

Setting in the Modern Short Story

by Elizabeth Hodgson

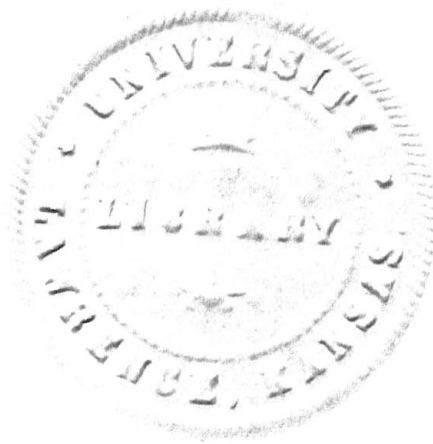
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Submitted to the Department of English of the
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ELIZABETH HODGSON

1913



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SETTING IN THE MODERN SHORT-STORY.

For mere convenience I have considered the modern short-story as beginning with the nineteenth century, though any such temporal demarcation is rather artificial. Several critics name Poe's Berenice (1835) as the first truly modern short-story; and nearly all of them consider his critique of Hawthorne's tales (published in Graham's Magazine 1842) as the first, and to this day, the most valuable contribution to the theory of the short-story. But all admit that some approximate examples of the form may be found in classic and in mediaeval literature; for instance, the Biblical tale of Ruth, the Cupid and Psyche of Apuleius, the Patient Griselda of Boccaccio, and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. But nearly all of the short fictions written prior to the nineteenth century are episodic, unplotted tales. Some of them are bare anecdotes; some are scenarios which could have been expanded into

picaresque novels; some are apologues, little stories appended to a moral; some are episodes intercalated in a long story, like Wandering Willie's Tale in Scott's Redgauntlet. But they all lack the distinguishing mark of the modern short-story,-- the deliberate concentration upon the 'single effect'.

On the whole it may be said with a reasonable degree of accuracy that the history of the modern short-story falls within the limits of the last hundred years. Since America and France have led the way, shoulder to shoulder, in developing this new literary genre, I have given more time and space to American and French stories than to English and German. The monthly magazine here, and the newspapers in France have popularized the short-story and facilitated its rapid evolution. In England the conservative magazines clung until recently to the three volume novel, published serially. Stevenson began writing short stories in 1877; most of the briefer fictions of Scott, Dickens, Thacker^ay, Wilkie Collins, Mrs. Gaskell, and George Eliot are novel-

ettes rather than typical short-stories. Kipling's Plain Tales from the Hills in 1888 was the first volume of English short-stories to win financial success. One might almost say that the English short-story began twenty five years ago with Stenson's A Lodging for the Night.

In Germany, too, this particular form of fiction has been slow to take root. German writers prefer the Novelle, for the most part. They perhaps lack that sense of form which is the supreme qualification of the short-story writer. I have not been able to find out very much about the work of Russian, Scandinavian, Spanish, and Italian writers, as the material was not accessible. But so far as possible, I have made an international study of short-stories by all the leading writers, though I have read very little foreign criticism of fiction.

In choosing short-stories for illustrative material I have tried to give the preference to the best work of the best authors, and the most perfect examples of the various types of story. Occasionally I have referred to a story of less intrinsic merit because it offers a particularly apt illustration of some point at issue.

Every one who writes upon a subject like the present one feels that he must define the term short-story. Brander Matthews explains that the short-story, hyphenated, is a very different thing from the story that merely happens to be short. Professor Canby in like manner limits the field of the Short Story, capitalized. Since no two critics exactly agree in their definitions, and since every reader knows for himself what a short-story is, it may be sufficient merely to state what forms I am excluding, and to quote one or two definitions. The tale consists often of a mere incident, or a series of incidents without plot-complication. The short-story must have situation as distinct from incident, and a denouement to which every factor of the narrative is subordinated. The term short-story, then, excludes tales, anecdotes, stories for children, apologues, plotless character studies, travel sketches, news stories, and condensed narratives of many incidents which might be expanded into novels.

Matthews says that a good short-story should have four qualities,—"Ingenuity, originality, compression, and a touch of fantasy." "Esenwein names

seven characteristics: "A single predominating character,, a single preeminent incident, imagination, plot, compression, organization, and unity of impression." " In his late and excellent text, *The Art and Business of Story Writing*, Professor Pitkin shows that very few stories have all seven of these qualities,, though all have plot, organization, and unity of impression. Other things depend upon the type of story and the 'single effect' chosen at the outset. He says that the short-story represents the fusion of two ideals,--the American ideal of the 'single effect', and the French ideal of the 'dramatic effect'. Action is dramatic when it both determines character and is determined by character.

A short-story is a highly unified and centralized development of a situation so treated as to secure a single effect. It can hardly be defined more exactly without arbitrarily excluding certain types.

Part I. Kinds and Elements of Setting.

The setting of a short-story is the fictive world created by the author for his fictive people to live in. It may be as large or as small, as tragic or as comic as suits his purpose. He may reveal his characters and their doings by broad sunlight, by gaslight, footlights, moonlight, or "the light that never was on sea or land"; but he must remember throughout just what kind of light he is using and plan his effects accordingly. He may choose any country on the terrestrial globe, if he knows its local color. He may turn the scroll of time back several thousand years as Hewlitt did in *The Rainous Face*, provided that he is a rare compound of historian, archaeologist, and poet. He may if he dares, tell a story using his home town today as a background for John Smith who lives in the next house; or he may take his hero to the floor of the sea, the planet Mars, or the interior of the earth. But he must have some kind of a world for his characters, a physical, social, or psychological world. He can not literally annihilate both time and space to make his readers happy.

The beauty of the fictive world is that the

writer puts into it only a few things that he really needs. He does not have to include superfluous and inappropriate weather, houses that shut off one's view of the landscape, and all the indescribably complex but monotonous machinery of everyday life. He furnishes his world as the skilful traveller packs his trunk, and woe to him if he chooses wrongly, for such limited space must not be wasted.

Every sincere story is an attempt to portray and usually to interpret some phase of life. To see the interrelations between man and his world and his deeds is to know the very heart of truth. All human experiences are judged and felt in relation to a background of time, place, and circumstance. Therefore the fiction writer has to provide his characters with a medium that is related to them in the same general ways in which our real world is related to us; otherwise they will not be vivid or lifelike, but will be mere figures in a fresco, without background or perspective. This is, in fact, what one finds in the very early tales, which were practically without setting. One of the most striking results of modern science is the present growing comprehension of the far-reaching

effects of environment.

One might say that setting is the third dimension in fiction, giving solidity to both characters and incidents. Strip a story of all setting; the plot will then sound either trite or impossible, the characters will be puppets or enigmas. If a writer knows how to handle this element, he need not have any "plot-ridden" characters or glaringly improbable events. Setting is the great peacemaker, and can reconcile almost any pair of incongruities if given a free field. Suggest a love affair between a man and a tigress, and the reader looks his contempt; then let him read Balzac's *A Passion in the Desert*. Could you make anyone believe that a well-meaning mother would end her son's life by refusing to buy him the needed stimulants, thus saving the money to provide mutes and "plooms" for his funeral? Arthur Morrison in his realistic East-End London story, *On the Stairs*, made this horrible act perfectly clear by using a psychological environment of tenement superstition and funeral etiquette.

Since setting is of different sorts and is used for different purposes, there are several

names that may be applied to it. In many stories of marked plot the setting is almost exactly equivalent to the stage effects of a play. Its uses are mechanical or decorative, or both. In *The Lady of the Tiger*, the ingenious Mr. Stockton has to provide a public amphitheatre for the trial,—an amphitheatre having seats for the people, a throne for the monarch, and separate accommodations for the lady and the tiger, one of whom welcomes the accused man when he opens the door. This is purely utilitarian setting so far; but the author goes farther and adds barbaric gorgeousness. When setting is merely a necessary (and perhaps decorative) place where things happen, it may be called the stage or the scene.

Sometimes setting has strong pictorial values that harmonize or contrast with the persons and events, though it has no real influence upon either. It merely heightens the artistic effect. Then we may borrow a term from painting and call it background. If this background is seen not through the clear daylight of impersonal observation, but through a medium richly colored by the emotions and fancies of the author or a character, it is termed

atmosphere. And the marked characteristics of a limited geographical section constitute its local color.

For the social background, the classes of society represented, their institutions, occupations, and manners, milieu is a more exact term than setting. As the complexity of American life is increasingly felt and reproduced in fiction, short-story writers emphasize milieu more and more.

If permanent forces like climate, heredity, national traits, and the general influence of surroundings are employed as setting, the scientific term environment is appropriate. The difference between environment and ordinary settings is like the difference between climate and weather.

Setting may be simply described as consisting of the time, place, and circumstances surrounding the events of the story. Time may be definite or indefinite, contemporary or remote, general or historical, literal or psychological. Place may be localized or universalized, geographical or imaginary, immediate or remote, romantic or realistic. Circumstances is, ^{as} rather vague term including weather, mood, and social conditions. It is hardly possible to discuss the three elements separately

without doing violence to good sense.

The very early story-tellers knew little about history and geography; they were not troubled about "local color" or the "historic sense", but they liked a lively tale with no setting at all, or with a conventional decorative background.

"Once upon a time in a certain country there lived a king and queen"; this sort of beginning launched many a thrilling "Embroidered Exploit", and ushered in many an awesome "Warming Example", to use Mr. Ransome's picturesque names for the early tales.

The Book of Ruth (450 B. C.) begins thus; "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled."

Ruth and Naomi had lived somewhere in Moab, but they went to a definite place, the town of Bethlehem-Judah. In Cupid and Psyche (100 A. D.) the king and queen lived in a "certain city", and exposed their fair daughter "on the top of a certain mountain". The House of Jupiter, the River Styx, and Hades are interesting ungeographical features. But when Defoe wanted to tell a realistic ghost-story, The Apparition of Mrs. Veal (1706), he has the spirit visit Mrs. Bargrave at her home in Dover, England on the stroke of noon, September 8,

1705; and he is throughout so particularly accurate as to time and place and circumstance that no one could have the heart to doubt his ghost.

Time and place may be definite or indefinite. Vagueness may be the result of lack of geographical and historical knowledge, or it may be thoroughly appropriate and artistic. Clayton Hamilton discusses the parable of the Prodigal Son as a well-marked short-story of only six hundred words. Imagine the effect of adding personal names and exact dates and places, clocks and time tables and local color to this sublime embodiment of universal and timeless truth ! This parable in a supremely dramatic and touching way implies all that the book of life tells us about earthly fathers and sons, all that the New Testament teaches us about God's love for weak and wandering humanity.

