CHAPTER I

Introduction
The Short Story is the only form that has developed recently enough for American writers to have participated in its development from the beginning. The contribution of American writers to the emergence, development and establishment of the modern Short Story is very great. In fact, they transformed the genre and dominated its modern development. As Frank O'Connor has rightly pointed out 'the Americans have handled the Short Story so wonderfully that one can say that it is a national art form.'

In fact, the Americans have produced a body of work in the Short Story form that is probably not surpassed by any other national literature.

As an art form, the Short Story proper developed during the nineteenth century with such writers as Hawthorne, Melville and Poe in the United States, Maupassant and Sadece in France and Pushkin, Gogol and Turgenev in Russia.

A. Walton Litz is of the opinion that in the early nineteenth century, the Short Story evolved from a number of sources, chief among which are the eighteenth century essay and the traditional ballad and tale. He also mentions

the fact that the new emphasis on painting and drawing influenced the American Short Story considerably.

In America, the publication of Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon Gent* in 1819-20 marked the beginning of a long tradition in the American Short Story. Significantly, Irving called his first collection of stories 'Sketches'. In fact, he saw his own tales as pictorial representation of events and places and thus called his work 'Sketches'. *The Sketch Book* came after a period of several years of non-literary activity and written in England where Irving stayed in 1815. It was an immediate success both in England and in America. The book contains mainly essays and sketches dealing with English subjects and themes. "The Broken Heart", "The Widow and Her Son", "Rip Van Winkle", "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" are a few well known tales included in *The Sketch Book*. They offered a humorous image of the taciturn and innocent American rustic that has continued to exist, with variations by other writers, down to the present. About "Rip Van Winkle", Arthur Voss observes:

Deceptively simple on the surface, "Rip Van Winkle" is actually a rich and subtle story made so by its reflections of folklore, legends and myths and by its psychological implications. The story charms us with its gentle humor that was typically American, lightness of touch and wonderfully vivid pictorial quality.

Hawthorne, Melville and Poe called their works "tale" as did Irving in a later volume "Tales of A Traveller". Hawthorne called his first published collection of stories *Twice Told Tales*. Melville called his early collection *The Piazza Tales* and Poe; *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. Ian Rait is of the opinion that the word 'tale' is apt for the kind of fiction these writers were writing "with its stylized characterization, detachment from normal social behaviour, and tendency toward allegory." 4

In his essay on "The American Short Story at Mid-century" Ray B. West points out that a sketch may be differentiated from the tale by pointing to its emphasis upon atmosphere and scene, its subordination of action and adventure. However, according to him:

--- It would seem more reasonable to say that both the sketch and the tale (if there ever was a real distinction) have been absorbed into our modern concept of the Short Story. 5

Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville and Edgar Allan Poe were the most important Short Story writers during the 1830s. They tried to make a very sharp break with the tradition of the short prose narrative known as "tale" and made a clear beginning of what is called the 'Short Story'.


The contribution of Edgar Allan Poe to the art of the Short Story is noteworthy. His originality and power were recognised by the Europeans earlier than by his own countrymen. The French symbolists and the Russian writers like Dostoevski were impressed by him. Nathan Click points out that Poe possessed a strange visionary mind that put his stories and poems outside the mainstream of American writing. According to him:

The French symbolists were enraptured by his fevered imagination and his intoxication with language. In Russia, Dostoevski was so impressed by Poe's "fantastic realism" that he published translations of the "The Tell Tale Heart" and other Gothic tales.

Poe provided one of the classic definitions of the Short Story which he distinguished from the novel by its unity and intensity. Poe was also among the first to consider the Short Story as belonging to the highest region of art and to suggest the formal discipline necessary to achieving it. Obviously, Poe aimed at singleness of effect and also suggested that the length of the Short Story should be such that it could be read at one sitting. However, his influence was hardly visible in the naturalistic or realistic work done by the major American Short Story writers during the opening decade of the twentieth century. Hawthorne's stories had a much more serious intent.

He depicted the moral and spiritual nature of men and
resorted to symbolism, allegory and other means to achieve
the effects he intended to. In his stories like "Young
Goodman Brown", and "The Minister's Black Veil", Hawthorne
examined the puritan concept of original sin and the inher-
ited doctrines of good and evil. The thought and behavi-
our of his characters are described from an almost modern
psychological perspective.

Herman Melville wrote only a small body of Short
Stories. Yet his stories like "Bartleby", "Benito Cereno"
and "The Encantadas" are very impressive. In tone and
method his stories owe a good deal to Hawthorne's example.
The achievement of "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno" gave him
the distinction of being the only American writer before
the Civil War, excepting Hawthorne, to write stories with
serious themes.

