| 1918 | Enlisted as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross in Italy; was severely wounded under mortar fire at Fossalta di Piave on July 8. |
| 1920-24 | Worked as a reporter and foreign correspondent for Toronto Star and Star Weekly. Met Sherwood Anderson (1920-21). married - Hadleg Richardson (1921)! published Three Stories and Ten Poems in Paris (Contact Publishing Co., 1923), made friends with Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound. As correspondent, covered Grew-Turkish War (1922) and interviewed Clemenceau and Mussolini. |
| 1924 | Published in Our Time (New York: Boni and Liveright), his first collection of short stories. |
| 1926 | Published in Torrents of Spring (a novel) and The Sun Also Rises (a novel) with Charles Scribner's Sons. All subsequent works except The Spanish Earth came under Scribner's imprint. |
| 1927 | Divorced Hadley Richardson; married Pauline Pfeiffer. Published Men Without Women (a collection of short stories). |
| 1928-38 | Set up his home at Key West, Florida. |
| 1929 | Published A-Farewell to Arms, his first widely acknowledged novel. 1930 Hurt in an automobile accident in Montana. |
| 1932 | Published Death in the Afternoon (a book on bullfighting). |
| 1933-34 | Published Winner Take Nothing (1933) a collection of short Stories. Made the first safari to Africa: also visited Paris and Spain. |
| 1935 | Published Green Hills of ffica (a book on big-game hunting). |
| 1936-38 | Covered the Spanish Civil War for the North American Newspaper Alliance. Published To have and have not (1937) |

- A novel; helped in preparation of the film *The Spanish Earth* (published in 1938) a film-script; and issued *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938).
- 1940 Divorced by Pauline Pfeiffer; married Martha Gelhorn. Published *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, another widely acknowledged novel.
- 1942 War Correspondent in Europe, flew with the Royal Air Force,
- 1945 participated in Normandy invasion, and attached himself to the Fourth Infantry Division to liberate Paris.
- 1927 Divorced from Martha Gelhorn to marry Mary Welsh in 1944.
- 1950 Published *Across the River and Into the Trees* (a novel)
- 1951 Published *The Old Man and the Sea*. yet another widely acknowledged novel.
- 1953- 54 Revisited Africa; suffered two airplane crashes; was reported dead in the world press. Received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.
- 1961 Died of self-inflicted wounds at his home in Ketchum, Idaho, on July 2.

4.2.2 Themes and Concerns

Hemingway's themes condensed in one word howsoever simplistic and inadequate is 'the violence at the heart of men and things. Its figurations include not only physical violence but also psychic violence, not only the violence of war but also the violence in everyday life, not only the threats and confrontations with violence but also its consequences. This foregrounding of violence also impinges on Hemingway's choice of characters, situations, sense of life and world. and evokes the emotions of fear, pain, hurt, anxiety, empathy, tension, trauma and so forth Hostile critics of Hemingway censure such a preoccupation with violence as an obsession, find his fictional world narrow and limited, and insist that less is simply in Hemingway. But his admirers consider such a pre-eminent positioning of violence quite authentic.

To move from this broad spectrum violence as the presiding metaphor in Hemingway's works to the specific and particular themes in his short stories, we notice that they are mainly focussed on the (i) shocks of experience, (ii) violence of war, (iii) man-woman relationships, (iv) quintessential nothingness, and (v) celebrations of values. Boy-protagonists of his stories of shocking, violent experiences are often caught unaware when they, for instance, encounter the contract-killers at a small-town lunchroom ("The Killers") or face the threatened, pointless violence of a demented ex-prizefighter ("The Battler") or witness the violent, ironically tragic death of the much-maligned father ("My Old Man"). The impact of such experiences stupefies and shatters them: nonetheless, contrary to several critics, their stories may not be categorized as the stories of initiation. For they hardly evince any sense of better understanding of the 'self and the 'surroundings' in their protagonists after the impact, and carry nothing of the ritualistic elements that accompany all initiations. Slightly different are the stories focussed on the violence of war which Hemingway used to call "invaluable and irreplaceable" as a subject and in which he captures "people under tremendous stress and before and after".

