CHAPTER - I
Henry James was a prolific writer whose creative energies as formal concerns were devoted in almost equal measure to his novels and tales. James produced one hundred and twelve tales. His tales deserve serious critical attention in their own right. James as a short-story writer exhibits high quantity and consistent quality as well. Had Henry James produced nothing but the tales, still he could have laid an indisputable claim to a seat among the Olympians.¹

This thesis aims to analyze James's art in constructing the short-story sequence, and also certain critical pronouncements by Henry James concerning certain structural notions and abstract principles that are relevant to it. A discussion of the thematic continuities suggested by selected tales for study and placement of stories in sequences to achieve thematic and architectural unity is also attempted in this thesis.

In his long life there is but a scattered handful of dates. The first large event in his life after his birth in New York City on April 5th 1843, was an accident to the back that prevented him from being a soldier in the civil war. He never married. He seems to have had no passionate relations with women or with men. He never had to earn his own living. He lived to be seventy-three, suffering only the normal illnesses that come to most mortals.

In 1875 he moved to Europe and during the next year chose England for lifelong residence. In 1897 he forsook London for a small house in Rye in Sussex. During 1904–1905 he spent ten months
revisiting his native land. With the beginning of the first German war against mankind, came a sudden outburst of emotion, formally symbolized by his becoming in 1915 a naturalized British subject.

Hardly an active life one might superficially judge, yet, as one studies its concretion, that is to say his books – one begins to wonder whether it was not one of the most active lives of the entire century! James's favorite word is 'awareness'. He must have been aware of more impressions, reflected upon more ideas in the course of a single waking hour than anyone can, in one's lifetime. Nothing happened to him except everything, everything that he could observe, relate, weigh and judge. These discriminations also produced an incalculable amount of life, an entire population of human beings, a world of connections, which were continually subjected to control, and a proper harmonious ordering. Experience assumes meaning when the proper form for its expression is found. Thus the life of Henry James became identical with the search for, and the discovery of proper form. It became a work of art. This work of art was a growth, like the life of Goethe, sans the pomposity. James began as a mediocre imitation of Hawthorne, a bright young reviewer, and a purveyor of genteel chitchat. He ended as a great creative novelist and critic. The progress was not accidental. It was the result of constant self-examination, self-knowledge, self-control and plain hard work. This is not to deny that the spring of it all – his genius was in him from birth. It is merely to
suggest that more than any writer of his time, he converted the potentialities of that genius into the fullest possible actuality.

The life of Henry James need never be written by anyone, for he wrote it himself in fifty remarkable volumes and half a dozen supreme ones. *Daisy Miller* (1878) and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880) stand amid James's varied and copious works, as the two titles that earned him during his lifetime, much popular acclaim. *The Turn of the Screw* has occasionally been represented as a thriller. A few of the short stories and one or two of the longer ones, like *The Aspern Papers* have been included in the anthologies. To the eye of the modern public and the modern publisher, he was an unsuccessful writer. Not only did he not sell, but also was not even talked about. Whatever reputation he possessed declined after his death in 1916. Though there have been small waves of reawakened interest, along with Mark Twain and Melville, he is deemed as one of America's greatest novelists and short-story writers—yet there are certain characteristics of his writing which make him less popular than the other two writers.

Firstly, the alienation from America is exposed in his work, and was formally symbolized by his becoming in 1915, a British subject. He completely ignored the great theme of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries— the rise of industrial America. His art is enfeebled by the malnutrition resulting from the split in his allegiance.
Then his snobbery imposed on him a pathetically limited subject matter. His mature life was spent among the rich, the wellborn, the eminent among artists. He had little sympathy for the common man, viewed with apathy the democratic drift of his time, and attached himself to all that was decadent and artificial in European, British and expatriate – American society. His characters drawn from this small and dwindling class, lack warmth, breadth, and social gravity. His emotional range is narrow. His work shows little realistic expression of passion. It is devoid of any representation of violence, or of the larger, cruder and more elemental emotions. It is timid, even old-maidish. It lacks masculinity.

According to Marjorie Kaufman, he sacrificed content to form.² His elaborate theories stifled the free flow of his imagination. His interest in the mere architecture of narrative made him draw out his stories to excessive length. He disguised the poverty of his content with the artifice of formal tricks and mannerisms. Finally his style is considered esoteric to the point of remediability. His dislike of banality, swelled in his later phase, into a mania, the consequence of which was a prose so dense, involved, indirect and allusive, so as to amount virtually to a dead language.

Thus at its most vigorous, the assignment of Henry James, is considered so specialized and rarefied so as to be insulated from the general reader. These characteristics of his are not baseless. The whole
case is based on what seem to be salient facts. James was a man without a Country. His characters are drawn largely from the rich, the idle, the over-sensitive – often the frivolous. Man, as a sexual animal is not one of his specialties. He has a hyper tropical interest in the problem of literary form. His later style is difficult. There is something in him large, pervasive and valuable that eludes the indictment. Another reason may be that most critics and scholars also use him as a balm, rather than as a great writer. For example, those who care passionately for British speech, find in the precision, the exquisiteness and the close workmanship of James's prose, a relief from the careless, uncleanly, and hyperthyroid jargon, which currently passes for sound writing. James's almost fussy concern for the elevated, even noble standards of craftsmanship, operates in agreeable contrast to one's own fetish of relaxation, the cult of informality. Writing today is made easier by either pictures accompanied by nursery prose captions, or by furnishing comic strips. Years ago James saw this entire coming. Indeed he described with stunning accuracy the triumph of the most admired journalism when he spoke of the bastard vernacular of communities disinherited, of the felt difference between the speech of the soil, and the speech of the newspaper, and capable thereby, accordingly, of taking slang for simplicity, the composite for the quaint, and the vulgar for the natural. To Howell's he wrote,

"The faculty of attention has utterly vanished from the
general Anglo-Saxon mind, extinguished at its source by the big, blatant Bayadere of Journalism."³

Those who find themselves unable to agree that the communication of ideas and feelings must necessarily be on a pre-adolescent level, find in the careful complexities of Henry James a welcome challenge.

