

## THE SHORT STORY: THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

MARY LOUISE PRATT \*

Structuralism establishes that genres have to be specified at least in part relationally, in terms of each other. What is often unrecognized, however, is that relations between genres need not be symmetrical. This paper examines some of the asymmetries in the relation between the short story and the novel, focusing on the former as a dependent and marked genre (or countergenre) with respect to the latter, now the dominant, normative genre for prose fiction, if not for literature as a whole. This asymmetry is articulated in a number of ways, both in classical short story theory and in the short story practice of the last 150 years. For instance, the fact that theoretical discussion of the short story invariably departs from and centers on the (purely relative) idea of shortness attests to the normative presence of the novel. In modern short story writing, the sense of the short story as incomplete or fragmentary with respect to the wholeness of the novel helps explain the dominance of short story structural types like the moment-of-truth, the exemplum, or the joke. Other fairly generalized trends in the short story, such as orality and experimentalism are studied in terms of the short story's status as minor and lesser genre with respect to the novel.

In Tokyo these days, according to folklorist V. Hrdličková (1969), there are two types of professional oral storytelling: *kodan*, the telling of long, serious, mainly historical narratives, and *rakugo*, the telling of short, humorous anecdotes. The two genres are performed in different theatres, with different gestures, props, mannerisms, and different training programs for apprentices. One, *kodan*, at the moment is in serious decline; *rakugo* is immensely popular and growing. In highly institutionalized forms of discourse, like verbal art, it is relatively common to find pairs of short and long genres like *kodan* and *rakugo*. Western scholarly writing has the essay and the book; in western literature we find the epic and the ballad, the one-act play and the (regular?) play, the poem and the long poem, the short story and the novel. Many different relations can obtain between the members of these pairs. They may be separate but equal, one may be derived from the other, one may be 'marked' with respect to the other (as long poem is to poem), they may be related as "major" to "minor" or as "greater" to "lesser". The pair whose relationship I propose to explore here is the last mentioned above, the short story and the novel. But before

\* Author's address: Mary Louise Pratt, Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese, Stanford University  
Stanford, CA 94305, USA.

turning to this pair, I want to make explicit a few assumptions about genres which will inform the discussion to follow.

(1) There is at present no single consistent use of the term "genre". The most one can say is that it always refers to a subcategory of some larger category (or subcategory) of literary works. Thus the genre of drama is a subcategory of literature, the genre of comedy is a subcategory of drama, the genre of farce is a subcategory of comedy, and so on. The fuzziness of the term arises not just from its being applied at different levels, but also from its being applied according to different criteria. Genre distinctions are based variously on subject matter (detective story, artist novel), narrative situation (confessional novel, dramatic monologue), surface linguistic form (sonnet, prose poem), effect sought in audience (tragedy, melodrama), mode of execution of text (drama) and so on.

(2) Genre is not solely a literary matter. The concept of genre applies to all verbal behavior, in all realms of discourse. Genre conventions are in play in any speech situation, and any discourse belongs to a genre, unless it is a discourse explicitly designed to flaunt the genre system. As Siegfried Schmidt observes, "It is one of the basic assumptions of communicative text theories (apart from the above mentioned assumption of the necessary social embeddings of texts) that texts in social communication always appear as manifestations of a socially recognizable text-type" (Schmidt 1978 : 48). Establishing typologies of text types is, as Schmidt stresses, an urgent priority. Within that project, it will be important to relate literary and non-literary genres, with a view to establishing comprehensive genre theories rather than the many local ones that obtain in literary criticism, folklore, anthropology and sociolinguistics. The term "genre" outside literature at present suffers from the same vagueness as within literature, and its boundaries with terms like speech event and speech situation are not clear. Candidates for non-literary genres are, for instance, the telephone conversation, lecture, interview, personal narrative, verbal duelling, therapeutic discourse.

(3) Genres are not essences. They are human institutions, historical through and through. The massive effort within literary criticism to maintain the lyric-epic-dramatic triad as ahistorical generic absolutes is seriously misdirected, though of great ideological interest. The myriad attempts to link the lyric-epic-dramatic triad with other phenomena, in paradigms of the type shown in table 1, are directed toward making these classical genre distinctions look natural rather than cultural, thus separating the sphere of art off from other spheres of discourse, and from social life in general.

We need to work out ways of describing the social mode of existence of genres. For instance, linguists customarily distinguish between a speaker's "use vocabulary" (forms the person both says and understands) and her or his "recognition vocabulary" (forms the person understands only), and it might be useful to distinguish likewise between use genres and recognition genres. In this society, literary genres belong to a large class of genres which are widespread as recognition genres, but highly specialized as use genres. Shifting to a related viewpoint, at a given historical

Table 1

	Lyric	Epic	Dramatic
Phases of language development	Sensuous	Intuitive	Conceptual
Tense	Present	Past	Future
Person	First	Third	Second
Function of language	Expressive	Referential	Conative
Faculties of the soul	Feeling	Thinking	Volition
Functions of the nervous system	Emotive experience	Imaginative experience	Motivic experience
Worldviews	Psychologicalistic	Naturalistic	Idealistic
Stages of life	Youth	Maturity	Old age
Historical sequence	Subjective antithesis	Objective thesis	Synthesis
Aspects of the self	Soul	Body	Spirit a)

a) These are discussed in Hernadi (1972), especially pp. 31-35.

moment we will have to distinguish among (a) productive genres, that is, those in which works are currently being composed without being anachronistic (e.g. now, the novel) (b) recognized genres, that is, those in which new works are not being composed, except as anachronistic revivals, but which most people know how to receive (e.g. now, animal fables) and (c) dead genres, that is, those that are only part of specialized, professional knowledge (e.g. now, the philosophical tale). I mean these suggestions just as examples of the kind of questions a social theory of genre might look at.

