

INCEPTION & GROWTH OF AMERICAN SHORT TALES

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ABSTRACT

The short tales, which is a literary form that dates back centuries, has persisted throughout history. The passing down of stories from one generation to the next has been a common practise throughout the course of human history. Participating in the fun activity of imagining ancient cavemen participating in the pleasure of listening to and repeating stories brings to a pleasant diversion. The origins of short stories may be traced back to ancient types of storytelling, such as mythology, folklore, folktales, and fairy tales. Based on the assertions of R. C. Fedderson, it is often believed that the story was initially conceived during the early stages of language development. It is not feasible to determine with absolute clarity the precise time when everything started with no doubt. An undertaking that would be fruitless would be to attempt to ascertain the first intelligible utterance that was produced by humans. Some people believe that the first form of written literature was comprised of short stories. The origins of some of the most fundamental stories in the history of all civilizations, such as fairy tales, fables, and legends, are so skilfully told that it is impossible to determine where they originated. The assertion that they were the pioneers of the current compact story, on the other hand, is a correct one.

KEY WORDS: Short Tales, Inception, Development, Ancient, Literature.

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of time till the present day, there have always been brief narratives that may be traced back to the earliest memories. These kinds of tales serve not one but multiple societal functions. To the extent that they have been successful in engaging and satisfying audiences, they have also made an effort to sustain long-standing cultural conventions and practises. The fact that these books are required to be included in the curricula of elementary, secondary, and higher education, as well as the fact that they are frequently read aloud in public, is evidence of the tremendous significance of these works. Shirley Ann Grau's opinion that short

stories are still being devoured in a ravenous manner, or as she so brilliantly puts it, "like mad" (IX), is one with which I find myself completely in agreement.

When compared to other genres of literature, the short story is the one that best captures the spirit and sensitivity of the United States society. The vast majority of observers believe that the United States of America is the place where the short tale might have originated. "The short story is a literary genre that originated in the United States and is considered by many to be the most significant American invention," according to Alfred Bendixen (3). The age of the American short story as a whole is getting close to two centuries at this point. Despite this, it has persisted right up until the present moment. "The origin of this event can be traced back to 1819, when Washington Irving played a significant role," asserted Irish critic Frank O'Connor, a stance that is largely acknowledged. "This event may have been significantly influenced by Washington Irving." In spite of the fact that the United States of America has a history of publishing short stories, none of them are significant when seen in the perspective of the contemporary short story genre. In spite of this, it is essential to give credit to two particular names. Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810), Freneau, and Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) are the three individuals that are pertinent to this discussion. Brown is the one who has the most extensive name recognition among them. Numerous works by Brown, including those written by Edgar Huntly, Wieland, and Arthur Mervyn, played an important part in the process of "Americanizing" the Gothic genre.

When compared to its European equivalent, which depended on imagery of destroyed castles and other things that did not exist in America, Brown's paintings presented a Gothic style that was more symbolically relevant and significant. Brown is widely recognized as the first American author and a significant figure in the history of Gothic literature. He is also considered to be the founder of the genre. Brown was the first author to bring the spooky and strong atmosphere of Gothic fiction to American settings, such as towns, forests, tunnels, and secluded estates. At the same time, he shifted the ingredients of fear to various locales. Between the beginning of the American Civil War in 1861 and the beginning of "World War I in Europe in 1914", the period that is referred to as the "era of the short story" can be specified as the time period in question. The compact and compelling prose tale, which was defined by its atmospheric and impressionistic style, acquired appeal across the Western world, notably in

France, Russia, England, and the United States of America. In a short amount of time, magazines became the dominant format for publishing literary works. It is said in *The Cambridge History of American and English Literature* that the genre initially lacked structure and was usually saddled with excessive sentimentality, manufactured effects, moralizing motives, and a dominant background. In addition, the genre was commonly seen as a dominant backdrop. On the other hand, as time went on, it steadily improved in terms of proportion, self-control, and artistic sophistication. In due time, it came to be acknowledged as a separate genre, one that was well suited to the temperament and culture of the United States throughout the nineteenth century.