To James writing is not merely an opportunity for self-expression. It is first a problem, not a solution. He thought about writing, as Mozart must have thought about music, as the unsurpassable nameless architects must have thought about the cathedral of Charles. That writing must express something, which goes without saying, but everything for James lies in the manner, the method, of the expression. What is to be expressed must first be in all possible relations, then a form must be discovered to enclose all these relations in the best conceivable way, which is of course the most economical way. James is at his finest when he works on the principle of least action. Accident, James leaves to life, which specializes in it, but art cannot come out of the fortuitous. The artist by accident is a contradiction in terms, the true creator fights all his life against the temptation, to take the easy road, to write the 'readable' to gain effects by happy strokes,

"The effect really to see and to represent is no idle business,"⁴

Says James, in the face of constant force that makes for confusion. In James there is difficulty and complexity but there is no confusion. He
is always clear, but only so after the reader has made a successful, if often an exhausting effort to perceive what it is he is being clear about. Yeats in his poem ‘The Choice’ says,

“The intellect of man is forced to choose perfect of the life or of the work.”

Thus when one surveys the work of Henry James, one is filled with a sense that in a manner it seems not a great deal ‘happened’ to James, but he made everything that did happen pay.

Before discussing in detail James’s contribution to short-story a brief history of the short-story is taken up in order to place Henry James, in that particular genre, as well as his place and contribution to the short-story.

The short-story is one of the oldest literary forms known to the human mind. Since the beginning of civilization, man has had the urge to convert his real or imagined experience into a story and hand it down the generations. A tale thus has its roots in the oral tradition. The short-story predates and forms the nucleus of the ballad and epic. It has existed from the earliest times up to the present. It is co-equal and co-terminal with the history of man.

From the earliest times, the short-story has served as allegory, fable and moral example. It has drawn themes from matter–super natural and natural, romantic and realistic, grotesque and mundane. It has portrayed the abnormal as well as the representative personality,
mental processes as well as physical activity, and casual happening, as well as arresting incident.  

The stories have existed throughout history in one form or the other. In the Egyptian Papyri, dating from 3000 to 4000 BC there is an account of how the sons of Cheops regaled their father with narrative. The Old Testament stories such as those of Jonah and Ruth date back to some three hundred years before the birth of Christ. Next, Christ himself spoke in parables. The early Greeks and Romans wrote incidents and episodes in their classics. In the middle Age, story telling as an art flourished in the form of fables and epics about beasts and also in the medieval romance.

In England around 1250 AD some two hundred well-known tales were collected as *Gesta Romanorum*. By the middle of the fourteenth century, Boccaccio in his Decameron, which paved the way for Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, collected a hundred stories.

The fifteenth century saw the assembling of tales of valor and bravery, of ancient knighthood in *Le Morte D' Arthur* by Mallory. These were long narratives that depicted the exploits of brave and chivalrous knights. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, conditions were ripe for the development of the novel, which culminated in the picaresque novel, in the seventeenth century.

Alongside, between 1660 and 1700, two modernizing trends were observed in short fiction in England: interest in psychological analysis
and interest in "vrasiemblance" or "versimilitude". These trends had
the effect of promoting the development of the new art form – novel –
with the tale itself taking a back seat. As such the eighteenth century
authors had no real or clear conception of short fiction as a genre.
However, even the new picaresque novel is a glowing tribute to man's
capacity for formal story telling.

In addition, the eighteenth century saw the rise and development
of the personal essay, which was generally based on incidents and
sketches such as Addison's Coverley Papers or in The Vision of
Mirzah. It was in the nineteenth century that the short-story came into
being as an art form, drawing upon and deriving from the periodical
essay of the eighteenth century.7

It is surprising then that such a durable art form as the short-story,
which is immensely popular with readers and writers alike, should take
so long to receive critical attention. Probably, the short-story is not
considered quite respectable, as an art form precisely because it is
popular in the pejorative sense. Even in the twentieth century the
short-story still depends on magazines to find an outlet.

In an interesting argument, American critic Clare Hansen says that
the short-story offers itself better to the underdog or the
underprivileged such as losers or the loners, exiles, women, blacks etc.
Drawing on the formulations of the short-story theorist Frank O’
Connor, Hansen suggests that the short-story by its very nature remains
remote from the society and is romantic, individualistic and intransigent. Possibly this is another reason why the short story is still struggling to get into the literary mainstream today."

Recently however, efforts are afoot to recognize the short-story as a distinct literary form and to draw and define the various aspects of this genre. The first important American short-story writer, Washington Irving (1783 - 1859) propounded certain theories of the short-story, which he preferred to call ‘sketches’. He wanted stories to be relaxed, placing more emphasis on character rather than on action or theme. He believed in characters being sharply and expressively drawn and saw no harm in introducing elements of local color and subjectivity in his works. Above all, he desired works of art to be realistic, touched with a refreshing half-concealed humor.