(4) Criterial features are not enough. Genre criticism has been heavily concerned with distinguishing genres from each other, with finding criterial or essential features by which a given work can unambiguously be identified as belonging to a particular genre. This system-oriented, structural approach needs to be complemented by a genre criticism that concerns itself not only with criterial features of genres, also but with non-essential and occasional ones, with characteristics that aren't relevant points of contrast with other genres, or with vaguer tendencies and trends not visible in all members of the genre, but present often enough to be noticed. Genres can be characterized not by an unambiguous discovery procedure for classifying texts, but by a cluster of characteristics and tendencies, only some of which may be present in a given text.

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Not surprisingly discussions of the short story invariably call upon the novel as a point of comparison, or rather of contrast. Brander Matthews' classic *Philosophy of the Short Story* (1901) is typical in this respect:

The difference between a Novel and a Novelet is one of length only: a Novelet is a brief Novel. But the difference between a Novel and a Short-story is a difference of kind. A true Short-story is something other and something more than a mere story which is short. A true Short-story differs from the Novel chiefly in its essential unity of impression. In a far more exact and precise use of the word, a Short-story has unity as a Novel cannot have it . . .

The novelist may take his time; he has abundant room to turn about. The writer of Short-stories must be concise, and compression, a vigorous compression, is essential. For him, more than for anyone else, the half is more than the whole. Again, the novelist may be commonplace, he may bend his best energies to the photographic reproduction of the actual; if he show us a cross-section of real life we are content; but the writer of Short-stories must have originality, and ingenuity. If to compression, originality, and ingenuity he add also a touch of fantasy, so much the better. (Summers 1963: 10-11)

Even in languages where the name of the genre makes no reference to shortness (French *conte*, Spanish *cuento*, for instance), comparison with the novel is the usual approach. For instance, Edelweis Serra in a recent book on the Spanish American short story introduces his subject thus:

El cuento es construcción y comunicación artística de una serie limitada de acontecimientos,

experiencias o situaciones conforme a un orden correlative cerrado que crea su propia percepción como totalidad. El cuento es, pues, un limitado continuo frente al "ilimitado discontinuo" de la novela, según Lukacs . . . El cuento sería un orden de asociaciones y de correlaciones internas más cerradas, y la novela un orden ampliamente abierto: un orden de singularización y percepción sintética, el cuento: un orden de pluralización percibido más analíticamente, la novela. (Serra 1978: 11-12)

The short story is an artistic construction and communication of a limited sequence of events, experiences, or situations according to a closed correlative order which creates its own perception as a totality. The short story, then, is a limited continuity, in contrast with the "unlimited discontinuity" of the novel, according to Lukacs . . . The short story is a relatively closed order of internal associations and correlations, and the novel a wide open order; an order of estrangement and synthetic perception, the short story; an order of pluralization perceived more analytically, the novel. (translation mine)

Short story critics typically rely on comparisons with the novel as ways of fleshing out the 'mere' fact of shortness, ways of talking about the short story as "something more than a story which is short". The problem with shortness, of course, arises from a sense that literary genres ought to be characterized by esthetic properties, and shortness seems altogether too quantitative, too material a feature to be given top billing. At the same time, for reasons I shall be exploring in a moment, it does seem inescapably the crucial fact. Contrasts with the more stably established novel open a way to associate this most pedestrian of properties with bonafide esthetic characteristics like compression, synthesis, "a touch of fantasy".

Frank O'Connor adopts the same contrastive tactic in his classic *The Lonely Voice*, though his comparison stresses different characteristics from Matthews and Serra:

Always in the short story there is this sense of outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society, superimposed sometimes on symbolic figures whom they caricature and echo - Christ, Socrates, Moses . . .

As a result there is in the short story at its most characteristic something we do not often find in the novel - an intense awareness of human loneliness . . . The novel can still adhere to the classical concept of civilized society, of man as an animal who lives in a community, as in Jane Austen and Trollope it obviously does; but the short story remains by its very nature remote from the community - romantic, individualistic, and intransigent. (O'Connor 1962: 19, 21)

Often the lyric, the other conspicuous short genre, is brought in as a positive point of comparison. O'Connor has described the short story as "the nearest thing I know to lyric poetry" (Summers 1963: 100), and his words are echoed more recently by Rust Hills, who says "The successful contemporary short story will demonstrate a more harmonious relationship of all its aspects than will any other literary art form, excepting perhaps lyric poetry" (Hills 1977: 1). Ian Reid suggests a four-way comparison: "In its normally limited scope and subjective orientation [the short story] corresponds to the lyric poem as the novel does to the epic" (Reid 1977: 28).

The chief goal of the comparisons is obviously to distinguish and separate the short story from the novel, to establish the former as

una estructura literaria de intrínseca validez, una criatura independiente dentro del área vasta de la narrativa, donde su deslinde categorial es practicable precisamente por su ser y existir autónomos frente a la novela. (Serra 1978: 14)

a literary structure of intrinsic validity, an independent creature in the vast regions of narrative, where its categorical distinctiveness is possible precisely by virtue of its autonomous existence alongside the novel. (translation mine)

Characteristically in short story criticism, the short story is conceived as an autonomous genre, and the novel and lyric are brought into the picture simply as a rhetorical means for highlighting its particularities. Nothing about the novel is really needed to explain the short story.