These stories transmit the predicament for instance, of the older people and the animals left behind during the evacuation of a village under threat of

imminent bombardment (“Old Man at the Bridge”) or the shell-shocked soldiers whose wounds may have healed but who continue to suffer from the neurosis and frequent nervous break-down (“A Way You’ll Never Be”) or those who despite their discipline and control over this post-wound neurosis spend sleepless nights listening to the silkworms eating in the dark (“Now I Lay Me”). They etch out the Hemingway irrational, impersonal, devastating face of violence the savagery and grimness of which is occasionally countered by the intermittent camaraderie and togetherness of some of the men-at-war. Subtly suggestive of surface calm and inward restlessness, of high tension and gnawing anxiety are Hemingway’s stories of man-woman relationships between unmarried lovers or married couples. Now and then these stories depict sexual inhibitions and deviations in such relationships (“Mr. And Mrs. Ehot” and “The Sea Change”): but more often than not they deal with the temperamental incompatibilities and marital maladjustments between males and females. such as the fertility wish in woman and the evasion of parental responsibility in man (“Cat in the Rain” and “Hills Like White Elephants”) or the sullen acquiescence of a wife in the dogged insistence of her husband on forbidden fishing (“Out of Season”), and so forth. Almost as a rule, the male in these stories is determined and dominant and the female submissive but tense and uncertain, the former sadistic and the latter masochistically pliant. By investing his women with a greater sense of responsibility and commitment in love/marital relationships which his men fail to share, much less demonstrate,

Hemingway the artist seems to castigate the real-life, egotistic, self-aggrandizing Hemingway, and tends to echo Melville’s telling phrase: “the conflict of convictions spins against the way it drives”. A class apart, however, are the stories of the ultimate nothingness, of an overwhelming and all-engulfing nada which go far beyond gender conflicts and draw attention to a “God-abandoned world”, a world with nothing at the centre”. Characters in these stories, resigned as they are to all kinds of losses and gloom. find themselves “not in His (God’s) Kingdom” (soldier’s Home»), are irretrievably landed in extremely hostile situations In Another Country») and are increasingly deprived of the few redeeming bits of sunshine in the midst of surrounding darkness («A Clean Well-Lighted Place»). These are essentially stories of total resignation to living without any shred of hope, to living with nothingness.

In contrast, the stories of celebration, of the triumphant ideals in the midst of violent death depict the protagonists of courage. These protagonists with stand and fight the worst challenges of life, make a supreme all-out effort to do whatever they hold closest to their heart, and in a manner of speaking achieve it in death. Plunged in a most trying situation, therefore, a Macomber, for instance regains his selfhood as a big-game hunter (“The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”) and a Haw his as a writer (“The Snows of Kilimanjaro”); and a Manuel preserves his honour as a bullfighter (“The Undefeated”). The suffering and death of these characters, however, do not involve any proverbial fatal flaw, nor any particular set of circumstances pitted against them; nor do they derive from any secret cause or commotion in the moral order. The stark and inevitable tragedy of these people is just a condition of their lives if only because they refuse to be broken by the world; and in Hemingway’s scheme of things, people who refuse to be broken have to be killed. “Commitment in Hemingway’s books leads to disaster; and complete commitment to complete disaster”, say J.J. Benson. Nonetheless,

their acceptance of death with dignity and their gallantry in moments of grief and death is “bracing rather than dispiriting”: it affirms the principle of the possibilities of life and of how best can man acquit himself as man. The themes and concerns of Hemingway as critic R.R. Weeks observes. “a limited range of characters. placed in quite similar circumstances and measured against an unvarying code.” Also. such characters largely remain isolated and expatriates severed from the context of their family. community. society and country. and engage themselves rather exclusively in out-door activities. Naturally then, the range and scope of Hemingway’s creative explorations stays restricted in that it relates to “no past. no traditions. no memories” and reflects little sense of “religion. morality, politics. culture o; history.” Significant areas of human experience are therefore blocked out to Hemingway readers: but whereas “we may regret this exclusive glorification of brute comage in Herningway- we “doubt if it is literary criticism to do so”. Harry Levin has neatly summed up the strength and limitation of Hemingway’s thematic achievement in his remark: “That he has succeeded within Limits, but with considerable strain, is less important than that he has succeeded. that a few more aspects of life have been captured for literature”. Thus considered, Hemingway’s theme(s) more than vindicate their validity and stand out at least in as much as they stand apart.

