Masterpieces of Short Fiction

Parts I & II

Professor Michael Krasny

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Michael Krasny is Professor of English at San Francisco State University, where since 1970, he has taught courses on the short story, modern and contemporary American literature, ethnic American literature, transatlantic modern drama, and literary theory. He earned his B.A. (cum laude) and M.A. degrees from Ohio University, where he is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin.

Dr. Krasny taught in the Fulbright Institutes for the National Fulbright Foundation, coordinated the Nexa Dissemination Program in Science and Humanities under the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Carnegie Foundation, and has been Visiting Professor at the University of San Francisco and Adjunct Professor at the University of California, San Francisco. In 2003, Dominican University awarded him a Doctor of Humane Letters at its annual convocation, and in 2007, he was honored with an Award of Excellence from the National Association of Humanities Educators.

Dr. Krasny has published a variety of fiction, literary criticism, and political commentary, including as a former regular contributor to *Mother Jones* magazine. He is the coauthor of *Sound Ideas* (McGraw-Hill) and author of *Off Mike: A Memoir of Talk Radio and Literary Life* (Stanford University Press), which was on both the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Marin Independent Journal* bestseller lists.

Dr. Krasny hosts KQED's award-winning *Forum*, a news and public affairs radio program that concentrates on current events, culture, health, business and technology, and arts and entertainment. He is a veteran interviewer for the nationally broadcast *City Arts and Lectures* and worked for many years as host of one of ABC's highest-rated radio programs. He has worked as host of KQED's television programs *This Week in Northern California* and *Civic Space* and as substitute host for National Public Radio's *Talk of the Nation.* Dr. Krasny provided live coverage for National Public Radio following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Krasny has interviewed a wide range of preeminent scholars, politicians, and cultural figures. The list includes Nobel laureates, such as Jimmy Carter, Francis Crick, Al Gore, V. S. Naipaul, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and Desmond Tutu; political figures, such as Patrick Buchanan, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Jesse Jackson, George McGovern, and Barack Obama; scientists and scholars, such as Noam Chomsky, Jacques Cousteau, Jane Goodall, Stephen Jay Gould, and E. O. Wilson; and authors, artists, actors, and musicians, such as Maya Angelou, Margaret Atwood, Ray Bradbury, Don DeLillo, E. L. Doctorow, Allen Ginsberg, Matt Groening, Annie Leibovitz, Maya Lin, Charles Schultz, Francis Ford Coppola, Dennis Hopper, Jon Voight, Joan Baez, Jerry Garcia, Yo-Yo Ma, and Wynton Marsalis.

Dr. Krasny has worked as a corporate facilitator for numerous businesses and has hosted or moderated meetings and conventions for a vast array of organizations, ranging from Businesses for Social Responsibility, the Society of Professional Journalists, and the technology publication *Red Herring* to the American Trial Lawyers Association, Harvard Divinity School, and the California Association of Public Hospitals.

Among his many honors, Dr. Krasny has received the S. Y. Agnon Gold Medal for Intellectual Distinction, the Eugene Block Award for Human Rights Journalism, the Media Alliance Award for Meritorious Achievement, the James Madison Freedom of Information Award from the Society of Professional Journalists, the Inclusiveness in Media Award from the National Conference for Community and Justice, the Award for Animal Rights Coverage from the National Humane Society, four Kudo Awards (including two for Best Talk Host) from American Women in Radio and Television, the John Swett Award for Media Excellence from the California Teachers Association, an award for best talk show host from the San Francisco Publicity Club, an award for professional journalism from the Peninsula Press Club, and the National Public Radio Award from the American Publishers Association. He was named a Fellow by the World Affairs Council and was awarded the Koret Foundation Fellowship. Dr. Krasny has also received two Emmy nominations for his television work.

In 1990, the California State Legislature—and again, in 2003, the California State Senate—passed resolutions honoring Dr. Krasny for public service. In 2004, he was made an honorary member of the Golden Key International Honor Society at San Francisco State University.

Michael Krasny Day was declared in San Francisco in 1990 by Mayor Art Agnos, in 1994 by Mayor Frank Jordan, and in 2003 by Mayor Willie Brown.

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Masterpieces of Short Fiction

Scope:

This course takes you on an exciting ride through an itinerary that samples 23 of the world's greatest short stories. The form of the genre, as well as the various ways in which it has evolved, is highlighted along the way with a display of the essential nuts and bolts of storytelling—plot, character, setting, style, point of view, and theme. A mix of critical approaches will also be brought in to enhance analysis and interpretation and to explore some of the ways we judge and evaluate short fiction. We will key in throughout the lecture series on methods used by critics to discover meaning—the author, the reader, the language, and the world the story mirrors.