Now structuralism has taught us that genres are never completely autonomous, but are always defined within the genre system with respect to each other. The statements relating the short story to novel and lyric are thus not gratuitous or simply rhetorical, though one understands why defenders of the short story might want to see them thus. Any attempt to describe a genre must make reference to other genres. But this does not mean relations between genres have to be symmetrical. The relation between the novel and the short story is a highly asymmetrical one, and it is this asymmetry that I would like to explore here. Their relation is not one of contrasting equivalents in a system (separate but equal), but a hierarchical one with the novel on top and the short story dependent. The dependency has both conceptual and historical aspects. The conceptual aspect is that shortness cannot be an intrinsic property of anything, but occurs only relative to something else. The historical aspect is that the novel is, and has been for some time, the more powerful and prestigious of the two genres. Hence, facts about the novel are necessary to explain facts about the short story, but the reverse is not so. The novel has through and through conditioned both the development of the short story and the critical treatment of the short story, but the reverse is not so. Between these paired genres, relations of long to short coincide with relations of unmarked to marked, of major to minor, of greater to lesser, even "mature" to "infant". There is nothing necessary or inevitable about such correspondences. Contrast for instance the relations between poem and long poem, where the longer genre is minor, and neither is stigmatized as lesser.

Let me give a small example of how this asymmetry comes to bear. The short story has a reputation as a training or practice genre, for both apprentice writers and apprentice readers. And it is in fact widely used in this way, in schools for example. Sociolinguistically, this use of the genre makes a lot of sense. The shorter a performance, as a rule, the less the participants have at stake in it, and the less is lost if it fails in any way. Relative to the novel, then the short story is the safer arena for the inevitable failures of apprenticeship. But only relative to the novel.

That is, it is only because there are two prose fiction genres, one short and one long, that one of the two is singled out as the training ground, and it is because there is a hierarchical relation between the two that the novel can be viewed as the goal of the training. The same analysis applies to the traditional role of the short story as an experimental genre. It is only relative to the ("full-fledged") novel that the short story is seen as, and used as, the controlled lab for preliminary testing of devices before their release into the world at large. In sum, both the conception of and the practice of the short story are conditioned by its relation to the novel, as the smaller and lesser genre.

Now it is easy to see why thoughts of this dependency might be unwelcome to defenders of the ("modern") short story, seeking legitimacy for the genre. Yet, as the preoccupation with the novel in their writings suggests, such thoughts were inescapable, and tended to resolve themselves into some intriguing contradictions. Here is Boris Eikhenbaum in his now classic essay "O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story" (1925):

The novel and the short story are forms not only different in kind but also inherently at odds, and for that reason are never found being developed simultaneously and with equal intensity in any one literature. The novel is a syncretic form (whether its development be directly from collections of stories or complicated by the incorporation of manners-and-morals material); the story is a fundamental, elementary (which does not mean primitive) form. The novel derives from history, from travels; the story – from folklore, anecdote. The difference is one of essence, a difference in principle conditioned by the fundamental distinction between *big* and *small* form. Not only individual writers but also individual literatures cultivate either the novel or the short story. (Eikhenbaum 1968: 4)

Here at the same time as he tries to show that the story is more than a story which is short, Eikhenbaum seems to want to boil everything down to the question of length, even differences in history such as the traditional association of the novel with travels and the short story with folklore. "Bigness" and "smallness" become essences from which all other characteristics of both genres derive. The paradox is that bigness and smallness are precisely the features that cannot be conceived of as separate essences, for they are relative concepts. Smallness and bigness cannot be inherent properties of anything, they can only occur relative to something else. What are selected as essences distinguishing the novel and the short story and guaranteeing the autonomy of the two genres, are the very pair of relative terms that bind the two together. In Brander Matthews we see the same tendency. At the same time as "mere" shortness is downplayed, everything is explained in terms of relative length, including choice of subject matter. For instance:

While the Novel cannot get on easily without love, the Short-story can. Since love seems to be almost the only thing which will give interest to a long story, the writer of Novels has to get love into his tales as best he may, even when the subject rebels and when he himself is too old to take any delight in the mating of John and Joan. But the Short-story, being brief, does not need a love-interest to hold its parts together, and the writer of Short-stories has thus a greater freedom. (Summers 1963: 11)

Here too, an “essential difference” between the two genres is posited on the relative feature of length. Moreover, notice that although Matthews starts out with a social explanation of length — that love is required to give interest to a long text — he then shifts to a purely formal explanation — the love interest is needed to hold the parts together.

The non-contradictory way to argue the integrity and self-containedness of the short story would be to describe it without taking cues from other genres. But clearly this would be even more misleading, if possible at all. The contradictions we do find in these classic discussions at least implicitly allude to the short story’s dependence on the novel, though they vehemently deny it on the surface. Thanks to the work of these early apologists, their defensive stance can now be abandoned, and we can move on to recognize the dependent (rather than interdependent) relation between short story and novel. In a rather schematic way, I propose to raise eight points at which I think an understanding of the short story is increased by that recognition. The general suggestion is that some of the narrative structures, subject matters, narrative traditions, and critical attitudes characteristically associated with the short story are associated with it (a) because the short story has been tacitly seen as incomplete or fragmentary with respect to the totality and completeness of the novel, and (b) because the short story has often redeployed materials that were dissociated by the novel, often because they were devalued in literary or social terms. The historical hypothesis that arises is that as the novel consolidated itself in the 19th century, the short story tended to shift around into positions of “countergenre” [1] to the novel. The emergence of the “modern short story”, usually located somewhere between 1835 and 1855, may be less the emergence of a new genre than the consolidation of a new relationship between genres.