He has created characters such as Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane, who are typically and unmistakably American. Both are believable characters, the former a typical henpecked husband; the latter a self-depreciating school master, the types now so firmly established in the American psyche. The action in both stories is very slow, but the delightful, all pervading humor makes the narration very absorbing."

More than any one else, it is Edgar Allen Poe who is credited with propounding theories of the short-story. In his essay analyzing Hawthorne’s “Twice - told tales,” published in 1842, Poe lays down
his theories of the short-story. Though he places rhymed poem at the
top of literary forms, he concedes the second place to the short-story.
He firmly believes that the short-stories should be long enough—or
short enough – to be read in one sitting, in one or two hours. Only then
it is possible to derive an impression from the said work. If the
narrative is too long, then worldly interests intervene during the
reading and modify, annul or counteract the impression one gains
through such reading. Therefore, Poe places a high premium on the
unity of impression or effect that is derived from the perusal of a short
narrative.

It is interesting to note that Ambrose Bierce (1842 – 1914) has
definite views on the nature of the short-story. In his article The Short
Story, found in his Collected Works, Vol. X, he too feels that a long
narrative is a paradox. A short-story provides the unity of impression
and that in itself constitutes its merit. He argues that the short-story,
unlike a longer narrative, does not “Cloy attention, confuse with
overlaid impressions and efface its own effect.”

Elaborating on Poe’s views, Prof. Brander Matthews in his The
Philosophy of the Short-Story, subjects it to a detailed analysis. He
insists that the short-story is to be spelt with a hyphen to indicate that it
has a special and technical significance. This, he assures, differentiates
the short-story from a story that merely happens to be short. It is, he
believes, a distinct species; an art form by itself; a new literary genre
and is, in short, characterized by compression, originality and ingenuity, with a touch of fantasy. He draws copiously on various English and American short-stories to bring home his point. Evidently then, a short-story is one of the longest surviving short narratives usually of one event or character, that takes no more than one or two hours to read and that which provides a definite unity of impression. To give it its due recognition, it must be clearly differentiated from the other current, dominant literary trend i.e. the novel.

In French literature novelistic fiction is divided into what are known as the ‘roman’ the ‘nouvelle’ and the ‘conte’. The ‘roman’ corresponds roughly to the English novel and ‘nouvelle’ to the novelette, which is a shortest novel. In English, however there is no word that is equivalent in meaning to the ‘conte’. Though Poe used ‘tale’ as a synonym to ‘conte’ many modern writers disagree with it and have since discarded its use.

The main difference between the novel and the novelette is that the latter is a work of shorter extent and covers a smaller canvas than a novel. It has fewer characters and fewer incidents than the novel, but they are presented in a more intensive manner. Barring this distinction, the novel and the novelette are more or less the same, employing the same basic materials. In fact, the era of long rambling novels is gone and is replaced by a lesser, more intensive novelette era. For the novelette accomplishes the same purpose of the novel with
more emphasis on art and a considerably lesser tax upon the readers' time and attention.

On the other hand, however, the same distinction is not applicable to the novel and short-story. If the novelette is a compressed form of the novel, a tale or short-story is not a compressed form of the novelette. In method, materials, manner as well as scope, the short-story represents a type that is at once unique and distinguished.

It is true that the short-story is often compared with the novel – it is defined against the novel, which is considered to be the major norm and form in fiction. The short-story is often seen as the little sister of the novel and because it is defined in terms of the novel, it is bound to fail in many respects when it comes up for judgement. It is considered that the short-story, in comparison with the novel, lacks "breadth" or scope and universality of the novel. And since it is short, it is suspected that it must be fragmentary, subjective, partial etc. In practice, however, it is not so. The short-story is a complete "genre" in itself, it is different from the novel and it has characteristics that set it apart from the novel, besides giving it a definite identity.¹³

Thus it can be said that a story can be constructed to achieve unity of impression through strict unity of form, as Poe has shown admirably. Short-story deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion or a series of emotions called forth by a single situation. A novel on the other hand, has a series of episodes that breaks and
mars this unity of impression.

Ambrose Bierce finds the notion of fantasy or imagination unique to short fiction, an irresistible one. He criticizes the realistic fiction dominant in his time, particularly that of William Dean Howell's. Significantly, Bierce feels that the novel is a faulty form of art, being both inartistic and impermanent. In a realistic novel, the narrative art becomes mere reporting which is inferior to history and literature. He derides the realistic practice of confining themselves to probability, which is found only in man's most commonplace experience. He strongly believes that the impossible and the improbable do occur in a man's life. It is the duty of the author to make these extraordinary things seem real. It is imagination with a touch of the absurd that makes literature worthwhile. Bierce believes that the short-story is capable of presenting the most imaginative of subjects in the sincerest possible manner.\(^1\)

Another theorist, Frank 'O' Connor\(^2\) is also concerned with separating the short-story from the novel. He feels that the short-story has a grip of the most basic human emotion – loneliness, which is ignored in the novel. The story-teller according to him, should be more artistic, more dramatic and technically more perfect than the novelist. As such, the short-story is a purer art form than the novel. It is a concentrated and distilled essence of literature, a drop of which contains the whole.
This view is endorsed by Elizabeth Bowen who, following Poe, compares a short-story to a poem. She feels that the short-story is more concentrated and so can be more visionary as it is not weighed down by facts, explanation or analysis unlike a novel. This does not mean that the short-story is formless, lawless or anarchic — it merely means that it has its own laws, which it obeys on its own terms.