In fact, it is to these three writers, Hawthorne,
Melville and Poe that one must look for the beginning of
the Short Story in America. Of course, the American Short
Story was not an isolated and independent phenomenon. It
has been directly or indirectly influenced by such writers
as Goethe in Germany, Pushkin, Gogol and Chekhov in Russia,
Maupassant, Flaubert and Zola in France, and Scott, Hardy,
But, factors typically American, have had much to do with the growth of the Short Story in America. For example, there was the development of periodicals and magazines in America with a consequent demand for writings which could be presented in a whole manner within a single issue. As a result, between 1830 and 1860, the number of Short Stories written and published in America was considerable. There was also a body of native materials which combined with more or less typical nineteenth century American attitudes, and determined the method or technique by which such materials could be shaped into a suitable form.

The elements of myth and folklore also contributed to the development of American Short Story. In fact, much of this folklore and myth came with the arrival of the settlers. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the settlers had to face a new environment in which the old traditions became outmoded. They invented tales about themselves and their relation to the place where they had settled. The earliest of these stories were told by itinerant peddlers who travelled from one place to another. To pass the time they narrated stories while resting by the camp fire, travelling by boat on the river, loafing around the stove at the local tavern or relaxing at home before the fireside. Thus they gave information and entertainment by narrating events that might have happened to them in their wanderings.
Sometimes the narrators would embellish the happenings in such a way as to transform them to an elaborate comment on frontier society. In the initial stages, the stories described the qualities of shrewdness, simplicity and energy that were considered important qualities for survival in an alien and harsh environment. Gradually, the stories became an almost mythical means by which the native Americans came to recognize their own character. Then, Americans had, what amounted to an oral tradition of ‘tall tales’ which obviously and greatly exaggerated the deeds and hardships of the hero. Walter Blair has rightly noted that—much of the (later stories) had their origin in the greatest American folk art – the oral story telling. It has been generally maintained that written narrative literature emerges from an oral tradition. This is true for the American Short Story also.

The “Tall Tales” helped the American Settlers to reconcile themselves to the difficulties of settlement and eventually it was possible for the narrator to form a typical style of his own. They owed no debt to Aristotle or to the Romantic movement or to the ‘Gothic horror tradition’ or to any other historical influence except probably that of the democratic individualism of the American

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Sir,

I am happy to submit four copies of my thesis entitled "A Critical Study of the American Short Story of the Twenties with Special Reference to Sherwood Anderson". The copies have been endorsed by Prof. R. A. Malagi, Head, Department of English and my guide Dr. A. Amin.

Kindly do the needful.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

(P.A. Abraham)
frontier. To quote Frederick Jackson Turner, a 'restless energy' and 'dominant individualism' are the contributions of the frontier to the American characters. When the American settlers shifted towards the West, they took their tales with them. The tales were enlarged and changed according to the needs of the new environment.

By the nineteenth century these folk tales had become so much a part of the social fabric of America that a group of writers decided to put them in writing. American newspapers were full of tales of the adventures of such mythical heroes like Davy Crockett and Mike Fink. Almost every aspect of American life was encompassed by their exploits. The writers showed an increasing tendency to use American settings, a vernacular language and a broad, rough humour. They started using a looser form and a looser technique than Poe and the others did. It was probably the presence of the frontier humour that enabled the Americans to turn their eyes from Europe and see something uniquely their own. As the frontier advanced westward, as civilization came face to face with wilderness, and savagery, the influence of Europe disappeared and the American character took on new and independent outlines.

Another noteworthy fact about these stories is that these writers assumed the pattern of a journey. In fact, the 'Journey' became one of the most important motifs used by writers of American fiction — more so those of the Short Story. The journey became a metaphor of self-discovery and the protagonist's quest for community relationships and values. Daniel Hoffmann examines this pattern of journey in his book *Form and Fable in American Fiction* and aptly states:

---the hero of American folk tale, legend and romance is likely to go on a journey of self-discovery. The imagination of our romance writer is clearly attuned to the relation between the individual and his own experience as "Representative Man" to use Emerson's phrase, in his representativeness the hero experiences the concern of his culture to define its own identity as he seeks his.10

It can also be seen that the world created by these writers is neither realistic nor imaginative. It is on the border line and the frontier experience is the border experience. And unlike the traditional stories, these American writers did not deal predominantly with social themes. As Lionel Trilling has pointed out, "the reality they sought was only tangential to society."11

The American Short Story seems to be devoted to projecting a kind of contrast whereas the traditional story tends to resolve these contradictions. In fact, these contradictions acted as a catalyst to the American Imagination. The writers sought in their stories the moral values necessary for the regeneration of human society and the tensions in the American experience helped them immensely to explore this problem. Thus the tension between tradition and progress, between the past and the present or future, between unfettered individualism and social cohesion, between optimism and pessimism, between Europe and America abound in those stories. These tensions of the American society can be seen in the stories of Hawthorne, Melville and other writers of the nineteenth century, and have become the legacy of later writers like Anderson, Hemingway and Faulkner. Of course all of them differ where the scope and treatment of their subjects are concerned. But the tensions and problems that their work project are all reflections at different levels of the basic split or tension in the American experience.

