

LITERARY FORMS

UNIT-V: FICTION

SHORT STORY

A short story may be defined as a story that can be read at a single sitting. Edger Allen Poe considered the Short story as a prose narrative ‘requiring from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal. Thus brevity is one of the essential characteristics of a short story. However, a short story is not merely a novel on a reduced scale. The short story has a distinct, well- marked organizational structure different from that of a novel.

Firstly, the theme of a short story must be one that can effectively be developed within the prescribed limits. The story should impress the reader as clear in outline and well proportioned. It should not give the impression of crowding. This does not mean that the story must necessarily be confined to a single incident. It only means that even when the story covers a wide field of time and large sequence of events it should give a concentration of interest. Most of the stories of Maupassant and Washington Irving’s famous story ‘Rip Van Winkle’ illustrate this point.

Secondly, a short story should have unity which means unity of Purpose, of motive, of action and of impression. A short story should contain only one informing idea and it should be worked out with singleness of purpose. No scattering of attention is allowed in a short story as it may be allowed in a novel.

Writers and critics hold different opinions on the art of the Short story. Edger Allen Poe thought that a short story should present only a “Slice of life suggestively”. It should have neither a beginning nor an end. However, the modern story writer and novelist Somerset Maugham thinks that a short story should be a finished product of art with a beginning, middle and an end. A short story may deal with any motive and material.

R. L. Stevenson speaks of three kinds of short stories – the story of Plot, the story of character and the story of impression. However, to most story writers, the idea of a story comes something like an abstract thought or impression and later they work it up into the shape of a story inventing the required plot, character and incidents.

NOVEL

The novel owes its existence to man’s interest in other men and in the great panorama of human passion and action. Both the Drama and the Novel are compounded of the same materials but in drama the literary element is bound up with the elements of stage setting and interpretation through acting. So Marion Crawford terms the novel as “Pocket Theatre”. The Novel may be defined as a long narrative in prose detailing the actions of fictitious people. Fielding calls it an epic in prose. The novel is a loose form of art and that enables it to give a fuller and more varied representation of real life and character than any other form of literature. The novel combines narration and description, history and philosophy, poetry and fantasy, social criticism and a particular view of life.

The novel has various elements. In the first place, it should have a plot. The novel deals with events and actions and the manner in which these are presented is the plot. Secondly, the men and women who are involved in these events and action appear as characters in the novel. The third element is the dialogue, the means of interaction among the characters. The fourth element is style in which the narration is done. The sixth element is the view of life presented by the novelist.

Characterization is the art of presenting the characters alive and real to our imagination. The men and women in must move through it like living beings and like living beings they should remain in the reader's memory after the novel is laid aside. Dialogue, well managed gives vividness and actuality to the plot and the characters and advances the movement of the plot. Time and place and action in a novel refer to the whole setting of the story, both social and material. There are novels of sea life, literary life, and industrial life, artistic life and life of different classes of people. There are novels with regional background; there are novels written in the historical background, whatever may be the setting the novelist should master its details and then present a lively picture of it.

The novel is concerned with life and so he the novelist's view of life may be revealed in the novel. A novelist may make creative observations on human life. By the selection and organization of the material and by the presentation of character and development of the plot, the novelist can show us what he thinks of life. However the novelist should not indulge in propaganda or preaching. His philosophy is a part of the structure of the novel and should reveal itself through the interpretation of life, thought, character and temper of the work as a whole.

HISTORICAL NOVEL

The historical novel is a work of fiction that attempts to convey the spirit, manners and social conditions of a past age with realistic details and nearly perfect fidelity to historical facts. The subject matter may compass both public and private events. The protagonist may be an actual historical figure or an invented figure. The historical novel combines the dramatic interest of plot and with a more or less detailed picture of the varied features of life of a particular age. The most important feature of the historical novel is its vivid reproduction of the life of a bygone age.

Even before the coming of the historical novel, writers had used history in their novels. As a result of the impulse towards novelty during the renaissance and after, several writers made use of history. In England Horace Walpole used a particular period in history as background to his gothic novels.

The passing away of the feudal system created nostalgia for the past, combined with social and economic changes caused by the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, this nostalgia for the past created the proper climate for the emergence of the historical novel.