4.2.3 Modes of Writing

Hemingway’s most memorable lesson in writing came from Lionel Moise. an older colleague of his journalistic days at the Kansas City Star. Moise used to say: “Pure objective writing is the only true form of story-telling. No stream of consciousness nonsense: no playing dumb observer one paragraph and God Almighty the next. In short. no ?ricks.” Hemingway religiously followed this golden piece of advice during !hi. course of his writing. both journalistic and literary. Of course he got out of journalism before it began to use up the juice needed for creative writing: but he repaid acknowledged: as a latter day eminent fictionist, the debt he owed to Moise. In his writing. therefore. Hemingway always endeavored to cut out emotional exaggeration without lapsing into emotional suppression either. He attempted at once to stimulate. and regulate emotion, and to keep it clean and functional. His emphasis, therefore. fell upon the right seLection of external details - facts, images: events and actions-which automatically evoked the inward emotion in the reader. In Hemingway’s critical parlance this communicated not only “what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel” but also “what really happened in action . . . the real thing. the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion.’. This method of using selective but representative details of experience in order to take the intended emotion came close to what T.S.Eliot had described: more than a decade earlier, as the use of “objective correlative” in any artistic creation. Eliot had dcEned the objective correlative as “a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion: such that when the external facts. which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.” Likewise, Hemingway also sought to reproduce ‘the real thing’ which came through in the right selection of external details and consisted of ‘what really happened in action The sequence of motion

and fact which made the emotion. The resemblance between the two theories was too conspicuous to be merely accidental: and Eliot was the first to state it in English criticism. Characteristically perhaps, the belligerent Hemingway not only gave the impression of devising this technique on his own but also struck a needlessly dismissive and hostile attitude towards the author of «The Waste Land» and «Four Quartets.» He has gone on record offering to grind «Mr Eliot into a fine dry powder» and sprinkle “that powder over Conrad’s grave”, if this could bring Conrad back to life. The vitriolic - comment was perhaps his typical defence mechanism to preempt any possible suggestion of his indebtedness to Eliot. A titan of ego, Hemingway has used this strategy against a host of major contemporary writers, including Sherwood Anderson, Gertude Stein, Scott Fitzgerald and Ford Madox Ford, from each of whom he learned something or the other. It must however be said to Hemingway’s credit that in practice he invariably moulded his learnings into something of his own and successfully whittled out one of the most powerful and durable prose-styles of our age. Whatever the exact measure of Hemingway’s debt to Eliot. this method of objective rendering of emotion was truly challenging. It wasn’t merely a matter of clever artifice and charming mannerisms as Leon Edel made it out to be. Nor was it simply the fact that Hemingway invested his writing with “an aura of emotion -- by walking directly away from emotion!” It required rigorous concentration on the part of the author as also right absorption and assimilation of experience and called for its controlled and objective expression. It was a high ideal of prose-writing that Hemingway set for himself. as rewarding as it was demanding. It entailed, as argued by Earl Rot it: the transference of the precise “emotion from the neural system to the texture of a prose narrative:” for “caught and frozen in the narrative, the emotion would be safe from the frittering of time and the distortion of memory.” Hemingway learnt it the hard way; and achieved it in the best of his prose-passages

4.3 ERNEST HEMINGWAY: THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO

Hemingway opens the story with Harry, a writer, and his wife, Helen who are stranded while on safari in Africa. A bearing burned out on their truck, and Harry is talking about the gangrene that has infected his leg when he did not apply iodine after he scratched it. As they wait for a rescue plane from Nairobi that he knows won’t arrive on time, Harry spends his time drinking and insulting Helen. Harry reviews his life, realizing that he wasted his talent through procrastination and luxury from a marriage to a wealthy woman that he doesn’t love.

In a series of flashbacks, Harry recalls the mountains of Bulgaria and Constantinople, as well as the suddenly hollow, sick feeling of being alone in Paris. Later, there were Turks, and an American poet talking nonsense about the Dada movement, and headaches and quarrels, and watching people whom he would later write about. Uneasily, he recalls a man who’d been frozen, his body half-eaten by dogs, and a wounded officer so entangled in a wire fence that his bowels spilled over it.

As Harry lies on his cot, he is aware that vultures are walking around his makeshift camp, and a hyena lurks in the shadows. Knowing that he will die before he wakes, Harry goes to sleep and dreams that the rescue plane is taking him to a snow covered summit of Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa. Its Western summit is called the Masai “Ngàje Ngài,” the House of God, where he sees the legendary leopard.