American democracy is founded on the belief that every man has some unalienable rights through the exercise of which he may develop his moral and intellectual capacities to the full. Probably Emerson had this idea in mind when he declared, "Let men stand alone, go along
and possess the universe." Thus, the ideal man for
the Americans was the free man, the man free to roam
around in search of goals, a self-reliant man. But
such a freedom did not imply the licence to encroach
on the rights of others. Thomas Jefferson, one of the
architects of the Declaration of Independence believed
in the natural moral sense implanted by the creator in
each and every human being making one equal to another.
Thus, liberty was of great value to the Americans. In
fact, it was this democratic flavour and the height of
democratic principles that shaped the new nation. Yet,
ironically, while the Americans were advocating the
highest principles of democracy, they were also refusing
to share those very privileges with the Negroes and the
Red Indians.

Under these circumstances the Americans were com-
pelled to ascribe their conception of the good life to
the community or they had to oppose, wholly or in part,
the values to which the community has committed itself
and be excluded from it. Therefore, in American stories,
the 'innocents' have to struggle hard and face the
trials and tribulations of life.

The universe depicted by the American writers of
the Nineteenth century is essentially pessimistic and
tragic. Yet it is these very qualities that have led the writers in the direction of comedy. For without a comic dimension their end point becomes a kind of escapism or annihilation. As comedy restores balance, order, sanity and possibility, their tragic insights make its countervailing force all the more compelling. Hawthorne and Melville satirized manners, politics, the business world, technology and ideas that contributed to self-deception and self-esteem.

American humour is associated with the frontier life. It is characterised by its contempt for elegance and manners, its comic exaggeration of danger, personal heroism, its well detailed natural settings and its use of local dialects. Mark Twain's works are important so far as the use of American humour is concerned. By introducing humour and the use of vernacular, Mark Twain has indeed developed a new literary style. The general tendency of his humour is "to degrade beauty, to debase distinction and thus simplify the lives of men."

Ian Raid is of the opinion that the most important formative influence on the American Short Story was American humour. It was marked by conciseness and suggestiveness. In fact, it aroused a new interest in the use of slang. According to Raid, it was the parent
of the American Short Story. In this context, humour also includes what is seen as wry, poignant and disillusioned. Constance Rourke in her book *American Humour* mentions three central figures of American folklore. They are the shrewd, itinerant Yankee peddler, the audacious roving backwoods frontiersman, and the resilient displaced Negro slave. These figures and the strand of native humour they represent found expression chiefly in the American Short Story. Each of the figures mentioned above is a wanderer without destination.

In the final analysis, the tradition of the American Short Story is one that finds reality in the individual conscience, but does not conceive that conscience as, in the ordinary sense merely self-regarding. On the contrary, it is marked by universality and originality. The reality depicted in these stories is not merely a visionary reality that takes lightly "the world of ordinary passions and longings." No doubt, the stories are pre-occupied with the ordinary world. They believe in the individuality and self-reliance of man, but at the same time they also believe that what man sets out to do is "to justify the ways of God to man". Here, the tension is all the more great because the American writer has a peculiar concern for the world. The tension
that is to take place in the mind of an American is essentially a private one, and it is indeed characteristically a tension in which the hero seeks in Scott Fitzgerald's words "to dominate life."

Thus one sees that the American writer is trying to project an ideal. His search is in fact derived from his hope, expectation, and experience. In the words of Daniel G. Hoffmann:

The core of the American experience has been a radical search for identity by attempting to free ourselves from old forms, old orders, old hierarchies of rank and belief to discover the emergent man.12

As stated earlier, the very conditions of a frontier society with its absence of settled patterns and with its opportunities for freedom and individuality were ideally suited for this search. This search has been a part of the entire history of the literature growing out of European civilization. To the American writer, life has a distinctive quality and a set of interests of his own. He is directed by a specific set of problems or tensions growing out of the historical background of America's emergence. These American writers together

contributed to a significant tradition with the result that a new national form of literature was born with a character, flavour and history of its own. It burst upon the world with a tremendous force charged with emotional energy.