The first four propositions I will examine concern the short story’s “incompleteness” with respect to the novel:

Proposition 1. *The novel tells a life, the short story tells a fragment of a life.* One of the most consistently found narrative structures in the short story is the one called the “moment-of-truth”. Moment of truth stories focus on a single point of crisis in the life of a central character, a crisis which provokes some basic realization that will change the character’s life forever. A classic example is Joyce’s “Araby”, and indeed all the stories in *Dubliners*. Not a few critics regard the moment of truth as the canonic form of the modern short story. Writing on Melville, Robert Marler says:

A fundamental element of the short story, then, is precisely this inner change. It may be an awakening, as in “The Beast in the Jungle”, a momentary realization, as in “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”, or a change that goes unrecognized except by the discerning reader, as in Sarah Orne Jewett’s “A White Heron”, but a character moves, regardless of the minuteness of the displacement, from a state of relative ignorance to a state of relative knowledge. (Marler 1973: 429)

[1] I take this term from Guillén (1971: especially Chapter 5).

Now to some extent, the moment of truth stands as a model for the short story the way the life stands as a model for the novel. These are not normative models; there is no sense in which texts not conforming to them are automatically seen as unusual or deviant. At most we can talk about the novel/life correspondence and the short story/moment of truth correspondence as recognizable trends or typical forms. What I want to suggest is that there is more than an analogical relationship between these two sets of correspondences, that the identification of the short story form with moment of truth plot was to some degree prescribed by the prior association between the novel form and the life. The lurking associations are these: if the short story is not a “full-length” narrative it cannot narrate a full-length life; it can narrate a fragment or excerpt of a life. And if from that fragment one can deduce things about the whole life, then the more novel-like, the more complete, the story is. L.A.G. Strong voiced this attitude some 40 years ago, saying that the short story writer “may give us only the key-piece of a mosaic, around which, if sufficiently perceptive, we can see in shadowy outline the completed pattern” (Summers 1963: 42). This attitude, I would argue, was conditioned by what Ian Watt describes as a premise “implicit in the novel form in general: the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience” (Rohrberger 1966: 125). Frank O’Connor regards the life as an all-out “essential form” for narrative, and at the same time assumes this form is not available to the short story:

For the short-story writer there is no such thing as essential form. Because his frame of reference can never be the totality of a human life, he must be forever selecting the point at which he can approach it . . . In the standard composition that the individual life presents, the story-teller must always be looking for new compositions that enable him to suggest the totality of the old one.

Accordingly, the story-teller differs from the novelist in this: he must be much more of a writer, much more of an artist — perhaps I should add, considering the examples I have chosen, more of a dramatist. (O’Connor 1962: 21–22)

Writers in both genres have played on the paired correspondences novel/life and short story/moment of truth. It was a overt opposition to the linear story-of-a-life novel that Virginia Woolf wrote *Mrs. Dalloway*, a novel-length exploration of a one-day fragment of a life, ending in a moment of truth. In “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”, Hemingway collapses the associations onto each other: Macomber’s happy life, as opposed to his whole life, lasts only a few moments, and corresponds to his moment of truth. Short life, short story.

It must be kept clear that this relationship of whole to fragment is not a necessary one. To return to an earlier example, we do not see the poem as incomplete with respect to long poem. It is not logically necessary for a short genre to be seen as a dependency of, or a fragment of, or a baby brother of a corresponding larger genre. Nor is it an empirical necessity arising from inherent limitations on forms. The novel form is not “by its very nature” too big for the moment of truth struc-

ture; nor is the short story inherently too small to tell a whole life. It is neither a logical nor an empirical necessity, but rather a fact of literary history, that the short story has developed along lines in part determined by the novel. By novelistic standards, the moment of truth is an especially good fragment of a life to narrate because it projects itself by implication backward and forward across the whole life: "All my life I had been *X* until one day *Y* happened, and for the rest of my life I was *Z*". Thus, so the thinking goes, the fragmentary short story is nevertheless able to achieve some of the plenitude and totality of the novel.

These same assumptions underlie one of the more general commonplaces of short story criticism, namely that the short story relies on suggestion and implication while the novel uses explicit statement. For instance, H.E. Bates says:

What Hemingway realized, and what it is important all short-story writers should realize, was that it is possible to convey a great many things on paper without stating them at all. To master the art of implication, of making one sentence say two or more different things, by conveying emotion and atmosphere without drawing up a tidy balance sheet of descriptions about them, is more than half the short-storywriter's business. (Bates 1941: 177)

In a similar vein, Frank O'Connor puts it, "Creating in the novel a sense of continuing life is the thing. We don't have that problem in the short story, here you merely suggest continuing life" (Summers 1963: 100). What is odd about such statements is not what they say about the short story, but what they say about the novel — that it does use "tidy balance sheets"? that it creates a sense of life by some means other than suggestion? Such statements seem to be efforts to cast a good light on the notion that the short story lacks internal space and achieves completeness only by referring beyond itself. In the process, they imply an almost ludicrous picture of the novel.

Proposition 2. *The short story deals with a single thing, the novel with many things.* This is a positive variant of the position outlined in 1. From this point of view, what is stressed in defining the genre is the word *single*, as in Poe's requirement of a "*single effect* to be wrought" (Poe 1967: 446), or Brander Matthews' dictum that "a short story deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation" (Summers 1963: 10), or John Milton Berdan's definition of the genre as "a single dramatic episode, rendered credible" to which he adds, "the word 'single' in the definition has a very real place. It differentiates the 'tale' from the 'short story' as a form of literary art" (Berdan 1932: v).