The writer is under no obligations to the clock, the calendar, and the atlas, except to use them accurately when he does use them. His problem is to make his people and their experiences artistically effective; within the limits of good sense he has the right to choose the time of day, the time of the year, the year of all recorded or im-

agined Time that will best fit his purpose. The same principle applies to place; but after he has selected any geographical region he must treat accurately, so far as he treats at all, its climate, its typical landscapes, its plants and animals, its local types of architecture, modes of speech, and social customs. If he is dealing with the present time and with places that he has actually seen, he simply combines and heightens the facts which his five senses have told him. Penetrating observation, artistic selection and skilful adaptation of known facts to the needs of the story in question may be all that he requires. But if he chooses a remote, unvisited place, he has to gather material laboriously from clipping bureaus, Baedekers, atlases, encyclopedias, travel sketches, Stoddard's Lectures or even from postcards of local views. If the time is remote too, his task is more than doubled: he reads all sorts of histories, and all the literature which throws some light on the period in question, and perhaps works for months on the antiquarian details he has to know. Then after all his research is laboriously finished, he

has to transform his jumbled collection of facts into an artistic whole by the force of creative imagination; otherwise "Humanity is choked by archaeology".

Gautier in *Arria Marcella* has reproduced the city of Pompeii shortly before the fatal eruption; in *One of Cleopatra's Nights* he presents a magnificent study of Egypt in the first century, with a vista stretching back to the dawn of history; in *Omphale* he recreates the pretty artificialities of aristocratic French society in the days of the Regency. As one reads these stories critically, one is fairly crushed by the realization of the amount of special knowledge they display,--knowledge of archaeology, painting, sculpture, landscape, architecture, history, literature. One can find in them almost everything but normal human beings. The setting is by far the most valuable and interesting part of them.

Sometimes an author plants the wrong trees and flowers, or lets the nightingale sing in American gardens, or provides an English drawing room with inappropriate furniture. Or he forgets the plan of his house, or makes his people go impossible

distances in a short time. Grant Richards suggests in his hand book on novel writing that young writers may avoid ridiculous slips and greatly stimulate their imagination by deliberately setting down the time scheme of their plots, and by drawing maps and diagrams of the landscapes, buildings, and rooms they represent. Such devices aid the writer in visualizing his scenes sharply. Some novelists and playwrights not only draw diagrams of their important scenes but actually use checkers or counters to represent the persons, and move them about in working out the action.

In the selection and treatment of time and place Poe and Gautier considered nothing but artistic effectiveness. Consequently their stories are not humanly convincing. We seem to see the authors carefully arranging their stages, hanging draperies, painting scenes, stationing bands of musicians, and arranging picturesque dramaturgic effects of sounds and colors. Of such art Professor Santayana says: "If our consciousness were exclusively aesthetic, this kind of expression (the beautiful) would be the only one allowed in art or prized in nature. . . . But as contemplation is actual-

ly a luxury in our lives, and things interest us chiefly on passionate and practical grounds, the accumulation of values too exclusively aesthetic produces in our minds an effect of closeness and artificiality. So selective a diet cloy; and our palate, accustomed to much daily vinegar and salt, is surfeited by such unmixed sweet." In other words, a setting may destroy its proper effect by seeming over-arranged, too good to be true. Death-bed scenes and proposals have to be carefully staged. So many people in real life have carelessly died or proposed without choosing an artistic time and place for the important act that some readers are apt to grin if the background is made too beautiful or too pathetic.

Arlo Bates remarks with graceful flippancy:

"There are many transiently popular novels where in the closing chapter the autumn rain falls dismally upon a lonely grave, or the summer sun--the June sun--and the obliging dicky birds decorate the wedding of the long persecuted but at last triumphant heroine, transcendently lovely in white satin.....

The trick of seeming to manage the elements is no longer tolerated. The villains no longer steal through smiling gardens whose snowy lilies all abloom and sending up perfume like incense from censers of silver, seem to rebuke the wicked. The thing sought for now is the appearance of naturalness..... Set a story carefully, but above all things be sure that it does not appear that pains have been taken".

All realistic settings have in time a certain historical value, but the term historical background is used only of stories in which a definite historical event or well marked period has some distinct relation to the characters or the action, -- more usually to the action. The event may be either contemporary or remote; Richard Harding Davis's story, *The Derelict*, written just after the Spanish American war and using the battle of Santiago as a background, is as truly historical as Balzac's *An Episode Under the Terror*, in which the horror-stricken executioner of Louis XVI has a secret mass said for the murdered king. Some other examples of historical setting may be briefly tabulated:

Garland: The Return of a Private. The close of the Civil war.

Hale: The Man Without a Country. Aaron Burr's trial for treason and the following period to the end of the Civil war.

Hardy: A Tradition of 1804. The Napoleonic wars.

Balzac: Farewell. The Retreat from Moscow.

Daudet: The Last Class. The Cession of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany in the Franco-Prussian war.

Another interesting topic is the difference between romantic and realistic settings. The early romantic writers were fond of remote or imaginary or picturesque times and places. Some of them yearned for the classic settings of ancient Greece and Rome, some preferred mediaeval stained glass and haunted castles, some frankly departed to a fairy world, and still others contented themselves with selecting the most weird or sublime weather and landscape and architecture to be found in the real world. Many of these early stories written in the period 1775-1825 hover on the vaguely poetic border line between the actual world and the supernatural. They are full of terrible storms, strange

or majestic scenery, ruined castles, and haunted palaces with mysterious passageways. They have much more of sunrise, sunset, misty twilight, fantastic moonlight, and ghostly midnight than of ordinary daylight. And there is very little attention paid to calendar time or geographical place in them as compared with the realistic short-story. Here are some examples of romantic settings:

Chateaubriand: Atala. The majestic forests of America in the eighteenth century. The noble red man.

Fouque: Undine. And enchanted wood full of forest and water sprites.

Tieck: The Runenberg. A magic mountain with strange music, vanishing paths, and transparent walls.

Scott: Wandering Willie's Tale. Cavalier warfare in 1652, the Commonwealth period. A phantom castle.

Poe: The Cask of Amontillado. Catacombs leading from a palazzo in Rome. Time vague.

The realists usually prefer contemporary time and actual places familiar to the author. They measure time by smaller units; and they choose backgrounds not for their intrinsic beauty and

strangeness but for their typical, realistic quality, their significance in the world's everyday life. They handle details more minutely and sharply, for they seek life-like accuracy rather than artistic vagueness.

The modern romantic writers, however, find their poetry and exaltation in finely imaginative interpretation of real life, rather than in Gothic machinery and sentimentalized or supernatural landscape. The present tendency is toward the romance of the inner world, not the outer.

Since one must be either indoors or outdoors, place is naturally subdivided into exteriors and interiors, landscape and buildings. Landscape setting is probably the commonest and most important sort, but it has to be handled with exquisite skill nowadays, for modern readers are prone to "skip the descriptions". Their visual imagination is pitifully weak, and they are in a dreadful hurry. Consequently no one but masters of landscape like James Lane Allen, Lafcadio Hearn, and Maurice Hewlett may dare in these days of moving pictures to insert long descriptive paragraphs in their stories. The thing has to be done by a light suggestive touch here and there through the tale.

However, James Hopper, who discovered the Philippines for literature, has succeeded in selling a good deal of description, just because of the novelty of his settings.

Landscape has been treated from several points of view in different literary periods and by authors of marked individuality. It may be made a strictly practical affair of roads for travel, fields for tillage, forests for lumber. Or it may be interpreted as a supremely poetic form of Divine revelation, an outdoor schoolroom. Chateaubriand and St. Pierre seemed to believe that free contact with nature (and nature only) would educate human beings into perfection. The sentimental school of writers used landscape emotionally, and were frequently guilty of what Ruskin later termed the "pathetic fallacy"--the attributing of human qualities and emotions to various phases of nature,--sea, wind, storm, sunshine. In such stories the characters are moved to tears by the pathetic beauty of a scene or nerved to Titanic deeds by an awe-inspiring storm. German Romanticists and the English writers of the Gothic school often employed

supernatural landscapes full of weird transformations, or mystery and horror. Another type of romance has an outdoor world thrilling with joyous adventure. The forests conceal plumed knights or masked outlaws; the fair meadows are tilting yards; the mountain sides resound with the clear call of the bugle and the eager baying of hounds.

Exactly opposed to the pathetic fallacy is the treatment which emphasizes the coldness of Nature, her eternal calm in the presence of human agony and ecstasy, her impassive strength that seems to tower over human weakness. For instance, in Tennessee's *Pardner*, Bret Harte closes the story of the "Pardner's" pathetic, doglike devotion to the worthless man who had wronged him, and for whose loss he grieved himself to death, with this sentence: "And above all this, etched on the dark firmament rose the Sierras, remote and passionless, crowned with remoter, passionless stars".

Here is another striking passage, from London's *The White Silence*: "Nature has many tricks where-with she convinces man of his finity-- the ceaseless flow of the tides, the fury of the storm, the shock of the earthquake, the long roll of Heaven's artillery,-- but the most tremendous, the most stupefying of all is the passive phase of the

White Silence. All movement ceases, the sky clears, the heavens are as brass; the slightest whisper seems sacrilege, and man becomes timid, affrighted at the sound of his own voice. Sole speck of life journeying across the ghostly wastes of a dead world, he trembles at his audacity, realizes that his is a maggot's life, nothing more".

Still another treatment of Nature is the symbolical, of which Hawthorne's stories offer many excellent examples. He does not add any supernatural elements to his settings and yet he spiritualizes them and gives them two-fold meaning. The Ambitious Guest, for instance, is a sublime parable of human life with its blind sense of security, its pathetic yearning for immortality, its utter helplessness in the presence of doom. That little cottage at the foot of the vast, impending mountain-- what an image of humanity and fate ! All the details of the setting are natural and realistic, yet the awe of the Eternal broods above the scene.

In many symbolical stories the features of landscape are fantastic and highly unreal. These tales are allegories, not parables; for the parable finds a truth which transcends time and space in some typical, homely deed or scene, while the allegory chooses a truth that is too familiar to

need the support of realism, and embodies it in the most unusual form that poetic fancy can suggest. Poe's *Eleanora* contains a remarkable allegorical treatment of sorrow, which is symbolized by the fading glories of the once supernally beautiful landscape.

The last and one of the most impressive treatments of Nature, and incidentally of landscape, is the naturalistic, for we have already noticed the realistic and the romantic. The naturalistic writers like Zola, Maupassant, and Hardy represent the environment as not only guiding the march of events but also shaping character, thwarting man with a malicious, personal irony. They measure time by generations and centuries, and represent the human will as powerless under the irresistible forces of biological laws-- heredity, the dominating environment, the inevitable cycle of experience never rising above the limitations of the flesh. Professor Hall Frye says that with Hardy, environment "has been promoted to a fatal and grandiose complicity in human affairs, of a piece with Destiny, overpowering the minds of the actors, tyrannizing over their lives and fortunes, and ap-

pearing in any one locality as but the particular agency and manifestation of a single consistent, universal power". At first sight this treatment of nature seems to be the same as that called the "Coldness of nature", but there is one marked difference. The naturalistic writers personify nature and force cruel human traits upon her, while the other attitude simply emphasizes her passive, impersonal majesty, entirely remote from man.