The main philosophic interest of the nineteenth century was nature. The relation of man to nature was a very important literary subject. The early Romantics who dealt with the subject of nature delineated scenes of pastoral beauty. They looked upon nature as nearly benevolent. In America also such ideas of nature were in vogue. Even the Indians appeared to James Fenimore Cooper as "noble savages". Emerson's nature is for the most part, as idyllic as Wordsworth's. Thoreau believed that nature would provide all the necessities if man would submit to its benevolent demands.

The first serious questioning of these assumptions occurred with the rise of the Short Story form in America. In Hawthorne's early tales, one can mark a dramatic conflict between man's idea about himself as an innocent child of nature and the real facts of history or contemporary events. For him the noble savages of Cooper became symbols of evil. Though Poe showed little interest in nature, the landscape he borrowed from his
Gothic forbes was inhabited by decay. Melville believed that life in nature is a struggle, heroic but bound to be doomed against the unknown forces of evil. These early realizations meant that American fiction in general and American Short Story in particular had found its subject.

It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the American Short Story underwent further development in the hands of writers like Henry James and Mark Twain. In his writings, James showed that the Short Story form could be used for serious literary pursuits. James was probably the first writer to use the term 'story' to describe his own short prose narratives. He gave importance to form in fiction. For him, a story was not merely an arrangement of events, but an organic whole covering as much as possible of life. Like Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville before him, Henry James through his stories showed how the Short Story could by its inner penetration open different vistas of man's mind. James also revolted against the restrictions of the length of the Short Story that had been fixed by the magazine publishers. He also raised questions concerning nature of reality and his stories had revealed the true and the false, as they were expressed particularly in social manners and in art.
James believed that art should be firmly based on life. Art was for him an autonomous form of knowledge, as science or philosophy is autonomous. James saw the Short Story as an organic whole in which none of the parts may be considered in isolation, in which each element must contribute its full share towards the achieving of a final effect.

While James added new dimensions to the form of the Short Story, Mark Twain infused the Short Story with local colour by using the regional dialect. He had utilized his experiences in the American West to illustrate the advantages of "innocence" and "common sense" over social pretensions and romantic ideals. Mark Twain achieved his earliest success with frontier "tall tales" — one notable for its outrageous exaggeration. But as Nathan Glick has pointed out, his unique contribution to American Short Stories is his portrayal of small town life, depicting Americans as eccentric, well-intentioned, colourfully colloquial and individualistic.

By the end of the nineteenth century with the completed writings of Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, James, Twain and Bret Harte, the first great period of the American Short Story had come to an end. The period from 1890 to 1920 is of considerable significance in the history of the
American Short Story. Henry James reached the height of his power as a master of the Short Story of character, manners, morals and ethical issues. Helen Garland through his collection of stories entitled *Rain-Travelled Roads*, added a new dimension to the regional story by making it express social protest without appreciably sacrificing narrative art. Stephen Crane demonstrated in his short stories like "The Open Boat", the skill of transforming journalism into literature. Edith Wharton and Willa Cather, both of whom had established themselves as distinguished Short Story writers before James' death in 1916, carried on the latter's tradition of the realistic story.

In all of those writers, the American "voice" or what D.H. Lawrence called the American art speech, had spoken with varying degrees of effectiveness. All of them tried to project the American background and the American character in their stories. Undoubtedly those writers had established the Short Story in what Poe had said it was capable of achieving, "the rank of the highest achievements of art".

By the end of the nineteenth century the carefully made, ingeniously plotted story had become a well-established tradition. But it was during the first decade
of the twentieth century that the type was carried to its ultimate lengths in the stories of O. Henry. Learning from his French master Maupassant, O Henry added most of his stories with an ironical coincidence that came to be known as the 'O Henry Twist'. He achieved tremendous popularity in his time and wrote his stories for mass circulation magazines and newspapers, with the intent, as he put it, of pleasing 'Mr. Everybody'. "A Strange Story", "The Last Leaf", "The Gift of the Magi" and "The Cop and the Anthem" are some of the well-known stories of O. Henry.

But the twentieth century started badly for American writers. The enemy was of course the Genteeel Tradition which insisted that no book should be published unless it was a 'decent' work that could 'safely' be read by proper young girls. The Genteeel Tradition hindered the publication of experimental and serious literary work. But in the later part of the second decade of the twentieth century, the reaction against it had set in. The publication of Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio (1919) marked the emergence of the modern American Short Story. It was indeed Anderson who propelled the Short Story form in America. The book was an important influence on the writers of the period. Many critics unanimously agreed that it was from Winesburg, Ohio that the American Short Story developed.
A new group of young writers emerged in America in the 1920s. The first World War had brought about a widespread disillusionment among the young men who had participated in it. They lost faith in the established values and this in turn led to a revolt against the Cult of Tradition in writing. Thus the war furnished both subject and theme for the new generation of writers. Many of these young writers became expatriates in Europe, especially in Paris, where literary developments were taking place offering writers ample opportunities to write seriously. Then almost exactly at the mid-point between the two wars, there was a depression. During this time, money ran out and the expatriates had to come home. Once back in America they were led by conditions of depression and they imbibed an interest in radical ideas. The environment was full of disillusionments and the writers of the period delineated this sense of alienation and disillusionment in their stories. However, these writers were filled with a typical American energy and optimism. Their attack on the provincialism of American life and manners and the gross hypocrisy of American public life in their time are reflections on the American society of the 1920s.