Gift books had a notable level of popularity throughout that era. Wealthy ladies from both North America and England were the target demographic for these gift books, which were targeted at them. The works that were included in these journals included poetry, artwork, and literary criticism. A publishing of the volumes was carried out on an annual basis. When the editors of these prominent magazines wanted to improve their existing collection of artwork, they started seeking brief literary pieces to fill the pages of their publications. This is a significant departure from the standard method that is now being followed. The first ever commercial market for short stories may be traced back to this particular beginning. The literary publications that are in circulation today can trace their roots back to these gift booklets. *Twice Told Tales* was an anthology of brief anecdotes that was produced by Nathaniel Hawthorne expressly for the gift book market with the intention of being published in the year 1837. A number of reviewers expressed their admiration for the anthology. As a result, short stories sprang out of nowhere. Two volumes, spanning the years 1804 and 1864, make up the collection of short stories written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The first one was made available to the public in the spring of 1837, and the second one was put out in the year 1842. The fact that each of the stories in this collection had been published in journals in the past served as the inspiration for the title of this collection.

Washington Irving, who lived from 1783 to 1859, was the first American novelist to write short tales that were considered to be remarkable. In the year 1802, he made his first appearance in print under the alias Jonathan Oldstyle. He published a series of letters that were both incisive and piercing in the *Morning Chronicle*. Following his relocation to England in 1815 in order to take over the family company, he achieved international notoriety in 1819 and 1820

as a result of the publishing of *The Sketch Book* of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. Before he passed away, he finished writing a thorough biography of George Washington that was spread across five volumes. In addition, during his existence, he was successful in that he regularly and continuously released works. Irving unquestionably made a significant contribution to the development of short story writing, which was a form that captivated him to a great extent. He was aware that the two most important characteristics of a well-crafted short story were the effective mix of a powerful impact and language that was succinct. It is beyond a doubt that these qualities are observable in the narratives that he has written. The collection of his short stories includes "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Both of these stories have been collected. Between the years 1819 and 1829, the *Sketch Book* was the first book that both writers had ever contributed to for publication. It is Charles Neider's contention that these tales exude a pleasant sense of nostalgia all throughout the reader. There is little doubt that the profound and meaningful settings that Irving depicts surely have an effect on the nostalgic tone that is present in his work. Not only do these surroundings contribute to the overall beauty of his writings, but they also serve to excite the author's imagination and improve the style of his writing. However, the irony that can be found in Irving's most famous work is not only nuanced and delicate, but it is also pleasant. It is my opinion that these characteristics are compelling, and that they provide an element of magic to the writing. (xxxix)

The Washington Irving unquestionably contributed to the development of the American short story. He was the first American author to completely position his writings in the United States of America, although deriving influence from the traditions of Germany and the Netherlands. In the realm of writing, he was a pioneer in both formal and informal forms of the English language. He did not have a particularly strong desire to write brief narratives that had a didactic message. His one and only goal was to make sure that his readers had a good time reading his publications. Young writers in the United States found a wealth of ideas and motivation from Irving, who provided as a source of substantial inspiration. It was reported by George William Curtis that every young person in the country who aspired to be a writer would get words of sympathy, regard, and support from Irving upon meeting him (Kime R. Wayne, 152). Edgar Allan Poe, on the other hand, stated that despite Irving's uniqueness, he is considered