Buildings as architecture may be part of a landscape. Gautier's antique romances, Cable's Creole stories, Hewlett's Italian studies, and many of Mr. James's stories of varied settings use architecture as background with picturesque or splendid effect. Comparatively few writers can do this; Americans, especially, have little opportunity to acquire knowledge and taste in this direction. But any one can learn to describe a house or a room by the impressionistic method, putting the few really characteristic details and the "single effect" into one or two sentences. Circumstantial description is seldom needed here. Sometimes an edifice or a room seems to have a distinct personality of its own, harmonizing or

contrasting with a deed committed within its walls, or revealing the character of its occupant. Thus Mrs. Wharton begins *The Duchess at Prayer*, suggesting mysterious passion and crime:

"Have you ever questioned the long, shuttered front of an old Italian house, that motionless mask, smooth, mute, equivocal as the face of a priest behind which buzz the secrets of the confessional?Other houses declare the activities they shelter; they are the clear, expressive cuticle of a life flowing close to the surface; but the old palace in its narrow street, the villa on its cypress-hooded hill are impenetrable as death. The tall windows are like blind eyes, the great door is a shut mouth".

Besides analyzing setting into time, place, and circumstances, one may classify its elements as physical, social, and psychological. Physical setting, of course, includes all the material surroundings; these have been sufficiently discussed. Social setting or milieu has been defined in Part I; it includes the phenomena of human intercourse, work, recreations, institutions. These are re-

lated to characterization but in so far as they belong to the "local color" of the place, they are a part of the milieu. In many occupational stories milieu appears as "enveloping action",-- the habitual activities of a given group of workers. Myra Kelly, Elizabeth Jordan, and Agnes Repplier use school room action; Montagu Glass and Bruno Lessing, factories, restaurants, and retail clothing stores; Norris and Chester, financial manipulation; Kipling, army life; Mary Stewart Cutting and a host of other women, the little complexities of home life.

Sometimes a story presents quite fully a single institution like the church, ward politics, the spoils system, in order to satirize some social evil or advocate a new theory. Gouverneur Morris's *The Claws of the Tiger* and Irving Bacheller's *Keeping up with Lizzie* are a pair of social tracts sugar-coated with fiction. *To Make a Hoosier Holiday*, by George Ade, employs as setting the rivalries of two jealous little village churches.

When we pass from the outer structure of society to the general feelings and beliefs which belong to the community rather than to any indi-

vidual, we have psychological setting. Zeitgeist is a good name for it when applied to the whole life of a nation at a given period. All the forms of local prejudice and etiquette and folklore may be included here. The traits of character which are typical of a nation, a race, a social caste, or a given occupation belong to the psychological setting as much as they do to the characterization.

This kind of setting may be the spiritual atmosphere of a scene, as in the following passage from Mary Stewart Cutting's *The Happiest Time*. The husband, unseen, is watching his wife put the children to bed. "The three children were perched on the foot of the nearest bed, whitegowned, with rosy faces and neatly brushed hair. While he looked, the youngest child gave a birdlike flutter and jump, and lighted on the floor, falling on her knees, with her bowed head in the mother's lap, her hands upraised. As she finished the murmured prayer, she rose and stood to one side, in infantine seriousness, while the next one spread her white plumes for the same flight.... This was the little inner chapel, the Sanctuary of Home, where she was priestess by Divine right."

Time and place may be wholly psychological, measured only by sensations, as in James's *The Great Good Place*. A worn-out author on the verge of nervous prostration goes mysteriously to a strange place of conscious security, bathed in stillness,--a place of slow, sweet bells, light, receding footfalls and quiet figures, "a paradise of negations, blessed omissions, quiet freedoms". He rests there many days in wondrous peace until he is well again and has regained his firm control of life. Then-- he wakes up, and finds that he has merely slept the day through, but the blessed calm and power are still his.

In stories of children the psychological place is often a world of make-believe very different from the bare, cold land inhabited by grown-ups. William Allen White's *A Babble of Green Fields* tells how a wicked man in his last delirium returned to his imaginative boyhood. Here is a bit of the boy-world. "Always it was to the woods one went to find a lost boy, for the brush was alive with fierce pirates and blood-bound brotherhoods and gory Indian-fighters and dauntless scouts.

Under the red clay banks that rose above the sluggish stream, robber's caves and treasure-houses and freebooters' dens were filled with boys who, five days in the week and six hours a day, could 'amo amas amat, amamus, amatis, amant' with the best of them"

A setting may be called psychological when it is distorted or colored by the peculiar mental state of the narrator, as in dreams, delirium, insanity, or abnormal emotion. In stories that voice the very spirit of a people, the psychological atmosphere is felt throughout; as, in Kipling's *The Man Who Was*, Daudet's *The Last Class*, Balzac's *El Verdugo*, Mérimée's *Mateo Falcone*, Hale's *The Man Without a Country*. In these every important element of characterization, plot, and setting is chosen to express subtly the soul of the race. One of Kipling's marked excellencies as an author is his skilful use of something deeper than local color; racial color, one might call it, the psychological environment of alien peoples.

In closing, perhaps we should notice the fact that many stories have not only a general

setting but several specific scenes corresponding to various stages in the action. Environment and milieu are terms applied to the long established factors in the setting; atmosphere refers to its emotional qualities; scene and background may be used for the physical surroundings of any distinct incident, and local color includes the physical, social, and psychological details which make one little piece of the world different from any other. Thus in Mateo Falcone, various phases of local color may be enumerated: the Corsican landscape with its dense undergrowths, the typical home, the diet of milk cheese, and chestnuts, the local costumes, the names and a few Corsican words; then the clan spirit, the vendetta, the hatred of organized justice, the many characteristics of a patriarchal society, the strange union of devoted Catholicism and stolid barbarism, the peculiar Corsican virtues and sense of honor. Besides, there are many little touches as to local customs and etiquette; as, "it is unworthy of a man to carry any other burden than his weapon", and again,

"some pécadillo--some gunshot, some dagger thrust, or similar bagatelle." This is a true local color story, for the local qualities are so integrated with plot and characters that the story could not be staged elsewhere. It lacks "atmosphere" as the setting is entirely free from emotional coloring; Merimee's work is usually objective, perfectly "detached". Cable's Louisiana stories have both atmosphere and local color. Poe's great mood stories like *The Fall of the House of Usher* are full of atmosphere but have no local color at all.

Part II. The Functions of Setting.

In his Study of the Novel Professor Whitcomb outlines the functions of setting as follows: "The imagination, in general, takes relatively little delight in the mere outline of an action, and a primary value of the settings is to increase interest, to give warmth, concreteness and individuality to events. The settings of a novel are often of special service in aiding the illusion, as well as in deepening the unity, beauty, and human significance of the fictitious action."

There are a few stories, even a few good stories in which there is practically no setting at all. There are a few great stories in which it is the chief element and to it, plot and characters are thoroughly subordinated. These belong to that rare and difficult type, the "atmosphere" story. Stevenson's Merry Men, Gautier's One of Cleopatra's Nights, and Poe's Fall of the House of Usher are typical examples. The power and fascination of the place itself dominate the story; the persons and their deeds belong to the environment as mere parts or results of it.

Omitting the stories with negligible setting and the "atmosphere" stories, it is evident that normally the setting is subordinated to the plot and the characters, and in the thematic story, to the theme. It exists only to be helpful to them and should claim no more of space and attention than its real helpfulness deserves. In the well-written story the setting is so vitally related to the action and the characters that the casual reader does not realize its presence as a separate element.

It has certain general functions in practically all stories, and in the well marked types it serves other more specific purposes. Miss Albright calls attention to the fact that the most immediate general function of the setting is to furnish the expository foundation facts. Every story has its initial premises of time and place and circumstance; these the reader wants to learn speedily in order to adjust his mind to appreciate the tale. He needs to know from the outset whether to expect near or remote time and place, romance or realism; whether the fictive world is political, commercial, occupational, social, natural, or supernatural. He can not comfortably enjoy himself till he has

roughly "placed" the action.

This statement does not mean that stories should always begin with a long descriptive or expository passage explicitly stating the setting. All that is necessary at the beginning may be implied in the title, the names of characters or places, the tone of the first paragraph, or the hints given by a bit of skilful dialogue.

Second, the author should so handle the setting as to emphasize his preconceived single effect, whether that is an effect of action, of character, of mood, or of theme. No short-story writer has ever suited his settings to his central purpose more thoroughly than Poe. *The Masque of the Red Death* is a marvel of technique in this respect. Unfortunately he chose a rather narrow range of effects, many of them morbid and fantastic and none of them emphasizing warm human nature. But the student of the short-story can learn some very profitable things by analyzing *Ligeia*, *The House of Usher*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, and *The Cask of Amontillado*, asking himself the reason for every detail. For Poe was a conscious artist, a strange compound of mathematician and poet, critic and creator.

In *The Cask of Amontillado*, Poe chose for his single effect the perfect revenge. Fifty years after the deed, Montresor, dying, confesses with cold triumph how he entombed his enemy. The time and place of telling the story emphasize the effect; a man must have hated well if half a century of life and the imminence of the other world can not dim the joy of his revenge.

The third general function has not been specifically named by any critic so far, but is implied in Professor Whitcomb's words "to give warmth and concreteness to the action". It provides the psychological background of "experiential detail", which should in fiction form the artistic substitute for the rich fullness and variety of sensations and emotions experienced in actual life. No matter how fantastic the setting or how unusual the events, the persons of a story are supposed to have five senses, and to use them as human beings do. Any little incident in life has its psychological background of many other things seen, felt, tasted, heard. Most of these are irrelevant and have no place in a story, but enough experiential detail should be included to prove that the char-

acters are not merely well-manipulated puppets.

Walt Whitman has two lines that illustrate beautifully this weaving of various sensations and emotions into a single experience:

"Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant
of my soul

There in the fragrant pines and the cedars
dusk and dim."

The story teller puts himself so thoroughly into the position of his character that he can imagine just what that person would see, hear, touch, taste, or smell; just what parts of his surroundings he would notice and how he would feel about them. He chooses a few supremely intimate and characteristic details of the setting, not to picture the scene for the reader, but to make some person a flesh and blood reality. Stevenson's *Markheim* and Maupassant's *The Coward* are wonderful in their effective handling of experiential detail to reveal the soul's very workings. Another example of a very different sort is Richard Harding Davis's *The Bar Sinister*, in which a dog tells his adventures. Naturally the psychological story makes the most subtle use of this function of set-

ting, but no convincing story lacks it entirely. Here is a touch of experiential setting from The Shipwrecked Sailor, 2500 B. C. "A wave threw me on an island after that I had been three days alone, without a companion besides mine own heart. I laid me in a thicket and the shadow covered me." That "shadow" is no part of the plot; it simply proves to us that a real man lay down in a real thicket. If he had not been there, he would not have thought of the shadow !

Bliss Perry mentions unification as one of the general functions of setting, and his remarks apply to the short-story almost as aptly as to the novel. "Finally, it is the setting of a story which often gives the deepest unity to the work as a whole. The setting is used to emphasize the fundamental idea of the book, to accentuate the theme, to bring all the characters of the story into proper perspective. In a railway novel the scream of the whistle may be heard in every chapter."