Alberto Moravia is another critic who seeks to see that the novel, apart from the short-story, on the basis of the nature of characters they present. In a short-story, characters are individuals whereas in a novel, they are embodiments of a theme. In other words, while characters are themselves ends in a short-story, they are merely means to an end in a novel. Therefore, Moravia boldly postulates that the short-story is a literary art form, which is unquestionably purer, more essential, more lyrical, more concentrated and more absolute than the novel.

Another landmark in the discussion of the novel and the short-story is made by Norman Friedman. He argues that a short-story like the novelette, makes use of a smaller canvas and its material is of smaller compass and they are subdued to maximize the artistic effect. He makes a brilliant distinction between static and dynamic plots, which in their turn pave way to the making of the short-story and the novel respectively.

A static plot shows its protagonist in only one state or another and includes only enough to reveal to the reader what caused this state.
Naturally then, the canvas it requires is small and results in a short-story. On the other hand, a dynamic plot takes its protagonist through a succession of two or more states and analyzes the several causes that brought the protagonist to these states. It is inevitable that a dynamic plot needs a large canvas and so is accommodated better in a novel. Therefore, the distinction between a novel and a short-story according to Friedman, is one that is based mainly on the type of plot it contains.

In addition, there are critics who distinguish a novel from the short-story in the manipulation of time in them - while a shorter time extent is expected of a short-story, a novel can dwell over considerably longer periods of time. The essential nature of the short-story is described by the word revelation and that of the novel by the word evolution.

On comparison with a novel, a short-story may seem fragmentary, lacking a sense of direction. But the short-story does reveal the traditional elements of conflict, development and final resolution. The difference is that, unlike in a novel they are not presented in the story, neatly organized for the reader to just pick up on his way through the story. As the present reader-response theorists, particularly Wolfgang Iser, believes the short-story offers blanks or gaps which the reader is expected to fill in order to arrive at the conclusion. Thus, the reader is assigned an active part in the act of story telling.

All these writers are intent on keeping the short-story and the novel distinct and separate from each other. Many conclude that in its
capacity for perfection of structure, for nice discrimination in means, and for a satisfying exposition of the full power of words, the short-story is much superior to the novel.

On the other hand, many writers consider the short-story akin to poetry. The form, the medium and even the experience of reading the short-story is akin to those of poetry. Eileen Baldeshwiler considers stories to be predominantly of two types – the mimetic and the lyric. She readily agrees that almost all stories have a mimetic base, presenting straightforward events leading to their logical conclusions. But, there are other elements, which are the property of verse, but find their way into prose, by conscious manipulation of their authors. Such elements include deviation from chronological sequence, presence of tone and imagery, a high degree of suggestiveness and emotional intensity, achieved with a minimum of means. These elements convert the ordinary, mundane or mechanistic mimetic stories into the more pleasing lyrical ones.

Based on these facts, Baldeshwiler categorizes stories into two groups. The larger group of stories depend, on external action, developed through characters which are expressly created for furthering of the plot, and the plot having a pre-determined denouement and all these expressed in an ordinary, inconspicuous, dry prose realism. The other group of stories contain an open ending, concentrating mainly on internal moods, changes and feelings utilizing
a variety of structural patterns to put forward the plot and are expressed in the condensed, evocative and often figured language of poetry. She considers Turgenev, Chekov, Katherine Mansfield, D.H.Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Sherwood Anderson, Conrad Aiken, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, and John Updike as representatives of the latter group.

The modern short-story is no longer an unpretentious piece of fiction, it employs newer techniques to present its material and concentrates more on the role of self. By this, action is altogether absorbed into the story and is refashioned as a pattern of imagery. This enhances the lyrical quality of the story, bringing it closer to poetry.

William H. Gass advocates a golden mean: he proposes to place the short-story somewhere between poetry and the novel. If a work contains plenty of imagery, requiring a lot of inferring on the part of the reader, then it is poetry. On the other hand, if in a work, its construction is fully elaborated, then it is a novel. A short-story lies intermediate between these two. In fact Gass, believes that short fiction is complete in itself and its value lies not in its strict adherence to reality but in its imaginative suggestion and its evocative and beautiful use of words. 29

Besides these English and American theories, several German theorists have also postulated hypothesis on the development of short-story as a major genre. Friedrich Schlegel, in his study on “Boccaccio”
in 1801, suggested the importance of style in the short-story. He firmly believes that if a tale is to be interesting, its narrator or writer should also be equally, if not more, interesting. Though the content of the story may be old, traditional and formulaic, its letter gives it a stamp of versimilitude, subjectivity, and therefore authority. This theory of the short-story also coincides with the rise of romanticism in English poetry.

Ludwig Tieck is another critic whose theories are quite similar to those of Schlegel. He argued that the short-story should be strange and unique but at the same time, it must deal with ordinary things, which should be presented as objectively taking place. His notion of ‘wendepunkt’ i.e. a twist in the story or a turning point from where the tale takes an entirely new direction and develops consequences which are nevertheless natural and in keeping with the rest of the story, is hitherto the most controversial of his theories. It is this turning point that distinguishes a short-story from a novel or other narrative forms. Several critics consider this notion as equivalent to a change in the fortune of the drama. However, Tieck also blends an old supernatural romance with the new narrative realism in a short-story that sets it apart from any other art form.21

A short-story therefore must be short, preferably around five or six words long and as such it should contain a small number of characters. These characters must be placed in relatively few settings and the
reader's attention must be focussed on a single situation – the climax. It can also profitably employ devices such as symbolism, imagery, supernaturalism, fantasy, imagination, and so on.