to be excessively overrated. Irving felt himself to be more of an essayist and historian than a writer of short stories. He believed this to be the case.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, who lived from 1804 to 1864, is a pioneer in the field of literature and deserves a great deal of respect. There is evidence that he was born in Salem. He was born into a family of Puritan immigrants, and his great-grandfather had been a judge during the renowned Salem witch trials, when he handed down death sentences to those who were found guilty of spreading witchcraft. He changed the spelling of his parents' name to Hawthorne by adding the letter 'w' to it, despite the fact that his parents had written their name as Hathorne. Following his mother's passing, Hawthorne spent a period of his boyhood in a state of isolation with his mother. 1808 was the year when his father passed away from yellow fever. *Twice-Told Tales* is the title of three collections of novellas that he has written in addition to the five novels that he has written. *Fanshawe*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of Seven Gables*, *The Blithedale Romance*, and *The Marble Faun* are all examples of works of literature. *Taking Moses and the Snow-Image* from an old house that has been abandoned.

Hawthorne initially perceived himself as being confined to producing short stories and lacked a sense of prospects for his future. In 1830, he made his modest entrance into the world of published authors with his story of witchcraft, titled "The Hollow of the three Hills," which was published in *The Salem Gazette*. He continued to write similar short stories for the next twenty years. Between 1830 and 1852, he produced a plethora of one hundred tales and illustrations before shifting his focus to novels. Following the release of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850, he redirected his attention from brief stories to longer works, which he referred to as "romances."

Twice-Told Tales consists of two volumes, comprising a collection of short stories. The first book was published in the spring of 1837, and the second volume was released in 1842. All of the tales had been published in magazines and books for a minimum of 10 to 12 years prior to this. Nevertheless, the overall audience response was somewhat underwhelmed. These stories may not have resonated with readers, but they brought immense joy to the creator. Consequently, Hawthorne decided to change their name to "*Twice-Told Tales*" for the subsequent edition. Horatio Bridge, an acquaintance of Hawthorne, proposed that he gather these hitherto untitled pieces, and he even extended a monetary offer of \$250 to cover the costs of their publishing.

Regrettably, Hawthorne's diverse compilation failed to receive any plaudits or attention. Following the significant publicity garnered by the books, Bridge published a review authored by Hawthorne in the Boston Post, acknowledging his authorship.

Puritanism is a significant theme in Hawthorne's short stories. After separating from the Anglican Church in England, the Puritans developed a strong and influential presence in New England. They upheld their puritan perspective both in their personal lives and in the realm of literature. The notion of inherent human goodness and wickedness is intricately linked to the core tenet of Puritanism. Superficially, someone may appear virtuous, yet they may conceal profound wickedness. Likewise, those who appear malevolent outwardly may possess inherent goodness within. The main characters in several of his short works undergo bizarre encounters that blur the distinction between reality and fantasy. The blurred boundary is seen in the story "Young Goodman Brown." The authenticity of Goodman Brown's perception of a witch assembly in the forest remains enigmatic. Despite the meticulous depiction of the story's events, its incredibility profoundly impacts Goodman Brown's life. However, the sudden transition from the gathering to Goodman Brown's awakening in the forest gives the impression of a disturbing nightmare. The ribbons adorning Faith's look, along with other enchanting attributes such as the devil's staff resembling a serpent, contribute to the perception that they are integral components of a dream. The event, whether imagined or truly experienced, irreversibly transforms Goodman Brown.

Based on Poe's evaluation of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales, it appears that the story is of a higher level than both the essay and the poetry. "The act of narrating a story 'possesses particular benefits that the book does not afford,' he said. The field is certainly more advanced when compared to the essay, as the comparison demonstrates. With regard to a number of features, it is superior than poetry. In continuation of his statement, he continued to say, "A skilled writer has skillfully composed a narrative." If someone possesses intelligence, he does not modify his thinking to suit his surroundings; instead, he methodically strategizes a particular, unique goal he intends to reach, and subsequently fabricates conditions to get that intended conclusion. In the event that the very first activity does not end up producing the intended result, the first efforts will be deemed unnecessary. Regardless of whether it is done directly or indirectly, every single component of the composition must comply to the predetermined design

in a manner that is completely consistent and without any deviations. Ultimately, a picture is created with an extraordinary level of expertise and attention to detail, which results in the spectator experiencing a great sense of joy in their imagination. However, the idea of the novel has been effectively presented in a manner that is partial but still complete, despite the fact that the book's purpose is impossible. It is not suitable to be too brief in this context, just as it is not appropriate in poetry; nonetheless, being too lengthy is absolutely dreadful.