Now this singleness argument does correspond to common short story practice. It is characteristic, for example, for short stories to be structured around single small-scale quests or socially identifiable single incidents like a party, an excursion, a funeral, a hanging, or some such pre-packaged fragment. And it is certainly commonplace for short stories to identify themselves by title as being about a single person — "The Prussian Officer", "The Adulterous Woman", "The Chemist's Wife",

"Funes the Memorious", and so on. It is equally certainly a mistake to elevate this singleness to a criterial feature of the genre. For example, A.L. Bader has perceptively pointed out that it is common for short stories to juxtapose two parallel incidents, as happens, for instance, in Maupassant's "A Country Excursion", or Mansfield's "The Garden Party", though their titles suggest a single incident (Summers 1963: 43).

Once again, the point is that the stress in both short story theory and practice on singleness of impression, incident, and so on, is in part conditioned by the novel, against which the short story had to look for what was smaller and lesser. Berdan's observation that this singleness criterion does not apply to the tale is suggestive. The older tale was never a dependent countergenre to the novel. When it became so, it turned into the "modern short story".

Proposition 3. *The short story is a sample, the novel is the whole hog.* This proposition refers to the tendency for short stories to present themselves, usually through their titles, as samples or examples of some larger general category. This is another way in which the short story claims its relevance by referring outside itself to some more complete whole. One example is the day-in-the-life variety — "Christmas in Steamboat Junction", "Mr. Jones Goes to the Fair", "A Day in the Country", "In the Penal Colony" — where the point is not just the events themselves, but their supposed typicality. This is where the short story merges with the sketch (another genre whose name assumes incompleteness). Then there are the character types, like "A Country Doctor", "A Hunger Artist", "The Man of the Crowd", "The Man Who Grew Younger", "Jonas or The Artist at Work" [2]. Then there are the emblems, stories given, perhaps ironically, as exempla of social or moral categories: "Grief", "Misfortune", "Politics", "Debts", "Wants" [3]. Sometimes the generalization being illustrated is a type of story, as in "A Boring Story", "A Christmas Story", "The Immigrant Story", "Story of a Farmgirl" [4], or Dylan Thomas's plain "A Story", whose everydayness he apologizes for in the opening paragraph: "If you can call it a story. There is no real beginning or end and there's very little in the middle. It is all about a day's outing, by charabanc, to Porthcawl, which, of course, the charabanc never reached, and it happened when I was so high and much nicer".

Even more common is the story titled by a quotation, whether a punch line, a cliché, or a proverb, which the story is understood to be illustrating. This is a favorite device of Flannery O'Connor, famous for "A Good Man is Hard to Find", "Good Country People", and "Everything that Rises Must Converge". But it is a common practice all over. Picking up Andrew Salkey's anthology of Caribbean

[2] The first two of these stories are by Kafka, the third by Poe, the fourth by Jerome Charyn, the fifth by Camus.

[3] Of these stories, the first two are by Chekhov, the others by Grace Paley.

[4] Of the stories listed, the first is by Chekhov, the second by V.S. Naipaul, the third by Grace Paley, the fourth by Maupassant.

short stories, for example, I find "Man, In England, You've Just Got to Love Animals", "A Free Country", "Any Lawful Impediment", "Birds of a Feather" [5]. Here we see the short story harking back to two of its most conspicuous antecedents, first the exemplum, with the appended moral promoted to title, and second, the exemplum's countergenre, the joke with its punch line.

One small but revealing feature of short stories in this exemplary vein is that their characters are frequently given no proper name, or only a first name, like Bartleby the scrivener. This contrasts sharply with the novelistic tradition of characters with full proper names, especially in titles, where the individualized character him or herself is proclaimed as the interest of the book. The nameless trend in the short story is a generalizing one, and of course, biblical.

The exemplary or illustrative trend in the short story traces back not just to the medieval exemplum or the biblical parable, but to the use of the short narrative in eighteenth century periodicals like London's *The Spectator* and *The Rambler*, where it merges with the essay. In the eighteenth century, says H.S. Canby, "the novel developed freely. But the short story, by custom, remained a pendant to the essay, was restricted to the purposes of illustration. In this age, as never before or since, it was bound up to the service of didacticism. Its range was small. Its success was remarkable" (Canby 1913: 26). Outside fictional literature, illustration of course remains one of the main purposes for which narration is used, as in journalism and debate. This is one of the most conspicuous points of contact between imaginative literature and other kinds of discourse. Outside literature, the exemplary narrative is always a fragment of a larger discourse, never a complete whole. The various kinds of exemplary short stories likewise suggest their own incompleteness and, usually through titles, imply the larger context in which they are to be understood.

Proposition 4. *The novel is a whole text, the short story is not.* Here I refer to the very concrete fact that a novel constitutes a complete book (or books), while a short story never does. A short story is always printed as part of a larger whole, either a collection of short stories or a magazine, which is a collection of various kinds of texts. Except in schools, perhaps, individual short stories are usually read as part of a larger reading experience. Though this is not a determining factor, it is likely that the fact of not being an autonomous text reinforces the view of the short story as a part or fragment. In any case, if one is looking for an objective factor on which to hang the concepts of longness and shortness, I think it would be, at least in the present period, this fact of being or not being a complete book. This is certainly a more useful distinction than the traditional "able to be read in one sitting".

[5] Salkey (1970). The stories are by Samuel Selvon, R.O. Robinson, Donald Hinds, and George Lamming, respectively.

I turn now to another set of fairly generalized characteristics of the short story which, though not attached to the idea of the short story as incomplete, do relate to its status as minor and lesser genre with respect to the novel.