Helen wakes, and taking a flashlight, walks toward Harry’s cot. Seeing that his leg is dangling alongside the cot and that the dressings are pulled down, she calls his name repeatedly. She listens for his breathing and can hear nothing. Outside the tent, the hyena whines — a cry that is strangely human.

Hemingway’s themes, characters and situations signify a limited world; nonetheless they make for, you must have observed an intensely realistic world. Again, His mode of writing and techniques are simplicity itself; nonetheless this simplicity conveys a lot more than it seems to convey. “A Clean Well-Lighted Place” is a glowing testimony to such a practice of the craft of short story writing.

The African safari was Harry’s attempt to put his life back on track. Harry, the central character, has been living a life of sloth, luxury, and procrastination, so this safari was supposed to bring him back to the virtues of hard work, honesty, and struggle as a step in the right direction. Also interesting to note is that both Harry and Hemingway were of the “Lost Generation” of World War I who had to rebuild their lives after being wounded in combat and seeing the horrors of war. This particular work, some have asserted, seems to reflect both Harry’s and Hemingway’s concerns about leaving unfinished business behind as a writer and the proper lifestyle for a writer that is conducive to writing on a daily basis. Hemingway was quoted as saying once that “politics, women, drink, money, and ambition” ruin writers.

Although this very short story deals with violence and suffering, with birth and death, sexism and racism, Hemingway’s emphasis is not on the shocking events themselves; instead, Hemingway shows the effect of birth and death on young Nick Adams. Nick’s progression in this short story is vividly portrayed in polarities. For instance, on the way to the camp in the boat, Nick is sitting in his father’s arms; on the way back, Nick sits on the opposite end of the boat. Similarly, while his father wants Nick to witness the birth (and his surgical triumph), Nick turns his head away; when the American Indian husband is discovered dead in his bed, Nick sees it, even though his father wants to protect him from it. The fact that Nick sits across from his father in the boat on the way back after this experience can indicate a pulling out from underneath his father’s influence.

Hemingway’s use of suggestion and symbolism is based on his belief that the dignity of movement of an Iceberg lies in only one-eighth of it being on the surface of the water. In spite of his tough exterior and his formidable reputation for boxing, big-game-hunting, bullfighting and fishing. He was a sensitive artist. This was captured in a New Yorker cartoon in the 1930s, which showed a brawny, hairy arm holding a beautiful rose in hand captioned “the Soul of Ernest Hemingway”.

It is relevant to see closely why the young boy asks his father why the young American Indian man cut his throat and is told, “I don’t know. . . . He couldn’t stand things, I guess.” However, there are more subtle undercurrents for the American Indian husband’s suicide as well. The treatment and attitude of Dr. Adams toward the woman, who is an American Indian, are key also. Also, Dr. Adams tells Nick that her screaming is not important, it is at this point that the American Indian husband rolls over in his bunk toward the shanty wall, as he is found later, after slitting his own throat with a razor. This failure to confront the events at hand indicates fear, it can also indicate the American Indian husband’s resignation to the thoughtless racism of the White men who have come to help her.

Some have suggested that Uncle George is possibly the father of the child, as he seems to have a friendly relationship with the American Indians in the beginning of the story and hands out cigars to everyone after the birth. His handing out cigars to the men present could possibly be interpreted as paternity, although one could also surmise that he is simply sharing his way of celebrating the miracle of birth with the American Indians. Additionally, he stays behind in the camp after Dr. Adams and Nick leave. Following the interpretation of Uncle George being the baby’s father, the husband’s suicide could be seen as an inability to deal with his own shame and the cuckoldry of his wife.

Here, Dr. Adams emphasizes to Nick that although this young American Indian man committed suicide, women rarely do. Fear conquered the young American Indian man; he did not have the courage and strength to cope with it. He failed his test of manhood. During the boat trip back across the lake, while Nick and his father are talking, the reader learns that Nick feels “quite safe — that he would never die.” Even at this young age, Nick vows never to succumb to fear. His resolve never to bow to fear is so great that he’s ready to defy even the concept of natural, mortal life.

4.4 MAJOR THEMES AND ASPECTS OF STUDY

Life and Death

Once we try to read through the governing theme of the story, we find that this is the story of an imminent death. “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” is suffused not only with images of death but also with a pervading sense of death’s presence. The story begins with death—“it’s painless,” Harry says in the first line, referring to his oncoming demise—and ends with the ironic comparison of the woman’s heart beating loudly and the stillness of Harry’s lifeless body. Death is symbolically figured both as the pristine whiteness of the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro and as the creeping, filthy hyena that lurks outside of Harry’s tent.