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The setting is often a central core of permanent conditions to which everything else is constantly related. It is the chief agent in blend-

ing the incongruous; it softens the incredible, beautifies the harsh and ugly, covers the crude, and fills out the incomplete. In all these ways it unifies the story. Besides, it is very important in maintaining the harmony of tone so essential to this type of composition, in which unity and intensity are substituted for the variety of the novel. In a way the setting is like a musical instrument upon which the accompanist may play in whatever key best pleases the singer. A writer may take a single plot, a single theme, and by varying the setting and the characters make the tone farcical, comical, elevated, or heroic. Frederick Stimson's beautiful story, Mrs. Knollys, owes much of its lofty pathos to the opening and closing paragraphs which describe the glacier with almost sublime effect.

Probably the most important general function of setting is to create or help create the artist-ic illusion. Every work of representative art, whether it is a painting, a bit of sculpture, a poem or a story, depends for its effectiveness upon its power to cause in the beholder a semi-hypnotic state of concentrated attention. This

state is the artistic illusion. The spectator does not believe that he is seeing realities, no matter how perfect the illusion; art can not and should not produce that effect. If he thought so, he would rush upon the stage and tie Othello's hands; he would hunt up the address of Hawthorne's Ernest and ask his advice about life. Even the most perfect realism does not and should not merely reproduce life without selection or composition, as a camera does. But a true work of art simplifies and interprets some phase of life, and presents it as an ordered, symmetrical, harmonious whole. Herein lies the peculiar power of art: life as we see it, is both fragmentary and continuous, while art presents isolated unities; life is confused, complex, without clear pattern; art chooses and arranges to secure a single impressive design.

Now, the artistic illusion is almost wholly a matter of consistency:--that is, it depends not upon the relation of the work of art to real life, but upon the relation of its parts to each other and to the whole. A fairy tale may carry as much artistic conviction in its own way as the parable

of the Prodigal Son. If Fouqué's Undine creates for you a less perfect illusion than Maupassant's The Necklace, it is not because the realistic illusion is intrinsically and eternally better art, but because Fouqué executed his design less artistically or because your sympathies do not respond to the fancifully romantic. But after reading the two stories, try to imagine the effect of exchanging the two heroines ! Then it will be clear that the setting is a tremendously important part of the artistic illusion.

For perfect results every detail of the story must be consistent and appropriate. A single word that strikes a jarring note, a single sentence that shocks and jolts may at a crisis be enough to wake the reader from his artistic trance, and set him to criticising methods and results. The game is over then, the spell is broken. The short-story is so compact and intensely unified a form that the principle of artistic consistency has to be applied to it most rigidly.

Arlo Bates in discussing this topic of consistency says that if you like, you have a perfect

right to send your prince exploring, seated on a fox's tail, but you must never forget and let him fall off ! Brander Matthews illustrates the point by an anecdote about a little girl who was playing that a sofa cushion was her horse. She said that her horse was thirsty, but when her mother, with grown-up dullness, offered her a glass of water for it, the acute lassie refused, declaring that "a purtending horse ought to drink purtending water."

The artistic illusion is secured by subordinating every detail to the central conception so as to produce a single effect. In discussing Poe's art, Baldwin says that the remarkable unity of impression given by his stories is the result of three processes: simplification, harmonisation, gradation. He decided on an effect; next, he deliberately chose a few elements that were supremely appropriate to that effect, rigidly excluding whatever would weaken it. This is simplification. Then he carefully blended those elements in the best order and proportion; and finally he observed a delicate gradation, making the intensity rise to the very last sentence. Not only the action but also the setting itself gains in power and interest.

Careful gradation is always necessary for climactic effect. In stories dealing with the supernatural or the marvelous, it is used to accustom the reader gradually to the strangeness of things, so that no shock of surprise may break the illusion. Gradation is secured by the choice of details for the setting, the position given these details in the story to heighten the effect of crises or conclusion, the varied intensity of the emotional atmosphere, and finally the maintenance of tone through harmonious diction and style.

In certain stories the artistic illusion is largely produced by the device of drawing to scale. This is true especially in stories of children, fairies, and abnormal persons. Agnes Repplier's *In Our Convent Days* affords an instance. In her preface she refers to the woods,-- "those sweet shades that in our childish eyes were vast as Epping Forest and as full of mystery as the Schwarzwald". The writer of child stories remembers constantly that his little people measure the world with a shorter yardstick than he does. The same remark applies to people of limited outlook. Turgenev's *Lear of the Steppes* illustrates the use

of a supernormal scale to suit with the primitive, monumental vastness of Harlov, the central character. The author never lets one forget that this man is a perfect mountain, a forest daemon, a Titan. Many details of his surroundings are given merely to help the reader measure him, just as the photographer poses a man beside a California redwood, to show how gigantic the tree is. The classic example of drawing to scale is Gulliver's Travels, in which Swift does literally what is done psychologically in most stories about children.

These, then, are the general functions of the setting to supply the initial assumptions or premises of the story, to emphasize the chosen "single effect", to make it psychologically true by means of "experiential" detail, to unify it, and to create an artistic illusion by placing the characters and incidents in the worldⁱⁿ which they properly belong.

In considering the functions of setting more specifically we have to notice both the kinds and the degrees of its relation to other elements of the story. Miss Albright makes a fundamental and suggestive distinction between accidental and

structural settings. The accidental setting is but the dress of a story, but the structural setting is part of its living body.

There are really four kinds of relation between the setting and the other elements of the story: mechanical, decorative, intensive, and causal. The mechanical setting is the irreducible minimum, that which positively must be kept in order to tell the story at all. It is like the barest of stages, which nevertheless provides a door for the heroine's entrance, a writing desk in which she finds the hidden will, a window or key-hole through which she providentially learns the villain's intentions. When the author does no more than this, his setting may be wholly implied. One may perhaps be unable to find a single sentence of description. Such a story may be bare and feeble, or a marvel of naked strength like Björnson's *The Father*.

At the opposite extreme from mechanical setting is the decorative sort,--that which is included wholly or chiefly because of its own interest

and beauty. The stage is arranged for lovely or striking scenic effect, rich costumes, jewels, graceful draperies, impressive architecture, picturesque landscape, color and perfumes and music are included for pure aesthetic delight, not because they are a vital part of the story. The realistic school abominates this sort of thing; and in general it is safe to say that there should be very little "accidental" setting. Critics tell the young writer to apply the "elimination test" rigidly and to omit everything whose absence does not leave a visible gap or lack. Indeed, the chances are that his "purple patches" are fine-writing and that they reveal more of conceit than of artistic sincerity.

Nevertheless it is possible to go too far in the other direction and to leave the story too bare of sensuous appeal. Professor Pitkin objects to the arbitrary exclusion of the rich, leisurely method of story telling and remarks: "The pure dramatic story of the French type gives us the dizzying effect of terrific speed. Its scenes and characters flit past us as the landscape past a

racing automobile". Such stories as Maupassant's best are perfect of their kind, but why insist that they are the only kind? Would not Rip Van Winkle lose a great deal if told in his way instead of Irving's?

It must be admitted that purely decorative detail is entirely out of place in most stories, and that it should never be used so freely as to contradict the central purpose of the narrative or even to divert the reader's attention from it. But in romantic tales of "the days that are no more", in contemporary studies of life in India, Japan, or the islands of the sea, in the clever story of society life, a great part of the reader's delight is owing to the rich pictorial effects, even though some of them are merely decorative.

In the ancient tale the setting is usually either mechanical or decorative. Just as the Greek stage had its back-scene of conventionalized buildings that were always the same for every play, the old story had its vague palace and cave, mountain or island or sea that never needed any visualizing touches. But now and then some conception would kindle the narrator's imagination, and he would

picture a room, a couch, a chariot, a handful of jewels, or a supernatural landscape with the most vivid and minute detail. Cupid and Psyche illustrates both conventional and decorative setting. Cupid's magic dwelling, and Venus's chariot are described almost wholly for aesthetic effect. But it is difficult in many cases to draw a line between the decorative and the intensive use of setting for vividness. If a passage makes characters or action more effective, it belongs.

Intensive setting is used to emphasize, heighten, and vivify the characters and the action. It gives force and intensity to the story, but is not represented as really influencing either the persons or the plot.

In the first place, it may be employed merely for the sake of vividness, for visualization. Bliss Perry says: "Sometimes the setting is used to do nothing more than give us an intimate sense of the physical presence of the things and persons described". Properly speaking, visualization should apply only to the imaginative reproduction of what can be seen, but it is often used loosely of all sorts of sense images, Since there is no name for the process of imagining sounds, odors, flavors,

and tactile sensations. The writer needs to suggest all of these, as was noted in the discussion of "experiential detail." Kipling makes good use of his five senses, but many writers are satisfied to get material from only two or three.

The use of background for vividness does not necessarily imply a realistic purpose, for realism is merely one sort of artistic illusions. Many other sorts are just as artistic to the reader of catholic tastes. Tieck's Venusberg with its wicked mysteries and changing aspects has to be made as vivid as Bret Harte's mountain in *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*. Vividness refers to intensity and distinctness of impression, not to realism alone.

Intensive background usually offers either striking harmony or striking contrast to some other element of the story. In life we pay little attention to people who are moderately suited to their environment, but we do notice those who are remarkably like it or unlike it. So too with the great experiences of our own lives, the intense moments of joy and sorrow; at such times, unless we are wholly oblivious of the world about us, we are abnormally conscious of anything in our surroundings that either chimes with our mood or jars

upon it. All the senses are trebly acute under emotional excitement.

When a writer tries to heighten a tragic or a happy incident by a harmonizing background of nature, he is sometimes accused of committing the "pathetic fallacy". But there may be psychological truth in what is a logical absurdity. If there happens to be a likeness between landscape effects and the hero's mood, the landscape may be described as he would see it, but the harmony should seem an unconscious, natural affair. Nature is full of parables; one does not have to torture and misrepresent her in order to find a natural parallel for most human experiences.

For instance, Miss Murfree's *Star of the Valley* has as its theme the secret and hopeless love of a mountain girl for a man far above her, for whom she finally gave her life. Note how this bit of setting emphasizes the theme by harmony:

"There are many things that suffer unheeded in these mountains, the birds that freeze on the trees, the wounded deer that leaves its cruel kind to die

alone, the despairing flying-fox with its pursuing train of dogs and men".

Maurice Hewlett's pretty little romance, The Judgment of Borso, illustrates the effective use of contrast for artistic emphasis. On a stage of mediaeval splendor, cruelty and sensuality, he presents the touching love drama of Bellaroba and Angioletto, birdlike young creatures of instinctive purity, heroic in their faith and devotion.

In Daudet's The Death of the Dauphin, emotion is heightened by the pathetic irony of the splendid trappings of royalty in the presence of death. When the poor little prince is finally made to understand that he must die, he cries bitterly, "Then to be a dauphin is nothing at all !"