5. *Subject matter.* Just as it is used for formal experimentation, the short story is often the genre used to introduce new (and possibly stigmatized) subject matters into the literary arena. Bret Harte refers to this function, for example, in an 1899 retrospective on the origins of the American short story. Harte explains that he wrote "The Luck of Roaring Camp" because, as editor of *Overland Monthly*, he failed to find in all the materials submitted "anything of that wild and picturesque life which had impressed him, first as a truant schoolboy, and afterwards, as a youthful schoolmaster among the mining population" (Summers 1963: 8). For Harte the American short story signaled the end of the dominance of English models in American literature, the end of an era when "the literary man had little sympathy with the rough and half-civilized masses who were making his country's history: if he used them at all it was as a foil to bring into greater relief his hero of the unmistakable English pattern". In other parts of the world we similarly find the short story being used to introduce new regions or groups into an established national literature, or into an emerging national literature in the process of decolonization. In France, Maupassant through the short story breaks down taboos on matters of sexuality and class. In the establishment of a modern national literature in Ireland, the short story emerges as the central prose fiction genre, through which Joyce, O'Flaherty, O'Faolain, O'Connor, Moore, Lavin and so many others first document modern Irish life. Its role has been comparable in the emergence of the modern literature of the American South. In Canada, smalltown Ontario life was introduced, at an early stage of decolonization, in the comic stories of Stephen Leacock, and at a later stage, in the more serious work of Alice Munro. In Latin America, it is through the short story that Horacio Quiroga introduces the marginalized society of the Argentine jungle frontier into literature; in Peru Jose María Arguedas first begins his exploration of modern indigenous life in the short story before moving to the novel. It is in such regional (*i.e.* marginal with respect to some metropolis) writings that one sees most clearly the short story's relations to the sketch, a genre which it has now subsumed, and which was, as Ray West describes it, "a romantic means of catching the atmosphere of remote places" (Summer: 1963: 28). On the other side, and perhaps moving toward the panoramic potential of the novel, it is also here on the regional periphery that the short story cycle has been most likely to make its appearance. Of the writers just mentioned, five wrote place-based short story cycles of the *Winesburg, Ohio* or *Dubliners* variety. (Joyce *Dubliners*; Leacock, *Sunshine Sketches*; Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*; Quiroga *Los desterrados*; Arguedas, *El aylla*.) To some extent, such cycles do a kind of groundbreaking, establishing a basic literary identity for a region or group, laying out descriptive parameters character types, social and economic settings, principal points of conflict for an audience unfamiliar either with the region itself or with

seeing that region in print. But the short story cycle sometimes is used to convey a particular social perspective too. Speaking of Sherwood Anderson's use of the cycle in *Winesburg, Ohio*, Ian Reid remarks:

The tight continuous structure of a novel is deliberately avoided: Anderson said he wanted 'a new looseness' of form to suit the particular quality of his material. His people are lonely, restless, cranky. Social cohesion is absent in their mid-western town. Even momentary communication seldom occurs between any two of them. Winesburg is undergoing a human erosion caused by the winds of change blowing from the cities, by the destabilizing of moral codes, and by the intrinsic thinness of small-town life. The 'new looseness' of Winesburg Ohio can convey with precision and pathos the duality that results: a superficial appearance (and indeed the ideal possibility) of communal wholeness, and an underlying actual separateness. (Reid 1977: 47–8)

Reid's comments also suggest why the short story cycle rather than the novel might be chosen to portray, for example, the disorder of frontier society, or of traditional societies disintegrating in the face of modernization.

Obviously, whether a given subject matter is central or peripheral, established or new in a literature has a great deal to do with what is central and peripheral in the community outside its literature, a great deal to do, that is, with values, and with socioeconomic, political and cultural realities. In some cases at least, there seem to develop dialectical correspondences between minor or marginal genres and what are evaluated as minor or marginal subjects. So for example, we find the short story used especially often for portraying childhood experience (illustrated by such classics, as Joyce's "Araby", Cortázar's "End of the Game", Lawrence's "Rocking Horse Winner", and so many by Faulkner). Novels dealing with childhood experience seem relatively rare on the other hand, except for the specialized (marked) categories of the picaresque and the bildungsroman. Such a tendency might be explained purely in terms of length and interest – a child's perspective is too naive, too thin, too unrevealing to sustain "full-length" novel treatment. But isn't this really a way of saying that childhood experience is not considered normative or authoritative in the society, or that it is considered an incomplete basis for the supposed totalizing vision of the novel? Similarly, the short story has a tradition of dealing with rural or peasant life. This is a longstanding trend in Russia. Speaking of the *conte* in late 19th century France, Ian Reid observes,

Not the least important tendency of those latter writers [Daudet, Flaubert, Maupassant], was their predilection for rural subjects and simple folk. Mostly it could be left to the novel to delineate those large-scale social patterns which were so amply extended in urban life; the short story seemed especially suitable for the portrayal of regional life, or of individuals who, though situated in a city, lived there as aliens. (Reid 1977: 24)

Reid's comment suggests an explanation based on some kind of natural or intrinsic literary possibilities of the various subject matters – rural life is small and thus appropriate to small genres. But of course it is essential to see such a view simply as an expression of the values held by the particular class who had proprietorship over

the two genres, and for whom the novel was the privileged vehicle for dealing with the areas of experience they cared about most. When it comes time for a dominant class to bring what Frank O'Connor likes to call "submerged population groups" to the surface, the short story often comes into play. One might offer a similar explanation for the fact that in the age of empiricism, the short story seems to have been the special domain for the fantastic and the supernatural – topics marginalized and stigmatized by a novel consolidating itself around realism.