Thus, the first World War did a good deal to make possible the achievement of this generation of writers. It was indeed the shock of the war that forced Americans to recognize that their country was a responsible part of
Western culture. The war helped them to add to their nineteenth century predecessor's understanding of the American soul "an imaginative grasp of American society and of the relation of the individual soul to it."13 According to Arthur Mizener, the main difference between the American writers after the First World War and their predecessors of the nineteenth century

is not a matter of what they saw when they looked at America or even of the main outlines of the tales they constructed about the relation of the American hero to his community. It is rather a matter of how they felt about that community, of their sensing the richness of American society as a subject for fiction, and their consequent feeling that it was possible to write directly out of the whole range of American experience, individual and social --14

Some of the American Short Story writers of the period also had a closer identification with the romance of sports - basketball, football, fishing, hunting, horse-racing - making him more conscious of violence and order and things masculine. They became more sensitive to the myth of the hero as well as to the day to day struggles of the common man, recording his responses to fear, pride, honour and courage. The Midwest itself was the new battle ground between preservation of the land and humanism on the one hand and the steady encroachment of

industrialism and mechanization on the other. These factors were also responsible for the revitalization of the American Short Story of the twenties.

Among the prominent Short Story writers who started writing during this period were Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Scott Fitzgerald and Katherine Anne Porter. It was these five American writers who perfected the form of the modern Short Story in America. They stand at the top of the list in what has been called the American Short Story's 'most brilliant period'. Many Short Story writers like Conrad Aiken, Stephen Vincent Benet, Erskine Caldwell, Willa Cather and others began and matured during these years. What is noteworthy is that it was with the success of Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* that this whole cluster of brilliant writers emerged in the field of the Short Story:

It was like a great current of fresh air, sweeping across what had threatened to become a parched desert of continued dishonest writing. Writers felt freed by it, including Faulkner and Hemingway whose names were given to what should be called the Anderson influence.15

Critics and scholars began to have a renewed interest in the new literary form and the American Short Story became a unique flowering of an art form. Though it emerged from

the American tradition of the Short Story, the short stories of the twenties were in many ways different from the sources from which they proceeded. The changes which the writers of the twenties made in the Short Story art are easier to see and feel than to describe accurately. But, as Philip Stevick has pointed out:

---it is not so much a revolution in subject matter that the short fiction of the twenties represents, although there is no lack of new subject matter. It is rather a revolution in form.16

He further states that for all its economy and singleness of purpose, the American Short Story is remarkably eclectic and derivative. It draws its strength from areas of general culture that have no obvious connection with it.

For example, journalism has influenced many of these writers. In fact, some of the distinguished writers of the nineteenth century like Poe, Bret Harte, Howells, Mark Twain and Stephen Crane combined the writing of their memorable Short Stories with careers as working journalists. At any rate, journalism did impose a certain discipline upon the imagination of these writers. It is significant that George Willard, the protagonist of "Nineteen,

--- Ohio is a journalist.

Anderson also was fond of journalism, and, later on, he became the proprietor of a country newspaper. To quote Philip Stevick again:

From Crane to Hemingway, the journalism that affects the nature of the Short Story is both economical and precise so as to serve the wishes of the editor and the busy reader, and highly personal so that the distinctive voice is never lost.17

Photography and films also influenced those writers in developing their visual imagination. Anderson was attracted to the framed and fixed moment in which the inner life of the subject is implicit in his visual stance. The words Anderson uses to describe Wing Biddlebaum in "Hands" show his fascination for visual imagination:

Wing Biddlebaum talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers for ever active, for ever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, come forth and become the piston rods of his machinery of expression.18

It is with a photographic imagination that Faulkner's narrator in "A Rose for Emily" says:

We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background his back.

17. Ibid., P. 17

All references to this book, hereafter, are to this edition.
Gertrude Stein was among the first to acknowledge the significance of the motion picture in her early work, *Three Lives*, stories which presented the characters of three women through their thoughts.