The great Roman poet and satirist Horace said that the purpose of literature is to delight and instruct. Each of the 23 stories we will work with do both in many ways. In addition, each story connects us to a broader vision of our lives and the lives of those around us, as well as to a specific cultural and historic context and to what Edgar Allan Poe, perhaps the earliest theorist on the short story, described as the unified aesthetic effect of reading a short story.

We begin with Poe, as well as five other storytellers who anchor us firmly in the narrative art of short fiction of the late 19th century. Poe is not only one of the earliest theorists on the form of the short story, but he is also one of the short story's pioneer practitioners. His mid-19th-century horror masterpiece "The Cask of Amontillado" serves as an introduction to the genre in its dawning form. With its murderous narrator Montresor confessing his carried-out vengeance and the carnivalesque world Poe plunges us into, we have a story strong in sensational effects, a harbinger of the modern psychological short story and a great deal of American and Western popular culture. From Poe, we travel to the more allegorical terrain of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and Gogol's "The Overcoat." Both are hallucinatory tales with strong moral underpinnings. It was Dostoyevsky (or some say Turgenev or Tolstoy) who said that he and all other fiction writers came out from under Gogol's overcoat, and he and Hawthorne are both early seminal Fabulists. From this trio of mid-19th-century storytellers, we move to the end of the century, beginning with one of the earliest examples of a well-made tale built on irony and class division, Guy de Maupassant's classic French set tale "The Necklace." After "The Necklace," we immerse ourselves in the Yalta set love story "The Lady with the Dog." In 1981, Vladimir Nabokov, the author of *Lolita*, described this Chekhov tale as "one of the greatest stories ever written." An important, ongoing question in this lecture series will be how and why we assign the label of greatness to a short story. What are our criteria, or what ought to be our criteria? We conclude this first quarter of our journey with "The Real Thing," one of the greatest stories by another of the world's great storytellers, Henry James, the only storyteller to have gained, and who still retains, the title of master storyteller.

As we move forward from one great storyteller to the next, we will see the connectedness, what critics call the intertextuality, that links great stories and reveals a linear progression in the genre as the years move us forward. Some connections are quite apparent; others, less so. As we travel into the early decades of the 20th century, we see both the more identifiable and the more subtle ties to storytelling of the previous century. We will also see a stunning array of new techniques and innovations through close readings and analysis of stories by James Joyce ("Araby"), Isaac Babel ("My First Goose"), Ernest Hemingway ("The Killers"), Franz Kafka ("A Hunger Artist"), D. H. Lawrence ("The Rocking-Horse Winner"), and Katherine Mansfield ("The Garden Party"). The stories are cumulative in their effect and each provides a portal to those that follow. These six stories bring us into the 20th century and what we will see is the emergence into Modernism, as well as the inauguration of major changes and innovations in the ways in which stories are told—the use of the epiphany in Joyce, the surreal in Kafka and Lawrence, the stylistic revolution heralded in the work of both Babel and Hemingway, and the emergence of Modernist women writers that begins with Mansfield. These six writers all begin to reflect more of the social and cultural upheavals associated with the first part of the 20th century, including the first of the two World Wars.

The last two clusters of great stories fall into the middle half and the later quarter of the 20th century. We look first at one of the mid-century's most provocative and disturbing stories, Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," linked in many ways back to Hawthorne but also tied to the period immediately following World War II and all of the trauma associated with that colossal historic event. We follow Jackson with stories by two of America's greatest women writers, the Georgia native artist of the grotesque Flannery O'Connor ("A Good Man Is Hard to Find") and the New York–born author who introduced readers around the world to woman-centered feminist short fiction, Grace Paley ("An Interest in Life"). The other authors who round out this mid-century section of storytelling are the great Colombian Fabulist and Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez ("A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"), the American Jewish Fabulist Bernard Malamud ("The Jewbird"), and one of America's finest African American writers, James Baldwin ("Sonny's Blues"). In this group of great authors, we see not only the continuing rising influence of women writers but the emergence of writers of ethnicity and color as identity politics begin to take hold in the world of short fiction and publishing and the acceptance of once non-canonical writers begins to open wide. We see as well in these six stories the rising overall effect of secularism—even in an Orthodox Catholic writer such as O'Connor—and the impact of Existential philosophy and all of the international cultural fallout associated with the aftermath of World War II.