The first great historical novel in English was Sir Walter Scott's 'Waverley' published in 1814. A series of novels based on Scottish history appeared. Among them the most important are 'Guy Mannering', 'Kenilworth', 'Old Mortality' and 'The Heart of Midlothian'. Among the more popular of Scott's novels are Ivanhoe and The Thalisman dealing with the Crusades. In these novels memory and imagination serve Scott's creative purpose and the central narrative is supported by a strong love of humanity. The main theme in Scott's novels was the destruction of the Scottish clans. Another historical novel of this period was Jane Porter's 'The Scottish Chief'. Almost during the same period James Fenimore Cooper's novel 'The Spy' dealing with the American Revolution appeared. Cooper's series of four novels known as 'The Leather - stocking Tales' dealt with the conflict between the American settlers and the aboriginal Red Indians.

The tradition of the historical novel continued into the Victorian age. Charles Dickens' 'A Tale of Two Cities', Thackeray's 'The History of Henry Esmond Esquire', George Eliot's 'Romola' and Charles Reade's 'The Cloister and the Hearth' are the important historical novels of the Victorian period. In the continent, the historical novel flourished in the writings of Balzac, Dumas and Tolstoy. It is generally agreed that Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' is the greatest among the historical novels. Robert Graves' 'I, Claudius' is another historical novel of significance.

The historical novel merges on one side with the realistic novel and on the other with the national epic. Saintsbury has remarked that a historical novelist need give only a subordinate position to the actual historical figure and should allot a prominent position to the imaginary figures because the chief object of the Novelist is the interpretation of human character. The historical facts without creating shocking anachronisms if that serve the purpose of faithfully presenting the manners, tone and temper of the age. It is the business of the historical novelist to bring creative imagination to bear upon the dry facts of history and to produce a work of artistic unity. Both Scott and Dickens have succeeded in this respect. In a historical novel the recreation of the spirit and tone of the bygone age is more important than adherence to truth. The historical novelist has to reconcile the claims of history and art.

The historical novel has limitations. It suffers from the weakness of both history and novel. Unless the novelist is scholarly and unprejudiced, he is likely to give a half digested and biased view of historical facts. It is also open to question whether the imaginative recreation of facts is preferable to facts themselves.

SOCIAL NOVEL

The social novel may be defined as a fictional narrative that focuses on the varieties of human behavior in society and the way in which the characters reflect or contradict the values of that society. Here the characters are seen in the background of their social milieu and culture. Though the inner life of the characters finds a place in such novels, greater

importance is given to their conflict and collisions with classes and beliefs. The essence of a social novel is the conflict between the individual and the society that surrounds him based on different concept of values.

Social novels can be divided into two groups-the Novel of manners and the novel of civilization. The novel of manners is concerned with social behavior and its correctness in a given society. The concept of behavior achieves a grand moral effect as in the novels of Jane Austen. "Pride and Prejudice" and "Emma" are the best examples. The novelist is preoccupied with the niceties of social conduct and often, by the employment of irony and satire exposes the undesirable passions like arrogance, hypocrisy and snobbery. Henry James's novel 'The Ambassadors' is a successful Social novel of manners .It depicts with great humour and delicacy the reaction of different American types to a European environment.

The Social novel of civilization takes a comprehensive view of the whole civilization. The best examples are Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit and Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'. The novel of civilization aims at revealing the meanings, principles and Social styles that govern people's lives. The actions of individuals are examined in the light of the civilization that surrounds them. In 'Little Dorrit' Dickens explores the English society dominated by the corrupt business class. In the novel of civilization that surrounds them. Sometimes it uses a family story as in Faulkner's 'Sartoris' or in Galesworthy's "Forsyte Saga".

The **proletarian novel** is a subgenre of the **novel**, written by workers mainly for other workers. It overlaps and sometimes is synonymous with the working-class **novel**, socialist **novel**, **social problem novel** (also **problem novel** or **sociological novel** or **social novel**), propaganda or thesis **novel**, and socialist realism **novel**.

THE PICARESQUE NOVEL

The picaresque Novel originated in Spain. The term picaresque is derived from the Spanish 'Picaro' meaning an anti-hero or rogue. A picaresque novel is generally an autobiographical account of the hero's fortunes, sufferings and wanderings. It is a combination of episodic tales arranged as journeys. They episodes generally depict low life in a rambling manner and come to an abrupt ending.