It now remains for the conscious reader to examine the various aspects of the short-story. E.M. Forster and others have done yeomen service to the novel by laying down various theories about its aspects. Similarly it is possible to propose theories about the elements of fiction with particular reference to the short-story.²²

Creative writing, whether it is a novel or a short-story, must contain mainly four ingredients – character, action, setting and a basic idea or a theme. That is to say, characters must act out a situation against a setting, a background, and the way in which they act, must mean something, or convey an idea, or a theme to the reader.

(a) CHARACTER: Readers have a natural tendency to identify with the characters presented in the story they happen to be reading. It is difficult to identify with characters one does not know or understand. Hence, proper characterization is essential to a short-story.

It is well known that Forster divides characters into two types depending on their treatment in a novel – the 'flat' and 'round'. The flat characters do not change at all in the course of unraveling of the story. The round characters exhibit various traits and show a marked change – for the better or for worse – in the course of the story. Needless to say that round characters seem more interesting than the
flat ones.

Owing to the limited scope of the short-story a writer needs to focus on only one aspect of personality of a character – in other words, his scope demands that his characters in a short-story are inherently dull and lifeless – they are not. They are lively personalities but are caught and seen at only a moment of their lives. A novelist paints murals while a short-story writer paints miniatures. Each has its own appeal and attraction, incomparable to each other.

A short-story writer then needs to focus on the traits which his character exhibits in a single situation that forms the climax of the story. In fact, the character in a short-story must be unique and original enough to attract the attention of the reader immediately. They must not on all accounts, be colorless. All the characters – heroes, villain’s etc- must be established with the first deft stroke of the author’s pen. Because of this necessity for choosing the exceptional rather than the normal that, in terms of character, the modern short-story is veering towards Romanticism rather than realism.

By the above accounts, it is clear that the reader should reduce the leading characters to their lowest terms; that is, he should decide what their dominant character traits are and how they affect the action of the story.
(b) ACTION: Any story needs to have some action either physical or mental. Every story must have a point at which it starts and moves to where it concludes. Many short stories, war stories or detective stories depend on bits of action to further their plot. In stories that are decidedly impressionistic, action does take a back seat to other elements like character - sketch or moving images. In a number of Anton Chekov’s stories - where it is said ‘nothing much ever happens’, this fact is brought to light. In a story like The Overcoat by Gogoe, Mrs. Bishop’s only outward action is her travel, in a subway; the major action takes place in her mind when she starts comparing the overcoat she found in the subway to her husband’s. In such stories, action may be indirect. That is, the characters may dominate the action, make things or incidents happen; or they may have things happen to them, and so be dominated by the action - when it is direct. It is possible to see then that action in a story is intended by the author to further and develop the idea or theme or plot of the story.

(C) SETTING: Setting, the background against which the action of the story takes place is of varying importance, depending on the choice of subject of the author. It is an important aspect of the short-story that enables us to understand a certain mood of the story or of a character. It may merely be an unobstructive back drop or stage prop sometimes, or may be a visual aid to the reader’s imagination. It
sometimes serves the same function, as does a musical accompaniment to a play or motion picture.

In some stories however, the setting is so important that it assumes the role of an actor in the story, a dramatic force. For example, in stories dealing with Red Indians or Mafia dons, it is essential to read their dominating background, which determines their characters and actions. Sicily and Corsica damp the codes of honor and silence (Ometra) on their subjects, which might seem impossible or implausible to others. Characters and actions can be understood only against such a back-drop. The setting gives to the characters and incidents, "a local habitation and a name."

In fact, the nature of the short-story is such that both characters and action may be almost without importance, provided the atmosphere, the place and time – the background is artistically portrayed. Readers are immensely pleased if a new corner of the world is discovered by the author for them or a familiar scene is sketched to their hearts desire or some aspect of human life such as war, commerce or industry is described in detail. As in the case of war stories of Stephen Crane, the setting is sufficient to produce the intended artistic effect.

(d) THEME OR IDEA: While the characters, incidents and setting in a story are concrete and thus can be described easily, the theme is abstract and so defies definition. It is seldom stated in the
story; a reader is required to find it himself.

Some stories deal with a common enough theme that most readers recognize on the basis of their experience. Some stories however have a set of facts put down by the author, which the reader accepts and believes. A story then has to be constructed on a very firm foundation – on an idea, which the writer can persuade his reader to believe. The theme of a story tells us some truth about life or human behavior. The necessary ingredients of a short-story then are character, action, setting and a theme. A short-story consists of a character or a group of characters, presented against a background or setting, who become involved, through action, in a situation. Such a situation should be accurately and logically handled by the author and a logical and convincing solution must be presented to the reader.

Depending on the dominance or subordination of one or more of these four elements, short-stories can be classified into various types. They may be setting – oriented if the back – drop or setting is most prominent (ex. Merimee’s Mateo Falcone) or plot oriented, where the reader’s primary interest is centered on this outcome on what happens. Most detective stories belong to this category.