With the advent of Freud and the study of human psyche, a new emphasis was placed on the awareness of subconscious motives, on the conflicts between reality and pleasure principles, and oedipal ambivalences especially in the adolescent. These writers were influenced by Freud's emphasis on the importance of sex in human life and often it is disguised in different ways. The oedipal relationship of George Willard and his mother, the general sense of sexual deprivation on the part of some of Anderson's characters are examples of Freudian impact on Anderson. Anderson denied having read Freud and it seems useful to accept what Frederick Hoffmann says:

Anderson developed his themes quite independently of Freudian influence, but with such a startling likeness of approach that critics fell into the most excusable error of their times; it seemed an absolute certainty that Anderson should have been influenced directly by Freud.


Anyhow, it is certain that the art and the intellectual life of the time had a great impact upon these American Short Stories. There is no doubt that these contemporary realities of the twenties created "a tumultuous tension-filled ambience in which the Short Story could and did flourish."

The word 'Short Story' indicates that it is a story which is short. This is at best a half truth so far as the American Short Story of the twenties is concerned. In fact, there is no hard and fast rule regarding the length of these stories other than that provided by the narrator itself. The length of such Short Stories varies because for the writer there is no such thing as essential form. However, his frame of reference has never been the totality of a human life. Hence the length of the Short Story will vary according to the needs of the theme which means a Short Story may be long also. For example, some of Faulkner's stories like "The Bear" and "Spotted Horses" are so lengthy that it has been difficult to decide whether they can be categorized as "Short Stories" at all. But what makes these good stories is that structurally they create a concentration of mood and singlemindedness of purpose. There is an 'expansiveness' and 'inclusiveness'...

in Faulkner’s stories. On the contrary, Hemingway secretes his meaning in a few phrases, a few spare notations of gesture and speech. Hemingway condenses his language. He seems to believe that an excess of words would blunt the reader’s sensitivity. Anderson also had that gift for summing up, for pouring a life time into a ‘moment’. In short, the American Short Story of the twenties is a highly elastic medium. Joyce Carol Oates points out that genuine artists create their own mode of art and nothing interests them except the free play of imagination. H.E. Bates also maintains that the Short Story writer is the freest of all artists in words. Hence he says very aptly:

——the Short Story whether short or long, poetical or reported, plotted or sketched, concrete or cobweb, should have an insistent and eternal fluidity that slips through the hands.23

It is, in fact, the realization of this freedom that has altered the character of the American Short Story of the twenties.


Every detail in a Short Story must add to its oneness or wholeness. Chekhov once remarked that when one has finished writing a Short Story, one should delete the beginning and the end. Like poetry these stories maintain a sustained effect. To quote Thomas Gullason:

---most modern short story writers are agreed that their medium is closer to poetry than to novel.24

The art of the Short Story demands a conscious awareness. The American writers who have excelled in Short Stories have all indicated a deliberate awareness of the problem of their craft. That may be the reason why the Short Story in America has become a mature form of literature as genuinely artful as such older forms like the lyric or narrative verse.

Moreover, the Short Story writer selects a point at which to approach life, he has to give just enough information to the reader and has to withhold information which is invested with a high degree of suggestion. The Short Story writer is indeed much more of a writer, much more of an artist. He may even be more of a dramatist.

Again, it is in the realm of plot that the American Short Story of the twenties is different from the earlier

ones and also from the novel. Sherwood Anderson rebelled against the plot-dominated Short Story formula of the magazines. In the American Short Story of the twenties, as Miller and Stoel point out, plot is likely to be more interior than exterior. Events are basically psychological and sometimes the story is simply a part of experience, a clarification of a moment in human life.

In his article entitled “Little Story, what now?” Sonaro Overstreet brings out the antipathy between plot and realism. According to him the nineteenth-century story teller was a master of plot and the twentieth-century writer saw that life was not made up of neatly arranged incidents. Therefore, he gave no importance to plot. But A.L. Badon is of the opinion that statements such as these are not so much protests against plot as against the misuse of plot. Fundamentally, they are protests against plot based on formulas and their ‘deceptive sentimentalizing of reality’ which the writer finds artificial. Anderson’s idea of plotlessness, of loose structure, is no doubt one of the major


changes incorporated in the techniques of early twentieth-century American Short Story writing.