A harmonizing or contrasting background may help to portray character, as in A New England Nun. "He came twice a week to see Louisa Ellis; and every time, sitting there in her delicately sweet room, he felt as if surrounded by a hedge of lace. He was afraid to stir lest he should put a clumsy foot or hand through the fairy web, and he had always the consciousness that Louisa was pain-

fully watching lest he should". This passage suggests the personalities of both Joe and Louisa, and explains why Louisa remained "an uncloistered nun."

Very frequently a story has two contrasted settings which correspond to the opposed forces or persons of the situation. The Birthmark by Hawthorne is a study of two warring passions in a man's nature, devotion to Science and love for a woman: to these correspond the contrasted settings, the laboratory and the boudoir. The Ambitious Guest has an indoor setting of trustful, cordial home life, and an outdoor setting of storm and impending avalanche. Garland's powerful but sombre story, Up the Coulee is a problem in opposed environments, - the sordid, grinding life on a Dakota farm for one brother, and the refined luxuries and pleasures of city life for the other.

Here is an example of contrast from O. Henry's The Rathskeller and the Rose: "He took from his coat pocket a rose -- a drooping, yellow, velvet, odorous rose that hung its head in the foul atmosphere of that tainted Rathskeller like a virgin bowing before the hot breath of the lions in a

Roman arena." The next morning the heroine left the tawdry triumphs of her stage world and went back to the pure country home where that yellow rose had blossomed.

The most distinctively modern use of setting is the causal use. Science has taught literature that environment shapes character. We have learned to expect moral degeneration in the tropics, intense passion in the subtropics, nervous intellectual energy in the temperate regions, lethargy or animal fury in the far North. We all know something about the effect of various kinds of landscape on a race; sea, mountain, and prairie develop different traits of character. Through the long centuries, environment gradually shapes a people; and heredity summarizes and reincarnates the Past in each new human being.

Consequently modern writers often represent the environment as influencing or even wholly determining character and events. They explain their persons by showing us the forces that have been gradually moulding them for

years, or they turn the whole course of a life by a sudden change in environment which calls out unsuspected forces of character. Maupassant's people are usually led astray by physical instincts and their environment. But *Moonlight* is a beautiful exception to his characteristic sort of story.

The Abbé Marignan, a fanatical ascetic who considers love to be the gateway to perdition, goes out, cudgel in hand, to spy upon his niece and her lover. But since he is a poet and a dreamer as well as an ascetic, the supernal beauty of the moonlit summer evening and its mysterious harmony with the spirit of love melt his wrath and conquer his prejudice. Finally he muses that God must have created the tender beauty of moonlight and nightingale's song and transfigured landscape in order to surround with poetry the loves of man. "And he fled in amaze, almost ashamed, as if he had penetrated into a temple where he had not the right to go."

In one of Jack London's Alaskan stories, *The White Silence*, the pitiless force of the environment makes a man finally willing to shoot his wounded friend; he knows that death for both would be the inevitable result of struggling further with such a handicap.

Hopper's story, *Her Reading*, illustrates the decay of character in a tropical environment,—the Philippines: "Well, he came over here with the Volunteers. Easy to read after that. First, fervent romantic patriotism, then mad exasperation, then mere cold, cynical brutality. Two years of loosening of fiber in the promiscuity of camp, of reversion to type in the butchery of field. When the volunteers returned, he did not go with them. The tropics had him by that time, had penetrated his heart with their pernicious charm --the charm of languorous amorality, the charm of power:-- we whites here as in some insane asylums, we're all kings. He stayed."

In some cases a phase of the setting determines action without affecting character at all, as in Kipling's *False Dawn*, where a sandstorm is to blame for a man's proposing to the wrong girl. A writer may use accident occasionally as a part of his plot, but only with caution. Von Hillern's *Higher than the Church* has a rosebush as the dominating bit of setting. Hans and Maili are planting it when the Emperor comes by and gives Hans the wonderful knife with which he learns wood carving. They tend the bush together for years and fall in

love and plight their troth in its shade. Finally when the doughty burgomaster has utterly rejected Hans's suit to Maili, with the scornful witticism that he shall never have her unless he can erect within the church an altar higher than the church itself, at that despairing moment the curved spray of the rosebush bound to a niche in the wall teaches Hans how to curve the tip of his altar and win his sweetheart. The author compares this fairy-godmother rose tree to a sympathetic friend who joins the hands of the lovers in her own.

In Stimson's Mrs. Knollys the glacier is practically not landscape, but one of the characters. This is still more true of the Maelstrom in Poe's great story. As Pitkin says, in such stories "the setting is not setting at all, but the dominant character in a drama without setting." Descriptive power must rise almost to sublimity to make them successful, for the conflict between man and some phase of nature appeals to fewer emotions than a conflict between man and man, man and Fate, man and the supernatural, or even between man and his Other Self. These are the five great sources of dramatic situation.

Daudet's Master Cornille's Secret and Mr. James's A Madonna of the Future illustrate setting used as dénouement. In each case the aspect of a room suddenly tells the secret. Here is a passage from the former. "What a strange thing ! The main room of the mill was empty. Not a sack, not a particle of grain, not the slightest trace of flour on the walls or the spider webs... The lower room had the same aspect of poverty and neglect; a wretched bed, a few rags, a crust of bread on one stair, and in one corner three or four bursted sacks with rubbish and plaster sticking out.

"This then was Master Cornille's secret ! It was that plaster that he paraded at night on the roads to save the honor of the mill and to make the people think that he made flour there. Poor mill ! Poor Cornille ! Long ago the steam millers had robbed them of their last customer. The sails still turned, but the mill ground nothing."

In James's story the painter's room reveals the "transcendent illusions and deplorable failure" of the man's life; he is dying without ever having laid brush on the canvas to paint his famous Madonna !

Occasionally one finds a story with a "frame" setting into which the real story is placed like a box within a box. The frame usually describes the circumstances under which the story is told to one or more persons not connected with the real action, at all. Sometimes with Turgenev and A. Conan Doyle this is merely a clumsy way of getting started. But it may be employed skilfully to heighten the emotional effect; as in Maupassant's *Happiness*. The frame setting here forms a lyrical prelude and postlude to the story of a great love that recompensed a woman for fifty years of devoted sacrifice. It gives the mood of twilight revery. Henry James's dreadful tale, *The Turn of the Screw*, elaborates a frame setting for verisimilitude. It is a difficult matter to make a modern public accept seriously two ghosts that appear in broad daylight. The initial chapter in every imaginable way prepares the reader to receive what follows as actual fact. Balzac in *La Grande Bretèche* devotes fourteen of his twenty pages to the narrator's attempts to learn from three different persons the secret of the mysterious house. His difficulties and the hints he gets from each person develop suspense to fever pitch; when the real story finally begins, it has

the swiftness and force of an avalanche. This frame, however, is largely narrative.

To recapitulate briefly: setting may be used to describe a character indirectly, to reveal him in spite of himself, to explain how he came to be that sort of person, to emphasize something about him by harmony or contrast, to express or heighten his emotion and mental states, and even to determine his action at a crisis. There is necessarily much overlapping of characterization and setting, for many details belong almost equally to both, especially in the social and psychological environment. Setting is implied in the traits and activities represented as typical of the whole community. Besides, the environment is often portrayed not objectively but as seen by a character in the story; thus, every sentence about the place reveals the person, too.

One of the beauties of literary art is that economy which by means of suggestion makes a mere sentence or two accomplish several different purposes. This bit from the lovely old pastoral is an excellent example. "Then said Boaz unto Ruth: 'Hear-est thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide

here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn'".

This one speech belongs to setting, plot, characterization, and tone. It suggests the full picture of the harvest field; it reveals the delicacy and courtesy of Boaz, and by implication, the shy charm of the modest stranger who has to be welcomed and protected; it is a plot step in the love story; and it is full of the pastoral tone of simple happiness and outdoor toil. While it may be necessary for critical purposes to analyze a story and discuss plot, setting, and characterization as separate elements, in writing a story the true art consists in interweaving them, in making many details count in all three directions.

In relation to plot, the setting may be only utilitarian; it may help the reader to visualize the action; it may heighten its realism or romance, its comedy, irony, or tragedy; as dramatized landscape or circumstances it may actually determine

the event.

When a story has a well-marked mood, like *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Hawthorne's *The White Old Maid*, or Stevenson's *Will o' the Mill*, the setting is largely a matter of what is called "tone color" in poetry. That is, the very sound of the words chosen, the rhythm of the sentences, the closing cadences, all suggest the mood; even if one pays very little attention to the meaning, one feels the atmosphere of decay, of mystery, of placid poise in the three stories respectively. In order to produce such wonderful effects by tone color, a writer has to have a large vocabulary, a delicate ear, and fine literary taste. Most presentative words have four kinds of significance: the sound meaning through which they affect the emotions much as music does; the dictionary meaning, or denotation; the associational meaning, or connotation, which determines whether the word is prosaic, vulgar, or poetic; and finally, the meaning it derives from the particular context. A literary precisian like Flaubert sometimes spent days hunting for word that should in all these ways suit his purpose. Such extreme care is foolish; nevertheless, one can not do much with mood, atmosphere, and tone color, un-

less one is sensitive to all the values of words.

"Style is the living garment of thought." The tone of a story is related to all the other elements and subtly unifies them.

One method of classifying stories is by the predominating element or elements. Character, plot, or setting may lead; or any two of them, the third being almost negligible. Besides, there is a type called the thematic story in which characters, plot, and setting are all chosen to prove or emphasize an abstract proposition. As Pitkin points out, the thematic story is very different from the story with a theme. Practically every story has what might be called a theme,-- a central purpose or idea. In most cases this theme belongs to one of the three elements. But in the pure thematic story the author starts from a general truth. The effect he is seeking is intellectual, not emotional or artistic. Such a story is The Great Stone Face of Hawthorne. One can not say that the theme is the effect of landscape on character, for the Face is not real landscape at all; it is not the plot, for there is no causal relation between the incidents;

it is not the character of Ernest, for he is obviously an ideal type. It is clear that Hawthorne wished the reader to appreciate the general truth that a man grows to resemble whatever he thinks about. Kipling's story of the bees and the traitor moth, *The Mother Hive*, seeks to prove that Socialism is a tissue of malicious lies. James's *The Real Thing* combats the doctrine that Art should merely copy Nature. Irving Bacheller's *Keeping Up With Lizzie* humorously develops the idea that a chief cause of social evils in the United States is too high a standard of living.

Since the thematic story presents a general truth, not a unique experience of some individual, it differs greatly from the ordinary short-story. Many people do not care for it at all; and to succeed it must be beautifully done. Pitkin says: "For the didactic story more than any other must sustain its dramatic interests perfectly. Ordinary art conceals itself; but the sermon-story must hide not only itself but also its moral. It calls for double magic. "The thematic story is usually didactic. Sometimes its three elements are so universalized that it becomes a pure parable; sometimes

the author makes no assumption of realism except as to the truth of human nature, and chooses fantastic settings and incidents; again, as in Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece*, he may highly individualize all the details of character, plot, and setting, yet without a word of explanation, he leaves with the reader the impression of a universal and timeless truth. This last sort of thematic story is the highest, for it carries most of emotional power and intimate conviction. To express in a fictive being and his experience both that which links him to every soul since Adam and that which makes him an absolutely unique and isolated creation is high art.