Some stories can be called action – oriented, a description of war and some related topic in war – stories, is a perfect example. Other types of stories are character – oriented, where the focus is always on the character. E.g. ‘A Cup of Tea’ by Katherine Mansfield.
In order to make a short-story interesting, the writer has to present certain conflicts in the story to enable the reader’s active participation. He can present an inner conflict in which a character is pitted against itself. Conversely, he can present one character against another, a social or external conflict. The third type of conflict is one in which man is pitted against his environment or outside circumstances – physical conflict. The fourth is the most unusual in which a character is pitted against the reader. A character is presented without authorial comments; a reader develops love or hatred for the character as the story moves along. It is the dramatic conflict. These conflicts enhance the appeal of the stories.

**TECHNIQUE OF THE SHORT STORY:**

To cater to the needs of the short-story various techniques are used by various authors. Prominent among these are focus, point – of view, management of time and the use of literary devices such as symbolism. Etc

Because of the limited scope of the short-story it is necessary that the writer focus upon an individual or a single action or an incident. Even if several characters are present, only one receives the spotlight. The writer also needs to choose a seat from which he views the characters and events of his story: this is called ‘point of view’ and there are three possible types.

(A) The author himself speaks in the first person; his character
becomes his mouthpiece. The story is his, and the action surrounds him. E.g. I want to know why? by Sherwood Anderson.

(B) The author adopts a side character, sits on the sidelines and comments on or reports the story. This character is not directly concerned with the main story.

(C) Impersonal: Here the author becomes omniscient, he is neither a ‘person’ nor a character in the story. This is an all Seeing Eye, which can focus on any and all persons, events and settings in a story. Great many stories, narrated in the third person, belong to this category.

A writer is also required to carefully manage the presentation of time in a short-story. By the very nature of the short-story, events spanning a long period of time cannot be presented. Therefore, action in a short-story should be well compressed into as short a period of time as possible. To present longer periods of time, a writer makes use of the ‘flash-back’ technique. That is, the story opens somewhere near the climax and the necessary information regarding the events leading to the climax are stated briefly in the flashback technique. In the novel, such a technique has contributed to the development of the stream – of consciousness. In the short-story, it serves the purpose of unity of impression.

On the other hand if a story is concerned with the development of an individual or a character or events over a relatively shorter period of time, then they are presented in a chronological order or linear
progression of time is permitted.

**SYMBOLISM:** Edgar Allan Poe, among others, depended a lot on symbols and conveys his feelings both in his poetry (*The Raven*) and in his short fiction (*The Black Cat; The Tell - Tale Heart*). Readers comprehend best through the medium of their senses, especially that of sight, symbols help the reader visualize the action and therefore understanding the particular work becomes that much easier. A great many writers use symbols in their stories.

It is clear from the above accounts that the short-story is a distinct genre or art form, containing a particular terseness, vividness attained by the choice of words, quick action, rapid description, as its elements, with a dash of symbolism and impressionism used in some stories. It is not very easy to define it, but to quote Suzanne Ferguson in her essay, defining the short-story,

"Short-stories are defined in terms of unity (Poe and Brander Matthew's), techniques of plot compression. (A.L. Bader, Norman Friedman), change or revelation of character (Theodore Stroud), subject (Frank 'O' Connor), tone (Gordimer), lyricism (Moravia), but there is no single characteristic or cluster of characteristics that the critics agree absolutely distinguished the short-story from other fictions."

Though there is no consensus among critics with regard to the identity of the short-story theory at present, an attempt is now being made to recognize it as a specific literary form. Most contemporary critical theories such as structuralism, deconstruction and reader-
response theories have left their mark on the short-story theory. A day will come when a comprehensive definition of the short-story, based on all the researches done on the facts of the short-story is derived.

**PRACTICE:** It is difficult to decide which nation has devoted itself entirely to the short-story and produced some of the world's best short-story writers. Almost all countries have writers practicing this art form. To trace the rise and development of the short-story as practiced by different writers in different countries is next to impossible. However, in the following pages, an effort is made to assess the contribution of various authors to this genre over the centuries.

In the history of the short-story, there are clearly three discernible phases:

(i) **Origins:** Hawthorne and Poe in America and Gogol in Russia.

(ii) **Early Modern Phase:** Anderson and Toomer in America, Mansfield and Joyce in England; Chekov in Russia.

(iii) **Contemporary Phase:** Coover, Barth, Barthelme in America, Borges, Nabokov and Kafka from the continent.

Along with Hawthorne and Poe, Washington Irving is considered one of the earliest theorists of the short-story. They are all influenced by German and English Romanticism. Their works are also tinged with realism, combined with an employment of a deliberate technique
and insistence of a tight form. Hawthorne and Melville are concerned with the problem of good and evil in their works.

The short-story flourished greatly, both in theory and practice in Guy de Maupassant (b.1850) of France. His realism is neither the spontaneous overflow of sensual delight that animates Boccaccio's tales nor the experimental and formless naturalism of Emile Zola. Rather, it is the reshaping of the materials of life to illuminate the effect desired and to subordinate whatever is irrelevant to the effect. He draws mainly upon people and incidents in his stories. His well-known stories are included in Mademoiselle Fife. (1882)

Irony is the hallmark of his writings. But his expression of attitude is so embedded in plot and symbols that it seldom appears distinct from the actual narration, E.g. A Piece of String, The Diamond Necklace, Bonle-de-suif & The House of Tellier. Objectivity is another characteristic of his writings. His characters are known through their appearances and action. Their motives and the inner recesses of their minds are not probed. He had great contempt for analytical fiction. In his stories, he naturally achieved the brevity and concrete portrayal, essential to the form, while his English contemporaries were still struggling under the burden of their novel heritage. His stories are plot-dominated.