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These influences bring us to the last group of stories and the concluding lecture. The final five contemporary short story writers exemplify the greatness of storytelling as the last century ends and the present one begins; all of the works that we will look at here are anchored in the sense of manifold change that typifies the rapid social and cultural transformations of the era. We first focus our attention on a 1960s story all about change by John Updike ("A & P"), which reveals the quest for Existential identity of a boy becoming a man, themes that connect back to Joyce's "Araby" but also become inextricably associated with a decade that would become identified with change. The story "No Name Woman," by Maxine Hong Kingston, is also a post–World War II identity story that presents to us the tension of a girl becoming a woman and straddling the difficult Existential identity between her Chinese background and heritage embedded in this story of her erased aunt and her contemporary American life. The Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, who gives us the Postmodern, metafictional story "Happy Endings," exemplifies innovative and experimental storytelling and the kinds of new and unchartered territory many short fiction writers were claiming. "Happy Endings" also brings us into the world of a contemporary feminist sensibility with a work that has the definite stamp of sexual politics. We conclude with short fiction about racial identity in South Africa, "The Moment Before the Gun Went Off," by South African Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer, a story about the change that resulted from the fall of apartheid, and a short story by one of America's best short fiction writers, Raymond Carver ("Cathedral"), which connects readers to a distinct proletarian or blue-collar, working-class identity with ultimate emphasis on positive individual transformation. Our final lecture provides concluding remarks about the nature of short fiction masterpieces and how they get written, where they get published, and how they have become democratized. We also conclude with a discussion of the future of the short story.

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Lecture One

Excavations—Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado"

Scope: This first lecture focuses on a working definition and historical outline of the short story and looks at the seminal work of Edgar Allan Poe: "The Cask of Amontillado," a 19th-century masterpiece of suspense and revenge. We also lay a foundation for critically assessing and evaluating what constitutes a short fiction masterpiece by bringing in Poe's theory of the short story and Aristotle's theory of tragedy and by focusing on the pedigree of the short story and its antecedents, including the German and American precursors to horror tales like Poe's and Hawthorne's. We consider elements of fiction, the historic background to the short story, and the ways in which Poe mines these aspects of the genre through the story's plot. We also consider Poe's biography, as well as some of the story's psychobiographic dimensions. We conclude by bringing into awareness some of the tale's weaknesses, an overall summation of its genius, and a consideration of the short story's initial path from the Realism of the 19th century to what ultimately will be a changing and more expansive global literary canon.

Outline

I. We begin with a brief look at the history of the short story.

- **A.** Edgar Allan Poe generally defined the short story in opposition to the novel or novella—in other words, a work of fiction short enough to read and absorb in a single sitting.
- **B.** Short fiction has a long pedigree, going back to oral history but also located in myths, biblical stories, and the anecdotes of ancient Rome.
- **C.** Short fiction has its origins also in the fable—folktales with moral exempla built in, like those of Aesop.
- **D.** The genre also derives from Western and European poetic forms of the 14th century, such as Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*.
- **E.** The modern short story bloomed in the 19th century with the market created by journals and magazines—often stories of shock or horror, such as those published by the Grimm brothers.

II. In this course, we will see all of the techniques at work in the genre during both the 19th and 20th centuries, with historical changes occurring cumulatively.

- **A.** We move chronologically from simple yet highly plotted and often poetically wrought tales to forms that are increasingly experimental, with a growing reliance on content related to psychology, ethnicity, sexuality, and identity.
- **B.** We work from early examples of Realism (with elements of allegory, Fabulism, and the Surreal) to Modernist stories that are steeped in Realism or built on Fabulism and parable, folklore and myth, self-reflexivity, autobiography, or historicity.

III. Four major elements are essential to judging and evaluating short fiction, all of which are intimately connected to craft and impact: the text, the author, the reader, and mimetic reality.

- **A.** We will learn how to read and savor short fiction that has been carefully selected from the pantheon of greatness.
- **B.** Selections are based on historical and canonical considerations of critical acclaim and inclusion in a wide range of anthologies, as well as the professor's scholarly and personal choices.
- **C.** The greatness of short fiction is attributable to authorial genius, impact on readers, universality, the emotionally evocative power of the tale, and its originality. Greatness is also inextricably linked to form, content, language (or stylistics), and craft.