6. *Orality*. This is another consistent trend in the short story, ranging from the incorporation of oral-colloquial speech forms in the language of narration, (e.g. James' "The Beldonald Holbein" and others), through instances where an oral narrative is embedded in the story (e.g. Chekhov's "Gooseberries"), to instances where the whole text takes the form of represented speech, often first person narration in an oral setting (e.g. Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"). Oral style and formate are common not just in regional or "folk" trends in the short story, such as the Leskovian skaz, but also at the cosmopolitan end of the scale, in the work of Poe, Woolf, Kafka, Cortázar and Borges, for example. They are perfectly possible in the novel too, of course, as is amply demonstrated by Conrad and Faulkner, for example, or more recently by writers like João Guimarães Rosa (in his Brazilian masterpiece *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*) or Robertson Davies (*The Deptford Trilogy*). But orality is not a conspicuous or consistent tendency in the novel as it is in the short story. The conspicuous tradition in the novel has always been toward writing and bookishness. As is so often observed, the novel was born affirming its own writtenness, and many of the early specimens have an explicitly written framework – the manuscript of *Don Quixote*, the letters of *Pamela* and *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, the (edited) memoirs of *Moll Flanders*, the ink-splotched pages of *Tristram Shandy*, the mock latinities of *Tom Jones*. In a simultaneous celebration and interrogation of literacy and the written word, the early novel redeploys the authoritative voices of writing, of documents. (In the modern variant of this tradition, those voices are mocked and undermined – in Cortázar's *Hopscotch*, Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, the novels of Robbe-Grillet – but they are still at center stage.) The lesser authority of speech is redeployed in the "lesser" genre, supported by the literary antecedents of Chaucer, Boccaccio, the Arabian Nights. And supported, in many cases, by living (or drying) oral narrative traditions. The oral fairy tale, for instance, fed into the modern short story via the brothers Grimm. Bret Harte locates the roots of the (Anglo-)American short story in the oral tall tale and in the joke while American Jewish oral traditions, as well as speech patterns, also flourish in the genre. This is not to say that imitation of written forms is absent in the short story. It is as common there as orality. The travel journal appears, for example, in Poe's "Manuscript Found in a Bottle"; epistolary form in Cortázar's "Letter to a Young Lady in Paris"; the personal journal in many of James' stories; scholarly discourse in Kafka's "Report to an Academy"; a new Bible in John C17X McCrae's "Revelations 23 : 1–". Here the asymmetry between novel and short story appears again. Oral

form has not been particularly at home in the novel, while the written formats so typical of the novel are likewise common in the short story.

The tradition of orality in the short story has special significance in cultures where literacy is not the norm, or where the standard literary language is that of an oppressor. The Mexican writer Juan Rulfo illustrates the first case. Of his single volume of short story masterpieces (Rulfo 1967), many take the form of dramatized monologues and dialogues, such as the monologue of a father carrying his dying son to the doctor, or the dialogue between a father and the son returning from a futile attempt to get to the US. The second case, representation of oral language in rejection of an oppressive literary standard, is exemplified by the stories of such Black American writers as Toni Cade Bambara and Sonia Sanchez (see Sanchez 1973), or Caribbean writers Samuel Selvon and R.O. Robinson (see Salkey 1970).

In such contexts as these, the short story provides not just the "small" place for experimentation, but also a genre where oral and nonstandard speech, popular and regional culture, and marginal experience, have some tradition of being at home, and the form best-suited to reproducing the length of most oral speech events. Orality can be counted as one of the important factors behind the flourishing of the short story in the modern literatures of many Third World nations and peoples, where, not incidentally, it is taken much more seriously as an art form than it is elsewhere.

7. *Narrative traditions.* The novel and the short story are often associated with different narrative traditions, as for instance in the statement by Eikhenbaum quoted earlier, that the novel has its origins in history and travel, the short story in anecdote and folklore. There is much truth in such views. As suggested in the previous section, the novel does hark back to history and document, while everywhere in the short story we see revivals and remains of oral, folk, and biblical narrative traditions, like the fairy tale, the ghost story, parable, exemplum, fabliau, animal fable. Many of these story types survive directly in oral culture, religious discourse, and in literature for children. In mainstream literature, however, they have by and large been absorbed by the short story, much as in the late Middle Ages, the exemplum tended to absorb "all varieties of short narratives except the most indecent" (Canby 1913: 10). I have already mentioned a (no longer didactic) illustrative trend in the short story that doubtless connects back to the exemplum. The parable we find in Borges and Kafka, the fairy tale, degraded, in Maupassant or Juan Rulfo, the ghost story in Poe. Even more conspicuous, perhaps, is the animal fable, fully revived by Horacio Quiroga ("Anaconda"), played on by Julio Cortázar ("Axolotl", "Letter to a Young Lady in Paris"), vestigially present in the symbolic animals throughout the stories of García Márquez, or simply alluded to, by titles like James' "The Beast in the Jungle" or "The Death of the Lion". In the short story there are animals everywhere.

I mentioned earlier Virginia Woolf's incorporation of the moment-of-truth struc-

ture into the novel form. Her equally experimental short story collection, *The Haunted House and Other Short Stories* (published posthumously and in various stages of completion) gives us a near anthology of older narrative forms redeployed in a modern context: "Lappin and Lapinova" is an animal fable; "The Searchlight" an exemplum; "The Man Who Loved His Kind" a parable; "A Haunted House" a ghost story; "The Duchess and the Jeweller" a fairy tale. These alongside the newer forms like the slice of life ("The Mark on the Wall"), the moment of truth ("The Legacy") and an explicit commentary on the genre system, a short story titled "An Unwritten Novel".