The first prose fiction in the nature of the picaresque was Jhon Lyly's 'Euphues' published in 1578 detailing the loves and adventures of a young Athenian called Euphues. Six years later Thomas Nash published his 'Unfortunate Traveller', a more perfect picaresque romance dealing with the travels and adventures of a page called Jacke Wilton. Defoe's 'Moll Flanders' published in 1722 had affinity with the picaresque mode of writing. But Smollet's 'The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom' is a more perfect form of the picaresque novel. Fielding's novel describes through eighteen books the adventures and several love affairs of the young anti-hero Tom Jones.

The object of Picaresque novel is to take a central figure through a succession of scenes and adventures introduce a great number of characters around him and thus build up a

picture of society. The picaresque hero often transcends the level of the rogue into a tragic figure with human attributes as in the case of Fielding's Tom Jones.

Another feature of the Picaresque novel is the dynamic movement of the hero. He should run through a succession of scenes as Tom does during his journey to London. The novelist constructs the picture of society through narration of the hero's wanderings. Tom Jones is a generous and manly youth in spite of the roguish elements in his character.

THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS NOVEL

The term 'Stream of consciousness' was first used coined by philosopher William James to indicate the flow of inner experience of the flux of thought in man. When applied to novel, it is a technique which seeks to record the random and apparently illogical flow of impressions passing through a character's mind. It records the mental activity of a person in all minute details. Through a kind of interior monologue, it shows the mind of the character in such a manner as to reflect the unending activity of the mind with all its apparent irrelevancies and contradictions. The writer does not generally use any punctuation or conventional syntax of consciousness of a person at a particular moment is depicted; only those elements relevant to that moment are selected. James Joyce's 'Ulysses' published in 1922 is considered to be the first great novel in which this technique is used. This novel gives the striking picture of a single's day life – the actions and thoughts of two Irish men. Virginia Woolf perfected the art of the Stream of Consciousness novel in Mrs. Dalloway, 'To the lighthouse' and other novels. The stream of consciousness technique is successfully used by Faulkner and a host of other novelists of the 20th century.

THE SENTIMENTAL NOVEL

The 18th century gave birth to a kind of novel which evoked the sympathies of the reader by presenting characters who undergo sufferings to preserve their morality and integrity. In these sentimental novels virtue is finally rewarded. The first novel of this type was Richardson's Pamela in which the heroine struggles hard to keep virtue against repeated attempts to outrage her honour. The new middle class liked the stress on feeling and sentiment. In Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield also sentimentalism is present. Another sentimental novel is Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling in which the hero is presented in a series of sentimental novel soon evoked satiric reactions from serious writers. Fielding wrote 'Joseph Andrews as a parody of Richardson's 'Pamela'.

The sentimental novel and the melodrama share several common characteristics. In both the stress is on cheap emotions and exaggerated virtues. In both tear-shedding is a common feature. The sentimental novel could not survive against the domestic novels of Jane Austen and the historical novels of Scott.

THE GOTHIC NOVEL

During the latter of the 18th century there was a revival of interest in the life and art of the medieval times. The rational realistic creed of Fielding and Richardson as novelists was questioned by the Votaries of antiquarian ideals. The Gothic novel arose out of this new zeal for medieval life and fashions. There was a new interest in pseudo-gothic castles and ruins described in ancient ballads and legends. The Gothic novels of the period sought to satisfy the readers' craving for mystery and violent emotions and for stories set in remote time and place, depicting ghosts, portends and demonic forces at work.

Generally the central theme of a Gothic novel is romantic novel. A somber, restless villain is the central figure. The innocent beautiful heroine probably imprisoned in a castle wants to be rescued by her lover. The scene is placed in a castle or a dark cloister of a ruined Abbey equipped with frightening secret passages and private chambers. Supernatural events, physical violence and mental anguish are part of the thematic structure of the Gothic novel. Wild and desolate nature provides the background. The central sentiment of the Gothic novel is melancholy. The Gothic novel was, thus, a conscious protest against the rational and realistic creed of the earlier period.