Maupassant's influence is more marked and particular on the American short-story writers rather than on the British. Henry Gyler
Bunner's *Made in France* (1893) is a collection of short-stories, which are actually Maupassant's stories given a Yankee twist, with further complications of plot with a surprise ending. William Sydney Porter (O' Henry) also wrote in a similar vein.

The American writers also gave the short-story a new impetus and a new direction with this unique contribution – 'The Tall Tale'. They were robust tales of the west that portrayed accurately the intensity of life in the west and told in the language of the common westerner. They owed nothing to Aristotle or Romanticism or any other known theories. Their authors were tremendously individualistic. Mark Twain (1835–1910) is not only a tall-tale teller but also a first rate social critic. His *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras Country* and other stories amply exemplify this point. He is westerner writing about the west.

Bret Harte (1836-1902) is an easterner writing about the west. His works are marked with an amazing simplicity and bold and fresh humor. He writes about mining towns, prostitutes, gamblers and violent death. *The Luck of Roaring Camp* is one of his famous stories. His influence is seen on Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane.

For sometime during the 'Genteel tradition', the short-story became confined to dealing with the rich, 'genteel' people. It emphasized the importance of ideals created out of experience. The important contributors to this type are William Dean Howell's, Henry
James and others. James’s works are now categorized under psychological realism. Though his short-stories as *The Beast in the Jungle*, and *The Real Thing* as are most of his other works criticized for dealing with only the rich, upper class people, they nevertheless add to the treasure of American Literature. Edith Wharton, Mary Wilkins, Freeman and Sarah Orne Jewett are other writers who wrote within the genteel tradition. To which, Jewett in particular, added flavor of local color.

Next, realism and romanticism were together combined with sentimentalism in the works of R.L Stevenson. He is followed by Frank Norris who was a naturalist and who in his turn influenced Theodore Drieser and Willa Cather. Jack London too wrote in a similar way.

Meanwhile in Britain, Rudyard Kipling was turning out to be a master of the short-story form. His *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) reveal his mastery over the technique of the short-story. His Russian and equally famous contemporaries are Gogol and Ivan Turgenev. The latter’s *A Sportsman’s Sketches* (1847-52) contain some of the finest short-stories of literature.

Perhaps Chekov (1860) is arguably one of the greatest Russian short-story writers. He is an objective yet compassionate artist. He is also a realist. He is a versatile writer but his unique contribution in the story in which according to popular description “nothing much ever
happens”. Chekov’s technique is one of abstraction and implication. He abstracts from the individual what is most representative and by this he implies the universal. His choice of scene and dialogue may often seem aimless and casual because they are not actually the main ingredients of his story.

This trend of Chekov’s impressionism is taken up and followed in Britain by Katherine Mansfield. She was even more precise in the process of abstraction and her impressionism gives greater concreteness to the description of the chosen moment. She also makes a deliberate and conscious use of symbolism. She believed that she was as fastidious as though she wrote with acid, stating her preference of the abstract form. Joseph Conrad, John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennet, Somerset Maugham, Stephen Vincent Benet were all fine craftsmen of the older tradition.

James Joyce was an experimentalist. In his Dubliners (1914) scenes connected only by the slender unity indicated by the title of the collection are substituted for formal plot. And in America, five years after Dubliners, Sherwood Anderson published his short-story collection, Winesburg Ohio, revealing the same lack of plot. Like Chekov there is much rambling and it is artful. He was influenced by Naturalism but was a Romantic at heart. His Unlighted Lamps, I am a fool are splendid examples of his craft. His influence is seen on such writers as John Steinbeck and William Carlos Williams. Ernest
Hemingway was another great novelist and short-story writer who told stories in the Chekovian manner, with such simplicity of style that an even greater concreteness was achieved. His stories *The Indian Camp, The Snows of Kilimanjaro* are very well known.

Hemingway's influence is seen on Scott Fitzgerald who excels in the complexity with which he probes the human heart. *The Rich Boy, Bernice Bobs Her Hair*, and other stories not only describe the travels of young people but also through them, the depravity of the society in which they live, is scathingly criticized.  

William Faulkner is an important writer after world war I. Being a social critic like Fitzgerald he considers the modern materialistic world as the culprit in man's predicament now. His *A Rose for Emily*, and *Spotted Horses* show him as influenced by Gothic tradition as well as the broad humor of the west.

In India too, the short-story found many practitioners in the twentieth century. R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Anitha Desai, Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, among others have made the short-story the main medium of expression. They also experimented with the technique of the short-story besides using it for social criticism.

Throughout its development, Poe's dictum remains — that a short-story must always aim at singleness and totality of effect. The short-story strives to preserve its concreteness of portrayal while suggesting more than is portrayed. It is this conscious search for techniques that
makes the short-story something more than mere anecdote or skeletal novel. It is one of the most flexible and most attractive contemporary literary genres today.

In 1888, Henry James told Robert Louis Stevenson that he wanted “to leave a multitude of pictures of my time, projecting my small circular frame upon as many different spots as possible. He was planning to go in for both quantity and quality so that they would constitute a total having a certain value as observation and Testimony.”37 (Henry James and the Art of Short Fiction)

James was a prolific short-story writer who defined with clarity his theory of the short-story in his Prefaces to the New York edition of his works. He preferred to call short-stories as ‘tales’ or more important as ‘novellas’. The ‘nouvelle’ is of unprescribed length and affords the writer some maneuverability. He sought masterly brevity, which was possible in a tale. His tales were an average ten to twenty thousand words long.