Once again, the retention of older narrative traditions in the short story is only partly a question of length. Certainly it makes sense to talk about direct lines of descent from the older short (*i.e.* not-a-complete-book) genres down to the contemporary one, parallel to lines of descent from longer written antecedents down to the novel. But there are also indications that the old oral traditions are "relegated" to the short story, that because of their orality, their associations with folk culture, their didacticism and/or antirealism, the traditions were incompatible with the literary values of early bourgeois novelists and were left behind by the prestige genre, to reappear in the lesser one. In other words, it is not only a question of short forms evolving into other short forms. It is perfectly possible to write novels in the tradition of the animal fable (Richard Adams's *Watership Down*), the fairy tale (Tolkien's *Ring Trilogy*), the parable (Kafka's *Trial*) and the rest. But with the possible exception of the ghost story, such instances in the novel seem to have been isolated, recent, and highly marked.

8. *Craft versus art.* One of the most intriguing aspects of the short story's generic status is the widespread tendency for it to be viewed as a (skill-based) craft rather than a (creativity-based) art. This attitude has been particularly pronounced in the Anglo-American world, but it can be found everywhere. Anyone who has worked with the short story has had the unnerving experience of finding the library shelves groaning not with short story theory, criticism and history, but with instruction manuals – *Short Stories for Fun and Profit*, *How to Write Stories that Will Sell* and so forth. Of what short story criticism there is, not a little turns out to be the work of the major short story writers themselves – Poe, Chekhov, O'Connor, O'Faolain (*cf.* Reid 1977: 2), and these too combine how-to instruction with their critical analysis. No example could bring home more clearly that basic ground rule of modern criticism: there is a thing called serious criticism and a thing called serious art, and the two are made only for each other.

The short story's status as craft rather than art is hugely overdetermined of course. Its connections with folklore, with speech, humor, children's literature, with didacticism, the very notion of lack that goes with shortness, all conspire to deny it the status of art. But what above all creates the association with craft and skills is clearly the short story's ties to journalism. In the realm of the commercial (as distinct from the literary) magazine, the short story becomes anathema to the

art-for-art's-sake values that consolidated themselves in the modernist period. In fact, it became exactly what those values are erected against. It is art commodified and commercialized, art one tries to make a living at and (horrors!) possibly even succeeds. Magazine stories are made to order, their tone, subject matter, language, length controlled in advance by the other more powerful discourses in whose company they appear. They are entertainment. The magazine context implies distracted reception in brief moments between other activities. They are for a mass public — the whole point is to achieve as massive a public as possible. This fact alone is decisive for those who hold Mallarmé's view that "art is a mystery accessible only to the very few". Magazine fiction is planned for obsolescence. Unlike books, the text actually becomes garbage after a reading. There is no chance, not any procedure for the mortality or immortality of a work to be determined on its merits. The whole point is to replace it with another, equivalent product in next week's or next month's issue. Everything pressures for the development of techniques, formulae, production routines, assembly lines, standard wages and prices.

One of the strangest responses to this commercialization of the short story occurs in a book published in 1929 called *The Dance of the Machines*. In the face of a good deal of patriotic boasting about the short story as the American genre, the author, Edward J. O'Brien, condemns it as an instance of the "mechanistic structures" increasingly taking over American life and the American psyche. O'Brien juxtaposes the short story with two other modern American phenomena, the machine and the army, concluding that the three "share so many qualities in common that they seem to belong to the same strange family" (1929: 20), and advancing the view that "it is imperative for us to devise quickly all possible means of ensuring that we shall retain control of the machines and of ourselves rather than that the machine and mechanistic structures shall make us their slaves" (1929: 7).

The approach is certainly eccentric, but equally certainly, O'Brien is responding to historical realities. Indeed, his view of the short story is quite reminiscent of attitudes to television today. In the 1920's the short story was certainly the genre most conspicuously caught up in mass production, the genre where the artist had least autonomy or time for composition, the genre for which a technology had been elaborated to efficiently meet the demands of the market place, the one most tending toward standardization and a "lowest common denominator". In part the short story was the most conspicuous example of the supposed horrors of mass culture precisely because of its length, that is, because it was not a book, and appeared physically surrounded by the propaganda of consumerism. Probably the most terrifying thing was how easily, how comfortably and prosperously it sat there, traitor to a much beloved distinction between high and low art.

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The eight points I have raised about the short story in this paper do not constitute yet another attempt to define that genre. They are not characteristics which, as Charles T. Scott puts it, "will unambiguously differentiate this class of discourses

from some other" (Scott 1969: 131) Given the complexities of human institutions, the discovery of such characteristics will, I suspect, prove either impossible or quite uninteresting. The recognition that literary genres form a system rather than a roster of essences is an important one. At the same time, the linguistic model on which this recognition is based easily encourages one to oversimplify. There are few human institutions indeed for which morphophonemics is an adequate analogue. In the study of literary genres, oversimplification is likely in two chief directions. First, in relating genres to each other, the "phonemic" tendency is to see them as related to and differentiated from each other always in the same ways, and to search for a set of universal distinctive features of genre. Among other things, I have tried to suggest here that the novel and the short story are related to each other in ways that are fairly systematic, but at the same time specific to these two genres. Secondly, oversimplification is likely in the relating of literary genres to other systems of meaning and value in the society. Here, for instance, I have tried suggest a few points at which the relation between novel and short story come into contact with other areas of the discourse system, and with values as to what kind of experience is normative or what kind of language authoritative. These are both directions which, I suggest, genre theory might fruitfully pursue.

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*Mary Louise Pratt* teaches in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the Program in Comparative Literature at Stanford University. She is author of *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Indiana UP, 1977) and co-author, with Elizabeth Traugott (Linguistic and English, Stanford) of a textbook, *Linguistics for Students of Literature* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980).