IV. Poe's aesthetic theory contributes to his status as a master of short fiction, evidenced by several key elements.

- **A.** The belief in the effect of reading a work in one sitting and the impact of a work neither too long nor too short was fundamental to the success of Poe's stories.
- **B.** Washington Irving's legends and German tales of horror are precursors to Poe and Hawthorne in creating a sense of horror in fiction.
- **C.** Poe's use of hubris and vanity in both characters in "The Cask of Amontillado" is a reflection of Aristotelian theory on the emotions of pity and terror.
- **D.** The essential conflict of revenge, sustained from the story's beginning to its conclusion, contributes to the overall impact of the tale.

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- **E.** The voice of an unreliable and possibly insane, morally deficient, or evil narrator who has committed the perfect crime—and is recounting it a half century later with clearly mixed emotions—adds dramatically to the effect of the story.
- **F.** Suspense is sustained through the use of a plot driven by a single incident with a decisive conclusion.
- **G.** The story is propelled by character—Montresor's—which creates ambiguities for the reader, whom he may even call "my friend."
- **H.** The relationship of the tale to the reader is complex. The reader might best be cast in the role of Fortunato, dressed as a fool, trying to guess the plot that is unfolding, and experiencing mounting irrational fear with the rising action of the story.
- **I.** The psychological nature of the tale—its architecture of the mind and intimations of what lies below the surface of our actions—yields strong universal themes.

V. The origins of the tale supposedly lie in an anecdote Poe heard while serving in the army. The story also resonates with Poe's feelings of class difference and class envy, resulting in part from the impoverished and unhappy life he lived, as well as from the peculiarities of his upbringing.

VI. Despite its singular effect and its ascent to a climactic impact, "The Cask of Amontillado" has weaknesses.
- **A.** The story is histrionic and has a style that could be described as puerile.
- **B.** Henry James referred to Poe's work as "primitive," and T. S. Eliot called Poe "gifted" but "before puberty."
- **C.** Poe's characters are not flat, but they are psychologically abstract.
- **D.** There is a sense of gimmickry or manipulation used by Poe that some deem non-literary.

VII. The story remains a masterpiece because of its totality and its seminal role in storytelling.
- **A.** Elements that may appear somewhat crude in Poe's work become more stylized and highly developed as the genre of short fiction evolves.
- **B.** The voice in the story is masterfully sustained and compels us to stay right up to the end, embodying what Julio Cortázar called "the successful insistent race against the clock."
- **C.** Poe provided much of the essential bricks and mortar for what we have come to see as the modern short story. His heirs include such popular writers as H. P. Lovecraft, Stephen King, and Shirley Jackson.

Suggested Readings:

Aristotle, *Poetics.*

Meyers, *Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Legacy.*

Peeples, *The Afterlife of Edgar Allan Poe*.

Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado."

———, "The Fall of the House of Usher."

———, "The Impact of the Single Effect in a Prose Tale."

———, "The Tell-Tale Heart."

Reynolds, "The Art of Transformation in Poe's 'The Cask of Amontillado,'" in Silverman, *New Essays on Poe's Major Tales.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How mad is Montresor? Would you judge him guilty by reason of insanity despite the careful, premeditative method he uses to murder Fortunato?
2. The story was especially shocking, even mortifying, in its day. Would it be considered so by today's standards? To what degree were you shocked by it?
3. Does this story deserve a masterpiece mantle despite whatever deficiencies it may have?

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Lecture Two

Hawthorne's "Goodman Brown" and Lost Faith

Scope: This lecture anchors us in allegory and its use in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown." The lecture connects Hawthorne to his Calvinist and witch-burning heritage, which we discuss, along with the essential plot of the story. We explore the significance of Calvinist belief, witchcraft, the wilderness, and the role of the Native American population in Puritan society. We then move into interpretation and meaning as we consider the connection between evil and human nature, the richness of the story's ambiguity, and some of the psychological dimensions of the tale. Finally, we examine a combination of other central themes: the story's sustained mood and tone, its language, its use of different means of expression, and its effect on readers.

Outline

I. Often regarded as a moral allegory—in which abstract meaning emerges through fictional characters serving as symbols for higher moral truths—"Young Goodman Brown" is a particularly successful example of Hawthorne at work in territory for which he is famous.

- **A.** This allegory is of an archetypal journey, an initiation story of an everyman character moving from innocence to experience, from faith to loss of faith.
- **B.** The name Goodman was common but in this story is also indicative of a good man who encounters evil.