For him, there were two kinds of short narratives – the anecdote and the picture. The anecdote he said was an account of something that has oddly happened to someone. To remain an anecdote, it had to point directly to that person and to keep him at the very centre of the story. If something that happened to the hero or heroine extends to other characters as well, the anecdote ceases to be itself and becomes a short novel. The story which was a picture, differed from the anecdote
in that, it was not susceptible of becoming dramatic action. It was usually a composition in a small frame — a foreground, a background, a centre of composition.

James’s tales can be divided into three phases — Early, Middle and Late. The early tales show his strong flair for dramatic dialogue. They tell of failure in love, renunciation, the reticence of young men, the unfathomableness of young women, the general fickleness of the female sex. They are rather melancholic, and romantic, and rather devoid of the later wit. They have a lugubrious atmosphere. They have typical American settings. James was concerned not so much with plot, as with personal relations.

The tales of his middle period mark his emergence as a brilliant and witty observer of life. In these tales he has discovered his European — American subject, the international theme. He exhibits tremendous intellectual humor. He criticizes the egalitarianism and newspaperism of America and the snootiness, arrogance and rudeness of Europe. James was a creator of maxims, and his epigrammatic style did him constant service in evoking the human imagination. The American woman is represented in all her glory, complexity and confusion in these tales. *Daisy Miller*, *Pandora Day*, and others are shining examples.

The tales of the late period deal with a study of states of feeling and of dilemmas of existence. They are mostly existential in mode and
reveal his sense of tragic insight. The Altar of the Dead, The Beast in the Jungle, are tales in which his study of nightmare and terror are carried on. In them he presents the consequences of extreme egotism and failures in spiritual sharing when men have sealed their eyes to the world and the love around them. The late tales are studies of ‘predicaments’ of individuals, frustrated and defeated, who arrive at the ultimate tragedy, that of helplessly knowing the emptiness of their past. It is ‘ghostly’ tales and tales of literary life that show his unexhausted wit. They are studies of stupidity and ignorance in public places, in them an old anger has been transmuted into urbane laughter and a lesson in gentle suave criticism of life.

By reading James’s tales in their chronological order, one can see the historian of manners, the psychologist, the civilized mind, and the profound moralist, gradually revealed before one’s eyes. His style at the beginning reveals a camera like sharpness, at the end it becomes impressionistic. The characters too, mainly belong to upper classes but some are also grocery clerks, school – teachers, artists, models and poor impoverished Bohemians. James was not concerned with their class but with them as individuals.

Since Henry James’s death in 1916, his fame and prestige have fluctuated. Until recently however little attention has been given to the major portion of his one hundred and twelve short-stories. Some of these tales for example Dasiy Miller, The Aspern Papers, The Beast
in the Jungle and a few others have been closely scrutinized while the vast majority of his works have remained unexamined and unread. The large copies of James's short-stories have yet to be closely studied specially the depiction of women characters and their role in the overall order and design of James's short fiction. No studies of the short-story sequence examines how James consciously placed and ordered the tales and stories that he elected to include in the collections to achieve thematic unity and architectural harmony. James published three species of short-story collections during his career. One type consists of a volume whose title is identical to that of the first story. The second type consists of a series of tales arranged in a volume to which James gave a special title, a title separate and distinct from the titles of any of the stories contained therein. James produced six such collections in his life time. Terminations (1895) Embarrassments (1896) The Two Magics (1898) The Soft Side (1900) The Better Sort (1903) and The Finer Grain (1910).

Finally there are the volumes which contain short-stories that became part of the New York Edition. These volumes are UN-titled save for the simple designation of the volume numbers.

On 24th of March 1873 James revealed his interest in organizing stories in collections around a central theme. He writes to his mother at that

"He desires to make a volume of tales on the theme of
American adventures in Europe leading off with the
Passionate Pilgrim. I have three or four more to write. One
I have lately sent to Howell's and have finished another.”
(Cage, p.111) 28

Not only do these remarks adumbrate the international theme,
which was to become the major subject of James's greatest fiction, but
they also clearly show that James conceived stories in collections in no
haphazard way. Rather each collection was consciously designed,
assembled and arranged to provide some thread of unity among the
desperate narratives.

A short-story sequence by definition is a series of desperate
narratives with different characters and different plots, it cannot have
the sort of unity that a novel with a continuous plot and a single group
of characters has. Consequently the ideas that will govern the
construction of a story sequence may be somewhat different from those
which govern the constructions of a novel. A novel will often have an
organic principle of development showing the changes or the lack of
changes that an individual character undergoes. A story sequence on
the other hand will achieve organic unity not so much through
protracted development of a single character as through development
of a theme or idea illustrated in various ways, by different characters in
different situations. Therefore in analyzing James's fiction, the
principal ideas that appear most important in providing clues to his
system of organizing and designing story sequences will be his
comments on structure, connections, associations, relations, arrangements and sequence. Further insights concerning James’s ideas about story sequences can be inferred through examining his comments, praising and disapproving of other author’s writings.

Virtually every one of James’s novels and tales is marked by appropriate arrangement of dialogue in relation to narration of the internal and external lives of characters, locations, and blocks of material of all kinds.
NOTES


4. Ibid. P. 5


10. Albert. J. Von Frank, Critical Essays on Hawthorne's Short

12. Ibid. p. 237


17. Alberto Moravia, ‘*The Short Story and the Novel*’, In a Book called *Man as a End; A Defence of Humanism* Trans Bernald wall, (New York Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 1965) pp.178-182