Horace Walpole is called the father of the Gothic novel. His 'The Castle of Otranto', published in 1764, set the trend. He used a medieval setting for this novel. There is death, murder, intrigue and villainy in the novel. The castle looms large as a sinister symbol until a ghost throws it down. Ann Radcliffe continued the gothic tradition in a number of novels. Her best work is 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' published in 1794. It shows an extravagant spectacle of gothic elements like somber castle of Udolpho with its sliding panels, secret passages and supernatural sounds. Another important novel is 'The Italian'. Her method was to arouse terror and curiosity by apparently supernatural events which are finally explained as natural events.

THE DETECTIVE NOVEL

The detective novel is one in which the story and plot are woven around an initial crime or murder the secret of which is solved by an investigator or detective. He does it by a logical assembling and interpretation of evidence known as 'clues'. The detective story turns on the following conventions.

1. A seemingly perfect crime is done.
2. Because of the dull-wittedness of the official investigating authorities like the police, the culprit is not traced.
3. The detective ably supported by his assistant launches an investigation.
4. Several suspects are questioned and let off.
5. In a sensational denouement in which the detective explains in minute details the various aspects of the crime, he solves the mystery and announces and apprehends the criminal.

It was Edgar Allen Poe who launched this literary form with his story 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' in 1841. He followed it up with 'The Purloined Letter' in 1845. 'Auguste Dupin' was Poe's detective character. After about twenty years Emile

Gaboriau, in France, wrote several detective stories after the manner of Poe. Later in the 19th century, in England, Wilkie Collins perfected the art of the detective novel with the publication of his 'Moonstone', Sergeant Cuff, became popular. Probably inspired by Wilkie Collins, his friend Charles Dickens wrote 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood', but could not complete it. Still it was a landmark in the history of detective fiction.

The first full-length detective novel in America was Anna Katherine Green's 'The Leavenworth Case' published in 1878. In 1887 Sherlock Holmes series by Conan Doyle began to appear and continued up to 1927. In these remarkable tales, Conan Doyle created the greatest detective in English fiction, Sherlock Holmes and the charming autobiographical character Dr. Watson.

In the modern times detective fiction has become very popular both in England and America. The twentieth century began with the detective novels of Austin Freeman, Mason and G.K. Chesterton. In his 'The Innocence of Father Brown' Chesterton presented the immortal character, Father Brown. The spread of paperbacks and the establishment of book clubs helped the growth and development of the Detective novel after the fifties. The detective fiction has become so popular that, between 1920 and 1940 alone, more than 8000 titles appeared and at least 1700 writers were engaged in writing detective fiction.

SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction has become popular in modern times. The essence of fiction is the presentation of conflict in the human drama. Science fiction deals with the conflict that arises out of the impact of scientific discoveries on the future life of humanity. The writer of science fiction must be well-versed in the modern scientific knowledge to enable him to create a credible science story. Though, in science fiction writer should not commit errors regarding scientific discoveries, facts and possibilities.

There are two types of science fiction. The first type is based on known facts of science leading to the development of new possibilities as in Arthur C. Clark's 'The Sands of Mars' which deals with the conditions encountered by the explorers on Mars. The second type is science fantasy which is very popular. It introduces any kind of assumptions realistic or imaginary, which are necessary for the story. The strongest element in science fiction is imagination which often goes beyond credibility or rational understanding as in Bradbury's 'Martian Chronicles'.

Modern science fiction combines elements of scientific facts with fantasy. Most common themes in modern science fiction are the following:

1. Space travel, journey to other worlds and encounter with extra-terrestrial beings.
2. Travelling in time past or future.
3. Biological and psychological changes brought about by the application of science in human beings and other species of life.
4. Extraordinary powers acquired by men through the use of technology or abnormal mental powers possessed by some persons.

Modern science fiction presents most of the important technological achievements of the age- radar, rockets, television, robots, electronic, brain, space vehicle, satellite, medicines and drugs with great imagination to create an exotic and weird effect. The most outstanding science fiction writers the sixties have been Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke .Asimov was a prolific writer of science fiction. The science fiction presents not only a fantastic world of wonders but also a world more or less scientifically accurate. Most science fiction writings conform to the general principles of novel writing. They stimulate our imagination satisfy our curiosity and lift us to a world of intense make-believe.