The ability of short stories to create a sense of unity, their deliberate avoidance of moral instruction and symbolic representation, the distinction between epic poetry and short stories, the condensed nature of the art form, its capacity to evoke emotions, its preferred subject matter, and the significance of eliciting emotional responses are some of the characteristics that Pope highlights as being fundamental to short stories.

A notable author of Romantic short tales, Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) was born in the United States. 1831 was the year that Edgar Allan Poe made his way to New York with the intention of having his poems published. Each and every publication that he sent his stories to turned them down. It was tough for Poe to make ends meet, maintain relationships, and advance his career. A letter of pleading for assistance was sent by John Allan, but he did not react to it. Following John Allan's passing in 1834, Edgar was not included in the fortune that he had received. After Edgar's tale "The Manuscript Found in a Bottle" won a competition in 1835, he was able to gain a position as a newspaper editor. This was a significant accomplishment for Edgar.

In many cases, the reputation that Poe has earned as a poet is considered to be more valuable than his reputation as a storyteller. Additionally, there are others who consider him to be the first truly outstanding American critic. The horrific and unsettling stories "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Tell-tale Heart" are among his most well-known works, and it is possible that some persons have read them. Themes such as murder, death, vengeance, and insanity were regularly subjected to investigation in Poe's gothic works. There have been several instances in which Hollywood has taken concepts from the works of Edgar Allan Poe. In the days of Edgar Allan Poe, readers were unprepared for many of the stories he wrote because of the tremendous dread they contained.

Poe utilised the terms "grotesque, arabesque & ratiocinative" in order to differentiate between the many forms and goals of his novels. Poe's creative works, such as "The Purloined Letter" and "Murders in the Rue Mortuary," played a significant part in the development of the detective fiction genre when it was first established. Poe's characters, particularly Sherlock Holmes, served as a source of inspiration for other authors of mystery literature. Poe tried his hand at writing romantic comedies and even moved into the realm of writing unorthodox love stories. In his endeavour to shed light on the nature of the world, he made use of a terminology that is reminiscent of the fundamental principles of quantum physics. "Journeys in hot air balloons, adventures on the open ocean, and searches for buried treasures" were some of the other topics that he discussed in his literary works. Poe felt that the success of a literary narrative was primarily decided by its capacity to elicit emotional responses from readers, rather than being exclusively dependent on the storyline of the story itself. Poe highlighted that the unity of effect or impression is an essential component in almost all forms of human expression, including literature. It is possible, in an ideal scenario, to accomplish this unity within the allotted amount of time. After only a short period of time, the reader is completely enthralled by the universe that the author has painstakingly built. To ensure that the tale has the desired impact, it should be kept brief so as not to interfere with the events that are taking place on a global scale.

CONCLUSION

Although short stories had always been a part of American culture in the form of an informal oral tradition, they did not have a real publishing venue until the western middle class became literate in the 19th century. At that time, the market for magazines and periodicals was established to meet the needs of the newly reading public. For the first time, writers were able to demonstrate their abilities via the medium of short tales. Due to the fact that readers showed a need for short tales, writers discovered that they were in possession of a new literary form. It is almost as if my assertion is validated by the fact that the short tale appears to have emerged effortlessly at its climax. Neither clunky beginnings nor progressive development over the course of generations were present. It is clear that the gift has always been dormant inside the human imagination, as evidenced by the fact that Hawthorne and Poe were able to produce short tales that are considered to be classics and timeless from the very beginning, which was in the early to

middle of the 19th century. Both of these renowned American authors are responsible for the whole development of the short story in their own works.

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