In thematic stories any detail that would contradict the parable must be excluded or at least made very inconspicuous. The artistic principle of selection is in this case almost wholly intellectual. Often the setting or some part of it is highly symbolic. Hawthorne offers excellent examples of this symbolism; as, the garden of poisonous flowers in *Rappaccini's Daughter*, the withered branch in *Roger Malvin's Funeral*, the lonely cottage at the foot of the mountain in *The Ambitious Guest*.

At the opposite extreme from the thematic type we have the psychological story, the most marked variety of the character-story. It differs from the ordinary character-story in that the stage of action is almost wholly internal. Very little may happen outwardly, but the author has so bared the mind and soul of his chief character that we know to the full the meaning of his slightest action. In such stories the setting is generally subjective, seen through the eyes of the chief character, as in *Markheim*. This wonderful story has just three bits of real physical action,--killing the dealer, hunting his keys, and telling the maid to call the police. The rest of the story subtly turns *Markheim's* soul inside out. The vivid descriptions of the threatening army of sounds, of the flickering lights and menacing shadows, of the mysterious presences haunting him, the mirrors spying upon him,--all these reveal his guilty terror; while his memories of earlier and purer days foreshadow the final victory of his better self.

Maupassant's *The Coward* is a psychological story illustrating the other possible effect of

great emotion,--utter obliviousness to one's surroundings. Consequently it has very little physical setting. Turgenev's *A Lear of the Steppes* is a character story of the objective type. The author tells how his people looked, what they said and did, and what other people thought of them, and leaves the reader to draw his own conclusions as to their thoughts and feelings. This is the favorite method of Mérimée and Maupassant also.

The local color story is apt to have a prominent setting. It has long been and is today a remarkably prominent type in the United States. Lieberman's late text, *The American Short story*, devotes a great deal of space to this local element in our fiction, the reasons for it and the results. This little tabulation will give some idea of its importance and its range:

Irving— The Hudson Valley and the Kaatskills.

Hawthorne, Mrs. Freeman, Miss Jewett, Alice Brown--

New England.

Miss Murfree— The Tennessee Mountains.

James Lane Allen— Kentucky

Thomas Nelson Page — Virginia.

Joel Chandler Harris—Georgia.

George W. Cable—Louisiana, Creole days.

Hamlin Garland—Wisconsin and the Dakotas.

William Allen White—Kansas.

O. Henry—Texas, Central America, New York City.

Stewart Edward White—Arizona, Michigan forests.

Bret Harte—California in the "Golden Age".

Jack London—Alaska.

James Hopper—the Philippines.

Brander Matthews and Richard Harding Davis—New York City.

This list gives force to C. Alphonso Smith's remark that the short-story has done more than any other agency to unify the United States. In each marked region some clever and sincere writer has worked earnestly to interpret his community to the rest of this vast country. Our great range of climate, our varied landscape, flora, and fauna; our rapid geographical expansion, and economic development; our marked forms of community life, such as the plantation, the mining camp, the factory, the great university, the department store; our mixture of races, augmented by a steady tide of immigration; and our rapid social and political changes-- all

these factors make the local short-story a leading type.

The writer of local fiction needs a quick eye for the distinctive and the picturesque, but he needs spiritual insight too, so that he can see below dialect, costume, and local etiquette into the real soul of a community. His local color should not be mere background, but a vital part of the lives he portrays. Otherwise his story will live only while the geographical interest concerning his region is strong.

The occupational story is now coming to the front very noticeably. It handles setting much as the local color story does. The many studies of home life and child life now being written by women have this peculiarity of setting: they win their effect by delicately suggestive treatment of minute details of everyday life, suffusing them with humor, fancy, or tenderness. Everyone has around him the material for such stories: they demand acute observation, sympathy, and a mastery of style, but no unusual experiences, bold imagination, or vast stores of information.

In the detective story, the tale of adventure, and the pseudo-scientific story, plot is the central interest. Characters are slightly drawn, and often no more setting is used than the machinery of the action necessitates. The detective story naturally concentrates attention on the position and nature of windows, doors, closets, furniture, and the like, to every detail, however casual or microscopic, which may afford a clue to such wizards as Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, or Father Brown. The length and intricacy of the logical chain which depends upon a trifle like a rusted and broken nail is a leading source of interest. The romantic reader delights in those mystery stories which discover secret drawers, sliding panels, false floors, infernal mechanisms, unconventional ways of killing people and marvellous ways of identifying the criminal. Arthur Reeve's detective stories are pseudo-scientific too, for he handles with scientific detail the apparatus and methods of the modern psychological laboratory.

Some pseudo-scientific stories are highly humorous conceptions, like Mr. Stockton's Negative Gravity. Poe was the earliest American in the field of pseudo-science. His tale now called The Balloon

Hoax actually hoodwinked several editors into printing it as news. The Adventures of Hans Pfaal also was almost prophetic in its imaginative realism. The tale of pseudo-science may be fantastic instead of humorous; Fitz-James O'Brien's The Diamond Lens brings spiritualism and insanity into the scientific laboratory. Mr. H. G. Wells often works for grotesque effects. Whether serious, humorous, fantastic, or grotesque, the pseudo-scientific story makes a great assumption of minute technical accuracy, flaunts its tools, gloats over its laboratory, and pretends to take the reader into all its secrets. The difficulty is that scientific language and machinery bore and confuse many readers. Some people have no interest at all in such matters, and others are so seriously attached to science that they can not approve of distorting it for fictional purposes.

The adventure story disappears under a cloud of realism now and then, but is never long obscured. Readers must have their "fiction of compensation", as Bliss Perry aptly names it,--"the fiction that yields them what life cannot yield them". In such stories the background is painted with big brushes and sweeping strokes for swift, romantic effect. It

is mechanical or decorative, not causal. Biological law and the slow forces of environment are banished to the nethermost pit and the reader is temporarily as free from Nature and Fate and Conscience as if he were a rollicking Dumas hero.

While these statements are true of the pure adventure type, there are many stories of marked plot that have strong characters too. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn. One sometimes finds an example in which all three elements seem equally important.

But there remains one more divergent type, the story of the supernatural. It employs two interesting processes, special devices for creating the artistic illusion? Moulton in Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist employs and explains the terms rationalization and derationalization which we may borrow.

A supernatural force or being seems out of place in a natural world of broad healthy daylight. Derationalization provides a weird, abnormal world in which one expects fantastic events and supernatural beings. Everything that would break the illusion and make the reader think of bread-and-butter reality is carefully excluded. Nothing hurts a ghost except

being laughed at; he has a natural delicacy about appearing at noon in steamheated flats or on a prosaic country road. He prefers twilight or midnight, deserted houses, ruined palaces, churchyards, dismal forests, storm and mystery. The Gothic romances thoroughly worked the field of derationalized physical setting.

The modern method of derationalization is often psychological. The writer delicately hints that the supernatural effects are possible caused by something abnormal in his hero's mind. Strong emotional excitement, hypnotic suggestion, optical illusion, illness, the effect of some drug, intoxication, nightmare, the maddening influence of long-continued solitude, even insanity-- these are psychological forms of derationalization.

Rationalization is of course the opposite process. Instead of making a mysterious world in which positively anything might happen, the writer brings the supernatural element down to the natural; that is, he "gives as many points of contact as possible with thought and experience-----uniting it with as much as possible of what is nearest akin to it in the world of reality." (Moulton)

In Kipling's *Wireless* a sort of telepathic re-incarnation is rationalized by its analogy with wireless telegraphy. A consumptive drug clerk in an emotional trance composes before the narrator's eyes the magic lines of Keats's *St. Agnes' Eve*, a poem which he never had heard of; meanwhile in the next room a "wireless" operator catches messages from distant places--messages meant neither for him nor for others that were hearing and answering them. In *The Return of Imray* the rationalization is a matter of physical sensations revealing a Presence. The dog refuses to sleep inside the bungalow, doors close, draperies move, footsteps and whispers are almost heard.

Maupassant's *The Horla* and Bierce's *The Damned Thing* both deal with invisible monsters; both stories employ the diary form, an excellent vehicle for verisimilitude because it facilitates repeated references to the Thing, and gradual approach to the supernatural. The method of analogy appears too, for Maupassant asks, "Do we see the hundred-thousandth part of what exists?" and Bierce says that there may be bodies too subtle for the human eye, just as there are sounds too high or low for the ear,-- a well-known fact.

One important point of technique in supernatural tales is to create the atmosphere of horror and mystery from the very outset. Julian Hawthorne says, "Tell me beforehand that your scenario is to include both worlds, and I have no objection to make; I simply attune my mind to the more extensive scope. But I rebel at an unheralded ghostland, and declare that your tale is incredible".

In these days of open-eyed scientific curiosity when nothing is regarded as permanently unknowable, ghosts are especially thin and slippery things to hold. The mystery of yesterday is the science of today; the best material of this type is found in the misty Borderland which we shall probably explore tomorrow. As Cross remarks: "Forty odd years ago, modern spiritualism gave rise to a literature dealing with the night side of nature..... And in these later days romance has fed on the reports of the Society for Psychical Research."

The frank fantasy and the burlesque ghost story like Mr. Stockton's Spectral Mortgage, and Mark Twain's tale of the bashful Cardiff Giant who wanted to be rescued from the Museum and decently buried, are of a very different nature. If they employ the old ghost-lore and conventions at all, it is for

pure fun. Demure drolleries or melodramatic horrors are to be expected there, with only a winking pretense of artistic illusion.

Of the humorous story as a type, it should be said that the laws of artistic consistency often are violated for amusing effects. Humor usually implies incongruity, unexpectedness, disproportion, some lack of harmony; it may manifest itself chiefly in the plot, the characters, or the relation of the setting to these. Again, it may be almost wholly a matter of the author's style. There is always some kind of ludicrous contrast. Unless the setting is essential to the humorous effect, it is very much subordinated. Any form of extravagance and inconsistency may have a place in the humorous short-story if it helps to gain the 'single effect'. Yet even this lawless type has to avoid mingling forms of humor that do not belong together.

Part III. The Technique of Setting.

After analyzing the kinds of setting and noting the purposes which it may be made to serve, we come now to the very practical questions that arise in actual composition. In what different ways can the setting be presented? How much should there be, and how should it be distributed? How should it be treated for certain distinct effects?

It is an axiom that space is very precious in the short-story. Other things being equal, the briefest method is the best. Clayton Hamilton declares: "The aim of a short-story is to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis." This nice balancing of economy and emphasis is to be observed throughout. One should cut away all the superfluities of undigested description, yet fill out whenever the gain in effect justifies it.