One of the methods adopted by these writers is indirect action. To suggest, to hint, to imply, but not to state directly or openly - this is a favoured technique of these writers. This method is well-described by L.A.G. Strong:

Instead of giving us a finished action to admire, or prickling the bubble of some problem, he may give us only the key-piece of a mosaic, around which, if sufficiently perceptive, we can see in shadowy outline the completed pattern.29

The early American short stories were characterized by a traditional plot line. Hawthorne, Poe, Melville and others moved away from this. Instead, they provided a plot that moved to a climax, a very simple surface and symbols whose meanings were derived more from context than from tradition. The reader is called upon to supply the thematic links. This important development is obvious in the evolution of the narrator's role. As Mary Rohrberger and Dan E. Burns suggest, "it is also evident in the transformation of plot into pattern, and consequently in the transmutation of the 'real' world into the world of dream".30

Thus the American Short Story had been freed from the 'tyranny of plot'. It has become flexible enough to include the informal narrative sketches of Sherwood Anderson, the episodic Nick Adams Stories of Hemingway and even the complex narratives of Faulkner. In other words, the American Short Story has become a genre varied enough to suit any temperament or any situation.

Frank O'Connor points out another important aspect of the American Short Story of the twenties when he says that these stories consist of 'submerged population groups' like the characters in Sherwood Anderson's stories. They may be tramps, artists, lonely idealists or dreamers. They are suppressed, confused, inarticulate and alienated. They want to come out of the trauma, but the more they try, the more they become submerged.

As one reads the stories of Anderson, Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Katherine Anne Porter, one is amazed how in their hands such a fragile form could bear the burden of intense personal anguish and human predicament and at the same time be an austere but lucid comment on the social conditions prevailing at the time. Their stories have retained much of the lyricism of the old tales. But the area of experience these later writers chose for their work was very different from that of the earlier ones.
Again, these stories do not flow within the river of time. They remain static, a static time of memory where the only movement is that of remembrance. This has bearing on the influence of photography on literature specially the Short Story. H. E. Bates has pointed out that in the Short Story, time need not move, except by an infinitesimal fraction. The characters themselves need not move. They need not grow old. According to him there may not be any characters at all. Therefore, the use of language becomes very important in this form of writing. In fact, a story leans more heavily on language than a novel.

When reflected in a certain time scale, the individual consciousness inevitably assumes the narrative form of the novel. When it is written in the timeless anatomy of words, it grows into a poem. But when it tries to defy the continuity of time and yet resists being subsumed within the autonomous configuration of words, a literary form is created which in the words of Nirmal Verma—'is half way between a novel and a poem— which we may call by the name 'Story'.

It is indeed a difficult task to be poetic in structure and yet be narrative in intent. But it is exactly the same.
this which brings to mind the remarkable purity of details and excellence in some of the stories of Anderson, Hemingway, Faulkner and others. All these writers, though different from one another, have something in common in what Thomas Mann once described as the combination of 'precision with passion'. Like poetry these stories are closer to the realm of silence:

Silence saturates poetry and the short story. That is why the aesthetics of silence plays a major part in the aesthetics of the Short Story.32

What we consider as the purity of form is actually built up through the multiple impurities of experience which life presents to us. We love and hate and we suffer and all the time one is engulfed by chaos of experiences which seem to have no pattern, no rational order. This reality has been depicted through the American Short Stories of the twenties. And in order to achieve their end, the Short Story writers have practised the aesthetics of silence in their stories. Of course, silence can be disturbing any a time. But sometimes, it becomes very eloquent. Art in its freedom is perhaps most deeply committed to the language of truth, without which all social commitments lose their value. When the Short Story is

considered as a pure literary form, we are actually dealing with the imaginative potency of language. It is undisturbed by external forces, so that one could hear the whisper of truth in its own words. The American Short Story writers of the twenties narrated this truth in a way more satisfying than their forebears had done.

One often wonders if there had been an actual change in theory as to the kinds of truth a story should tell, and it is true that no earlier writer would admit that he did not care about telling the truth. The difference must be that the writers of the twenties were not satisfied with what the earlier writers regarded as truth. The American Short Story writers of the twenties obviously wanted to give an appearance of greater freedom in matters of form and technique. The tendency of the growing realism of the twenties is considered not as a moral movement but as a technical development. What matters for these writers is not the calculated single impression alone, but the quality of expressiveness which they are careful to insist is essentially indefinable. The technique is well-adapted to the peculiar mental states in which the writers of the twenties were most interested. To them the particular artistic problem was more important than the subject matter. They were more concerned with the amount of 'felt life' that they put into the story.
The dominant mood of many of these stories can be described as questioning, sceptical, ironic, disillusioned and defiant. In order to project this specific mood, these writers also have taken up the typical themes of modern fiction: initiation, alienation, isolation, the quest for identity and integration. The characters are lonely and isolated with only rare moments of communion or shared experience possible to them. The compactness of these stories makes these themes all the more apparent.