Harry’s attitude toward his death wavers during the story. At first, he puts up a brave and almost cavalier front, telling his wife that he does not care about his death and is resigned to it. He almost seems to be trying to anger her, knowing that she cares about him and that he can hurt her by seeming not to be bothered by death’s imminence. But in the italicized sections of the story, Harry’s bravado disappears, and he slips into the regret of a man who knows he is dying but who sulks over the fact that he has not accomplished

what he wanted to accomplish. The gangrenous rot that is taking his leg metamorphoses, in his mind, into the poetry that he never wrote: “I’m full of poetry now. Rot and poetry. Rotten poetry.”

Throughout the story, Hemingway constantly brings death into the story largely by the use of symbolism. We may list those examples: the woman leaves the camp to go kill an animal, going out of his sight because (the narrator states) she does not want to disturb the wildlife. However, she clearly does not want to kill something in plain sight of her dying husband. The hyena, an animal that feeds on carcasses, skulks around the camp, a prefiguration of the rotting death that Harry fears. Even the relationship between Harry and his wife is a symbol of his imminent end: he says that the quarrelling had “killed what they had together.”

But when death comes it is not rotten and lingering and painful. Rather, it is transcendent. Harry slips into a reverie in which he hallucinates that his friend Compton arrives in an airplane to take him to find medical care. As the plane takes off, it passes by the blinding white summit of Kilimanjaro. As Harry passes this image, the reader is reminded of the epigraph of the story, in which Hemingway says that “close to the western summit there is the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard. No one has explained what the leopard was seeing at that altitude.” Harry seems to have found something, though: a release from his earthly problems.

Artistic Creation

Harry’s failure to achieve the artistic success he sought in his life is one of the main themes of the story, and in this the character of Harry comes very close to being a representation of Hemingway himself. In the italicized flashbacks, we see Harry as he was in his earlier life, especially in Paris, where he lived in bohemian poverty and devoted his energies to writing. But he consistently regrets leaving that behind. He gave up, in a sense, and began spending his time drinking, travelling, hunting, and chasing rich women. He became “what he despised,” as the narrator says.

His perceived failures eat away at him like the gangrene that eats his leg. At one point he explicitly equates them: “Rot and poetry. Rotten poetry.” He uses his verbal talents to quarrel with his wife and instead of seeking to heighten his sensations he dulls them with alcohol. In this sense, the hyena that lurks around his tent is not only creeping death but also his pangs of regret at his wasting of his artistic gifts. Ironically, it is in death that he returns to creating. As he slips away, he hallucinates a beautiful scene: his friend Compton comes to him to take him to a hospital, and as they fly away Harry catches a glimpse of the summit of Kilimanjaro, a vision that awes him by its purity. Only here, as he dies, does he take part in the kind of creation and transcendence that he has always sought.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

In a nutshell, “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” is a combination of fact and fiction. Hemingway based the main character on, as he has shared frequently, someone “who cannot sue me—that is me.” In the story, while facing his imminent death on an African safari, a writer goes in and out of consciousness. This sense of ‘personal’ adds more intensity and depth

to the story. During his conscious moments, he argues with his wife and seems intent on destroying her. During unconscious or dream-like states, he remembers his life and has insights into why he made some of the choices he made. He has regrets, fears, and some wonderful memories of good times, as well. These memories are based on Hemingway's own experiences and professional career.

4.6 EXERCISE

1. Comment how "Snows of Kilimanjaro" is a combination of fact and fiction.
2. Examine the theme of "Snows of Kilimanjaro" and the techniques Hemingway employs to project this theme.
3. Discuss the major concerns of Hemingway in his short stories and the formal strategies he often adopts in highlighting them.

FURTHER READINGS

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Kenneth H. Rosen (edited), Hemingway Repossessed (1994).

Online resources:

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/h/hemingways-short-stories/about-hemingways-short-stories?lcitation=true>

<https://www.enotes.com/topics/snows-kilimanjaro/themes>

<http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/22805/1/Unit-1.pdf>

Study questions:

What is the main theme of the story "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"?

How is Ernest Hemingway's short story "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" a reflection of modernism in terms of its style and content?

What are some possible symbolic interpretations of the leopard in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" by Ernest Hemingway?

How does Hemingway use the, "Iceberg Theory," in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"?