The setting of a story may be presented explicitly or by implication,-- in what is said, or in what is suggested. The explicit setting consists of passages of description or exposition picturing the physical surroundings or explaining the social and

psychological environment. These may be written from the author's point of view, as in the opening paragraphs of *Rip Van Winkle*, or from that of some character, as in all the descriptions of this story after Rip goes up into the Kaatskills. Whether it is the author or one of his creations that sees for us, the setting may be treated sympathetically or in a "detached" way.

Explicit setting takes up too much room in some cases; it gets in the way of the action, obscures the characters, and bores the reader (if used too freely). If you look at a popular magazine you will not find many stories beginning with a column of landscape or architecture. In one of his prefaces Mark Twain tells his readers that he is offering them the first story ever written without weather, but that any reader who wants some may turn to the Appendix of Assorted Weathers and take whatever kind and quantity he chooses ! Evidently he "skipped the descriptions", too.

While some of the setting is best presented by the direct method, a great deal of it may be implied, in the action, the characterization, the dialogue, the

tone and style. The Insurgent by Halévy, The Son by Björnson, and many other wellwritten stories almost defy the reader to find a sentence of description. It is excellent practise for a beginner after writing the first draft of his story to underline with colored pencils all direct descriptions of either characters or setting; and then to rewrite the story without any of them, striving to incorporate all those ideas in suggestive phrases here and there. One important way to secure a swift, vigorous effect is to choose verbs with a picture in them. Kipling's verbs are a revelation of energy and picturesqueness. The exact noun and the vivid verb take the place of many adjectives and adverbs.

Here is a passage from White's By the Rod of His Wrath, illustrating how setting may be implied in the action, especially if it is typical of a community. "Mrs. Markley went about her quiet ways, giving her missionary teas, looking after the poor of her church, making her famous doughnuts for the socials, doing her part at the Relief Corps chicken-pie suppers, digging her club papers out of the encyclopedia, and making over her black silk the third time for every day."

This paragraph characterizes the little western town as neatly as it does Mrs. Markley. The King of Boyville, also by White, gives us both the theme and the setting in the opening sentence: "Boys who are born in a small town are born free and equal."

In Daudet's humorous tale, The Curé of Cucugnan, the moral laxity of the village is thus implied: "But alas ! the spiders spun their webs in his confessional, and on glorious Easter day the consecrated wafers lay untouched in the holy pyx." No wonder that the good Curé in a vision saw all his wicked flock in Satan's charge!

There is usually a close relation between an event and its setting; if the plot of some stories is stated, one can guess the time and place quite accurately. Certain things can happen only under definite conditions; the deed and the place are Siamese twins. In like manner no character can be portrayed or even well named without suggesting his environment. There is much humorous realism in the names Abe Potash and Mawruss Perlmutter in Mr. Glass's Sketches of Jewish retail clothiers; and strongly romantic connotation in the names of Poe's heroines, Berenice, Ligeia, Morella, Madeleine, and Eleanora. Gautier's Arria Marcella takes us back to the days

of Rome at once. Louisa Ellis belongs to New England almost as obviously as Marse Chan to the South "befo' de wah". The names and nicknames in the stories of Bret Harte, Kipling, and Hewlett are a large element in the local color.

Rich opportunities for suggested setting are found in the dialogue. Picturesque localisms, dialect, scraps of a foreign tongue, and the very syntax all help to imply both the geographical and the social environment. A few brief examples will make this clearer than any discussion.

"Eat, sahib, eat. Meat is good against sorrow. ... These be curried eggs." (Kipling's Without Benefit of Clergy.)

"...The cries of 'Garson!', and 'We, Monseer', and 'Hello, Mame !' that distinguish Bohemia." (One of O. Henry's stories, staged in a New York restaurant.)

"Teacher, Missis Bailey, I know you know what year stands. Only it's polite I tells you something, and I had a fraid the while the comp'ny mit the whiskers sets and rubbers." (Myra Kelly. Stories of school life of little Jewish children in New York.)

"'Here, Dougal', said the laird, 'gie Steenie a tass of brandy till I count the siller and write the

receipt'". (Scott, a Scotch story of the Cromwellian period.)

The nondialogic passages also imply setting by their diction and tone color. The Ruinous Face by Hewlett, a story of Helen of Troy, suggests the classic background by Homeric phrasing as much as by direct description. "When the walls of wide-wayed Troy were cast down, and of the houses of the chiefs nothing stood but staring walls and rafters charred by fire; and when the temples of the Dardan gods had been sacked, and scorn done to the body of Priam, the old,... then the Achaeans turned their eyes with longing to their homesteads." This setting would have a very different effect if described in Kipling's style.

The implied setting has several advantages: it gives the reader information in a manner so painless that he never knows when or how he learned; it is never irrelevant nor over-abundant; and it is well distributed and closely related, each detail of the setting naturally coming just where it is needed. There is great artistic economy in the use of suggestion, and much delicacy too. But it is a mistake to rely much upon subtle suggestiveness for producing remote or intricate effects. The average

reader will over-look the meaning unless he is aided by some very definite passages. After the general conception has been presented in clearcut style, it can be reenforced and completed and kept in the reader's thought by means of suggestion.

The explicit method is valuable for clear presentation of what is unfamiliar and complex. It makes possible the massing of descriptive detail for climactic force in stories of fire, storm, flood, earthquake, or battle. Also it admits of more interpretation; and if the author is gifted with humor or fancy, his sidelights of comment or circumstances may be the most delightful element of the story. Usually both the explicit and the suggestive method of handling setting will be found in any piece of fiction. The social and psychological settings are more apt to be given by suggestion than the physical background.

Many writers have found it a good plan to read their stories to some honest friend and thus find out how many of their suggestive touches "carry". It is surprising how much that one puts into a story is not there at all !

Another question of treatment is whether objectivity or subjectivity will be most effective in the given case. Mateo Falcone, which Pater called "the cruelest story in the world", betrays no sympathy on the author's part with any of the characters. Imagine a man, keen but impassive, practically omniscient; able to see and understand everything intellectually, but completely immune from human sympathy. Such a man's writings would be perfectly objective. No one quite achieves this detachment, but there is a great difference between the aloofness of Mérimée and Maupassant on the one hand, and the warm subjectivity of Dickens and Daudet on the other. There is some truth in the dictum of the "detached" school that the objective attitude is the only impartial one, and that sympathy distorts the writer's art. But only plots of strong dramatic quality and perhaps of an ironic flavor are well adapted to objective treatment, for ~~this~~ lacks the emotional reenforcement given by the other method.

The subjective treatment of setting humanizes it, brings it into warmer and closer relations with the characters, heightens its emotional values and expresses more of the author's personality. The objective setting has better perspective, is more

classic in tone, and often has a certain ironical realism that one enjoys when one feels pessimistic. It is a sort of guarantee that the author has played no tricks with the truth. In the types of story without strong character interest the method is usually objective.

Several factors determine the relative amount of space and emphasis to be given to setting in a particular story. First, how much is actually needed for clear visualization? Naturally, in the case of unfamiliar settings like remote historical periods, new localities, novel "occupational" backgrounds, studies of foreign life or fantastic imaginary places, much more setting is needed than for a familiar contemporary story where a very few strokes are enough to suggest the whole scene.

Then, how much attention can be given to setting without boring the reader? This depends upon three things,— the intrinsic novelty or beauty of the background material, the closeness of its integration with the rest of the story, and the author's skill in varying his descriptive effects. If the setting is confined to what is supremely relevant and

significant, and is presented by a variety of methods, it should engage the reader's interest. The mechanical and the causal settings can not be dispensed with, but decorative and intensive backgrounds must justify their presence by their effectiveness. The reader's interest is the final test.

How should the setting of a story be distributed? One natural tendency is to mass it at or near the beginning. Initial setting makes possible a clear exposition and swift action thereafter. It indicates the tone of the narrative from the very outset. Mood and atmosphere stories practically have to begin with setting, for their force is much lessened if the reader is misled into expecting dramatic plot or dominant characters, or if he tunes his mind to the wrong emotional pitch.

Against these advantages of initial setting stands the stubborn fact that many readers dislike a descriptive beginning and never get past one if it looks long or commonplace. The author has to take his most pointed pleasure and stab their spirits broad awake, or else they will refuse to wade through any massed description. Consequently it is safer

to depend chiefly upon setting in solution, rather than mass. Besides, as Pitkin says, it is not a good plan to pile all your pictures in a heap at the beginning of your book and leave the rest of it as bare as a ledger. "And in a story, the most magnificent picture of the setting, crowded, let us say, into the opening paragraph, will heighten the 'single effect' much less potently than a hundred little significant glimpses of tree, sky, and brook scattered loosely up and down the whole landscape."

It is a psychological fact that descriptions bring a reader to the fatigue limit of attention more quickly than anything else but unrelated columns of words. The reason is that they tax both memory and imagination very severely. The details really co-exist in space, yet they have to be given separately in time order; the reader then must keep each in mind from first to last, correct his imagined picture several times, and finally try to fuse the scattered bits into a whole. Therefore a long description must appeal strongly to humor, emotion, or the sense of beauty in order to hold attention.

The distributed setting is very flexible; it yields itself to climactic gradation, as in *The Masque of the Red Death*, where each new mention of the awesome clock and the blood-red light is more impressive than the last. Here are the final sentences: "And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripod expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all."

Frequently a bit of setting helps to heighten the crises of a story. In *The Cask of Amontillado* the climax is reenforced by a ghastly description of the crypt surrounded with human bones, and the recess beyond into which Montresor chains his enemy. Kipling's *Without Benefit of Clergy* prepares us for the tragic close by the descriptions of famine, drought, and cholera. In Mérimée's little marvel of compression, *The Taking of the Redoubt*, the blood-red disk of the rising moon is felt to be an omen that the morrow's battle will be disastrous.

The atmosphere story naturally devotes more space to setting and recurs to it more frequently than other types of stories. Generally its closing

paragraphs are for setting. The dramatic story usually ends with action or characterisation; for the 'single effect' should be made prominent at the end.

"The New England Nun" has very little action. It opens with two pages of setting, then adds two more of mixed setting and characterisation; in the heart of the story there are five pages that explain just why Louisa dreads marrying Joe; it closes with a page more prophesying her peaceful life as an "un-cloistered nun". Almost half of the space is given to setting, but not too much, for it is treated with delicious humor.

The space given to explicit setting varies between one percent and about thirty percent of the whole. Implied setting can not be so measured. In local color stories and stories of dramatized landscape the ratio of description to narration is comparatively large.

Since the setting is distinctly a subordinate element in the story, one should strive especially to secure artistic economy in handling it. This principle not only demands the rigid exclusion of the ir-

relevant, the inharmonious and the ineffective, but also the deliberate search for the supremely characteristic and forcible. "The good is ever the enemy of the best." Because of its brevity the short-story more than any other form of fiction should have structural perfection,--symmetry, harmony, stylistic perfection. Its "implacable unity and swift compactness" leave no room for leisurely essays and descriptions that do not advance the central purpose of the story.