The world of the American Short Stories of the twenties is fragmented both socially and morally. Characters in such Short Stories are obliged to find or make for themselves their appropriate place in the society and the appropriate principle to guide them. But they are always put in a precarious predicament and almost never find a satisfactory solution. Though these stories are pessimistic in outlook, they directly imply that only love, understanding, and perseverance could make life worth living.

This dissertation is an attempt to study the contribution of Sherwood Anderson in perfecting the form of the modern Short Story in America. As stated earlier, it was Anderson who propelled the new movement at the beginning.
of the decade with the publication of his *Hinesburg, Ohio.* However, modern-day critics and scholars have often overlooked him as a great writer. Surprisingly, one of the principal reasons for them to overlook Anderson's significant contribution to American fiction is that primarily he is a Short Story writer. Although Anderson did write several novels, these fade in comparison with his short stories. His talent lay principally in the Short Story. He wrote novels because they held out hope of financial security and not because he felt an affinity towards the genre. Frank Gado in his insightful introduction to the collection of Anderson's stories discusses this problem of adequate recognition of Anderson's contribution. According to him, our critics have tended to slight the importance of Short Story in American letters, "perversely treating it as though it were a lower species of fiction". He has rightly pointed out that while studies of the art of the novel spread relentlessly across library shelves, studies of the art of the Short Story remain few and quite inferior and this bias has been especially damaging to the perception of Anderson.

Many critics claim that Anderson lacked precision, aesthetic refinement and intellectual depth. They argue that his stories appealed only to adolescent sensibilities.

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and offered easy solutions to complex problems. The fact is that his stories do not give any solutions to the problems he examines. They reach for a heightened awareness of vital mysteries. Their constructions are puzzling but often done with care, skill and taste.

There are no plots in Anderson's stories. Anderson overturned the conventions to liberate the Short Story from the determinants of time and incidents. According to him, the story resides not in events or even solely in the relationship between the teller and the thing narrated but in its being told. Sequentiosity is an inescapable quality of any narrative. However, in Anderson, the sequence of particulars responds to an urgency quite independent of the usual chronological impulse. Frank Sado believes that the "idiosyncratic conception of narration" by Anderson strongly contributes to the originality of his genius.34

An equally important aspect of his departure from the so-called realism has to do with his concept of language. He focuses on what lies beneath the surface. In him the hidden knowledge remains hidden (even from the author), because its ramifications and implications lie beyond language's power of containment. Hemingway condenses

34. Ibid., P.5.
language for the required effect. Anderson stresses the irreducibility of the word to experience. He allows it to expand obviously uncontrolled, as though it were searching for its uncertain object. In the final analysis, one can state that Anderson had achieved a quality of emotional rather than factual truth and he preserved it to the end of his career.

The major short stories of Anderson have been analysed with a view to finding out the specific themes and techniques used by Anderson in order to build a new art from which made it one of the finest achievements of twentieth century American literature. Again, Anderson was a powerful shaping factor in the development of Hemingway and Faulkner as Short Story writers. Though both have repudiated the influence of Anderson, their indebtedness to him is very conspicuous. An attempt has, therefore, been made to trace the specific echoes of Anderson in Hemingway and Faulkner. Some of the major short stories of Hemingway and Faulkner are also analysed to see in what way their techniques and themes are similar to or different from Anderson's. It can be seen that in order to project a distinctive American imagination, these writers have employed a number of techniques - narrative, dramatic, stream of consciousness and experience, flash-back, inference, use of imagery symbols and metaphors -
and a number of themes - initiation, loneliness and isolation, inarticulation, human depravity in the gaol world, search for identity, violence and death, sexual frustration, the grotesque in character etc. There is no doubt that the short stories of these writers were the product of their imagination which was essentially private, rooted in individual consciousness whose signature was imprinted on them. These stories, in fact, depict ordinary experience with an impression of actuality.

Language is one of the most potent instruments in the hands of a writer. In a short story it has an important structural function in the sense that it is the chief unifying factor within which the story exists. An effort has been made to examine how these writers have molded their language and style in order to create an American idiom.

Anderson was an inevitable choice in this study as he is generally considered to have given a momentum to the new movement at the beginning of the decade. Hemingway and Faulkner were also indispensable because of Anderson's great influence on them and because they enjoy the prominence as America's two greatest writers of Short Stories in this century. Anderson is considered to be the representative short story writer at the beginning of the period,
Hemingway the middle period, and Faulkner at the end of the decade. Of course, Fitzgerald and Katherine Anne Porter have also contributed a lot in making the American Short Story into a great art form. Hence in the concluding chapter, a brief analysis of some of their stories has been made to show their contribution to the Short Story form. In the final analysis it can be seen that there has never been a time in the history of American literature when the short story writers have shown more interest in their craft than in the twenties with the result that the American Short Story became the most dominant art form of that period.