The first step in securing artistic economy is perfect motivation. The writer chooses his central effect, his leading character, that character's chief trait, the situation, the climax, and the tone--realistic or romantic, humorous or elevated, passionate or detached. Then he decides what kind of setting will secure and enhance these effects. Of course, the whole process of creation may be unconsciously selective; one may do these things by instinct without any analysis at all. But the conscious process is the only sort that can be profitably discussed.

As we have already noted, one principle of

artistic economy is to make a single detail serve several purposes. Description from the point of view of a character is more economic than description from the author's point of view, for it aids both setting and characterisation, and may also be more vitally related to the next plot step. Dialogue may be highly economic if it not only reveals the speakers and aids the plot, but also implies the setting by the characteristic turns of speech, the references to the social milieu, and by its general spiritual atmosphere. Even bits of essay-like comment may have their place if the author has the shrewd or charming humor which throws a flood of light on a situation. The most subtle form of artistic economy is perhaps, tone color. The very quality of the diction and the abrupt energy or sweeping majesty of the sentence rhythms determine the effect of a descriptive passage as much as the ideas presented. The sound should re-enforce the sense, for readers are unconsciously influenced by the emotional coloring and the auditory values of what they read.

Impressionism is really a form of artistic economy. To describe a thing not by its physical de-

tails but by their effect-- the emotional impression they leave-- is to save the reader the labor of remembering and combining details and deducing the effect for himself. Impressionism stimulates his imagination and yet leaves it perfectly free. Marlowe's famous lines describing Helen of Troy offer a good illustration.

"Was this the face that launched a thousand
ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

An Irishman and a modern Greek, reading these lines, would alike conjure up the most beautiful face they could imagine. The images might differ greatly, but so would they in spite of the most itemized account of Helen's features, complexion, figures, and bearing. James Lane Allen in *The White Cowl* describes the method of impressionism and illustrates the result. This story deals with a Trappist monastery in southern Kentucky, a strange bit of mediaeval Europe transplanted in modern America.

"Sometimes during the long summer days I walk out here alone and lie for hours under this tree until the influences of the place have completely possessed me and I feel wrought up to the point of

description. (The very key to the impressionist's method. The rest of the passage is the resulting impression.) The sensation of a chill comes over me... The sun seems no longer to warm the pale cross on the spire yonder, the great drifting white clouds send a shiver through me as though uplifted snowbanks were passing over my head... Everything becomes cold to me-- cold, cold, cold. The bleak and rugged old monks themselves, in their hoary cowls turn to personifications of perpetual winter."

The tragedy of the story results from the conflict between this chill asceticism and the ardent energy of a young monk full of the passion to live a complete life. Atmosphere stories naturally make great use of impressionistic description, for an emotional unity of effect is their natural goal. But it would obviously be out of place in the detective story or the pseudo-scientific "yarn", where effects are gained by realistic detail.

Condensation is of course, a large factor in artistic economy. Reducing a paragraph of description to a sentence, choosing the noun that contains its own adjectives, the verb that both acts and pictures, the one detail that recalls a dozen others,

the epithet or figure of speech that paints a whole background with a single stroke,--these are the devices that make some short-stories marvels of brevity, and intensity. Here are a few examples of strong background effects secured with the fewest possible words:

"Simpson's Bar on the eve of Christmas day, 1862, clung like a swallow's nest to the rocky, entablature and splintered capitals of Table mountain, and shook in the blast." (Setting by simile. Harte's How Santa Claus Came to Simpson's Bar.)

"Ah, the happy days ! the happy city ! Halberds that did not wound, state prisons where they put wine to cool. No famine; no wars." (Setting by suggestion. Daudet's story, The Pope's Mule.)

"There was a town down there as flat as a flannel cake, and called Summit, of course..... We knew that Summit couldn't get after us with anything stronger than constables and maybe some lackadaisical bloodhounds and a diatribe or two in the Weekly Farmer's Budget." (Setting by humorous simile and suggestion. O. Henry's The Ransom of Red Chief.)

"Now it was a tall, solid, ugly, well-bricked house... where the front door stood open all day long, and the womankind sat on the steps, talking of sickness and death and the cost of things." (Selected detail and suggestion. Morrison's *On the Stairs*, a bit of sordid realism.)

"Then came the cholera from all four corners of the compass... It was a red and heavy audit, for the land was very sick and needed a little breathing space ere the torrent of cheap life should flood it anew. The children of immature fathers and undeveloped mothers made no resistance." (Concentrated comment. Kipling's *Without Benefit of Clergy*.)

"For whom was intended this sublime spectacle, this flood of poetry, poured from Heaven to earth?" (Maupassant's *Moonlight*.)

William Allen White's *In Our Town* describes the social setting largely through humorous epithets: "Trundle-bed Trash; "the Happy Hoppers"; "the Amalgamated Hand-holders' Union"; "the Cold-nosed Whist Club"; and "the howling dervishes".

A great part of what has been said about the setting of the short-story applies also to the tale, the novel, and the novelette. But there are some differences in treatment owing to the stricter architectonics of the short-story, its swiftness, compression, rigid unity, and concentrated emphasis on the 'single effect'.

The tale is looser and simpler in structure than the short-story. Consequently, its setting is less organic and reveals less motivation. The amount and treatment of the background material may depend as much upon its separate beauty and interest as upon its reenforcement of incident and character. Irving's *Rip van Winkle* and Maupassant's *The Necklace* are characteristic of the two sorts of setting technique. This passage from one of Irving's letters sums up his theory and practise as to story-writing.

, "For my part I consider a story merely as a frame upon which to stretch the materials; it is the play of thought and sentiment and language, the weaving in of characters lightly, yet expressively delineated; the familiar and faithful exhibition of

scenes in common life; and the half-concealed vein of humor that is often playing through the whole,--these are among what I aim at, and upon which I felicitate myself in proportion as I think I succeed."

Now contrast with this leisurely play of varied effects Brander Matthews' theory of the short-story.

"...The short-story must do one thing only, and it must do this completely and perfectly; it must not loiter or digress; it must have unity of action, unity of temper, unity of tone, unity of color, unity of effect; and it must rigidly exclude everything that might interfere with its singleness of intention."

One need only read these two passages to understand the fundamental differences between the short-story and the tale. They are perhaps equally valuable forms of fiction; but the point is that they work for different effects. A writer must be able to distinguish between story material that should be made into a tale and that which fits the short-story form. The style of the tale tends toward that of the familiar essay, while the style of the short-story verges upon that of the drama. Since a tale needs no complication of plot, the setting is less

closely related to the action. Since it seeks variety and spontaneity rather than conscious intensity, it may admit more essay material and personal comment.

The difference between setting in the short-story and setting ⁱⁿ the novel is largely a matter of scope. Some settings are too vast or complex for the short-story; others are too localized and slight for the novel. A short-story or a series of short-stories can reproduce faithfully the life of a small community or the influence of a single historical event upon the life of a nation or reproduce a historical period.

The novel is better adapted, also, to the study of contemporary social problems,-- questions of politics, religion, education, marriage, race and caste. The shorter form has no room for proving a thesis; it must assume its premises arbitrarily at the outset. The novelistic breadth of treatment is needed for the convincing presentation of institutional life,-- the church, the government, the astounding scope of financial operations in modern days. In

like manner, it affords better opportunities to interpret life from the naturalistic point of view, which considers man as shaped by environment and biologic laws, like the rest of the animal kingdom. The forces at work are too slow, too impersonal, too vast to be handled easily within the limits of five or ten thousand words. Hardy's great novel, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is more naturalistic than any of his short-stories. However, Maupassant succeeds in putting a great deal of naturalistic material into *Futile Beauty* (*La Beauté Inutile*). When naturalism appears in a short-story, it is liable to be so direct and concentrated as to be repulsive.

As the novel is either longer or broader in scope than the short-story-- dealing with many years of it's hero's life or with a broad social field,-- it necessarily has greater variety of backgrounds. So long a composition would be insufferably monotonous without this variety. Some of the material in a novel may be almost episodic, introduced for contrast and relief. And only the crises will attain to the emotional intensity of the character type of short-story, for sustained emotion on a high level is seldom possible, either in life or in fiction.

Although any single short-story has a narrower

range of setting than a single novel, as a form of fiction, the short-story has the widest range of all. Bliss Perry's chapter on the short-story in *Prose Fiction* is especially full and clear upon this point. One can not do better than to quote him as to the especial opportunities offered by this form of fiction.

"In the brief tale, then, he may be didactic without wearing his audience."

"..He can pose problems without answering them."

"He begs to be allowed to state his own premises... and considers it beneath him to explain his miracles."

"What is more, the laws of brevity and unity of effect compel him to omit, in his portrayal of life and character, many details that are unlovely... But were a novelist to take the personages of those stories and exhibit them as full-length figures, he would be bound to tell more of the truth about them, unpleasant as some of the details would be."

"The space limits of the short-story allow its author likewise to make artistic use of the horrible, the morbid, and the dreadful-- subjects too poignant to give any pleasure if they were forced upon the attention throughout a novel."

"...It allows a man to make use of the vaguest suggestions, a delicate symbolism, a poetic impressionism, fancies too tenuous to hold in the stout texture of the novel."

From the very fact of its brevity, then, the short-story can utilize as setting what would be too slight, too didactic, too incomplete, too beautiful, too ugly, too fantastic, too symbolic, too poetic, or too vague for a novel. A great deal more may be done with lyric effects, with tone color, and impressionism. As the character short-story naturally deals with the crisis in a life, the dramatic quality may be very strong. Several critics have already noted the likeness between the short-story and the one-act play.

It is interesting to compare a volume of short-stories treating a single community with a novel that does the same thing. Often the former has the advantage, for it can present all the phrases of the setting separately and fully yet the reader, as he progresses from story to story, fills in from memory all that the previous stories have supplied of the setting. In the novel some phases of the local life

may have to be omitted, and in presenting others the order will depend upon the needs of the plot. Also, there is a danger that, taken as a whole, the community life does not furnish material for a strong novel plot. Either completeness or dramatic unity has to suffer. Mrs. Freeman's *Pembroke*, a novel, is considered less successful than her short-stories. She seems to be treating her villagers too seriously when she makes a novel of their doings. Of course, the novel has compensating advantages, but the series of related short-stories offers a great opportunity for flexibility and correlation in the treatment of both setting and character.

"The novelette differs from the novel quantitatively, not qualitatively." It is a shorter story, but the same kind of a story. Consequently it is like the novel in illustrating more varied effects of setting and a rather looser unity than the short-story. It admits of more full and lifelike treatment of character, especially of developing character, and of a series of incidents with very different backgrounds. Turgenev's *A Lear of the Steppes* illustrates the richer variety of the novelette. As there is less need of compression, it may depend less upon

suggested setting and the various devices for brevity. Hewlett's Little Novels of Italy have a pleasant, leisurely richness; the backgrounds are more fully elaborated than would be possible in the typical dramatic short-story. Many magazines like novelettes which may be divided into two or three comfortable sections of short-story length, each containing a marked incident.

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