II. Hawthorne was born in the infamous Salem, Massachusetts, and descended from ancestors who participated in the Salem witch trials and believed in a stern form of Puritanism tied to the teachings of John Calvin.

- **A.** Calvinist heritage and thought permeate this tale, as does Hawthorne's awareness of his own lineage.
- **B.** Calvinism, the religion of the Puritans, is a belief in the doctrine of original sin tied to predestination.
- **C.** The Puritans' belief in witches is seen in the allusion to Goody Cloyse's broomstick being lost or stolen, perhaps by "an unhanged witch," and talk of magic potions of cinquefoil, wolf's bane, and "the fine wheat and fat of a new-born babe."

III. The Puritans feared and persecuted Native Americans, whom they viewed as godless, wild pagans residing in the woods—the central allegorical setting for paganism.

- **A.** Preindustrial America often associated forests with lawlessness and with Native Americans, who were seen as part of that lawlessness.
- **B.** In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the act of sexual union between Hester Prynne and Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale likely occurs in the forest. Later on in the novel, Hester removes her scarlet letter in the forest—in part because that setting was perceived as free and lawless and existing under a kind of natural rule.
- **C.** In "Young Goodman Brown," we find talk of powwows in the forest and the fact that no church exists there.

IV. "Young Goodman Brown" can be seen as another horror story but with a New England setting, as opposed to Poe's southern-nurtured Gothicism.

- **A.** The depravity of human nature is implicit in the story.
- **B.** A sense of horror is inherent in seeing people beneath their masks and everyday appearances, including those of piety and religiosity.
- **C.** Perhaps the most profound horror is in Goodman Brown himself—his loss of faith and the realization of the demonic force within him.
- **D.** What happens to Brown is what Shakespeare in *Hamlet* called the "pale cast of thought," a descent into darkness that results from intellect.

V. The ambiguity in "Young Goodman Brown" contributes to the story's richness, and one wonders if Hawthorne's attitude toward the Puritans is one of indictment or affirmation.

- **A.** It is unclear whether Brown sees members of the church in the forest or is bedazzled by gleams of light flashing.
- **B.** It is unclear (though "some affirm") whether the lady of the Governor is present in the forest scene.
- **C.** It is also unclear whether Brown's experience was a dream or, indeed, why he needed to set out on his winter solstice journey in the first place.
- **D.** The dreamlike quality of the story is a precursor to the Surreal and brings the reader's unconscious into play.
- **E.** The story creates a psychological division between the id-like woods and the world of Salem, which represents the outer, conscious self.

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VI. Other elements also make "Young Goodman Brown" a masterpiece.

- **A.** A central theme in this work is what Hawthorne saw as the unpardonable sin of divorcing the intellect from the heart, leaving his characters lacking in love and reverence for the human soul, as we saw in Roger Chillingsworth in *The Scarlet Letter* and as we ultimately see in Goodman Brown.
- **B.** The opening paragraph sets both mood and tone, and both are masterfully sustained.
- **C.** The language of the story is rich yet represents Puritan vernacular speech.
- **D.** Elements of Realism, Surrealism (tied to the evocation of the unconscious), and Fabulism (fable-like in its effect) are combined within the allegorical frame of the story; these elements move us from outside the forest, to inside, then outside again.
- **E.** The effect on readers is mesmerizing as they are drawn into a world of fear, horror, loss of faith, the palpable evil of humanity, and the evil communion of the human race.
- **F.** With Brown left hopeless and gloomy, the story ultimately compels us to reckon with larger questions of how we choose to live our lives.

Suggested Readings:

Freud, *Civilizations and Its Discontents.*

Hawthorne, "The Birthmark."

———, *The Blithedale Romance*.

———, "The Minister's Black Veil."

———, *The Scarlet Letter.*

———, "Young Goodman Brown."

Melville, "Benito Cereno."

———, "Billy Budd."

———, "Blackness in Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown."

Questions to Consider:

1. Is Hawthorne representing Puritan belief or criticizing it?
2. Why does Brown set out on his journey? Can we guess or presuppose his reasons or motives?
3. What is Hawthorne rendering in the story about the nature of faith and the human experience?

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Lecture Three
Under Gogol's "Overcoat"

Scope: We begin this lecture by looking at the framework of "The Overcoat" and what it yields to even the casual reader. Gogol is of singular importance in that he introduces into fiction a low man—a powerless figure of no apparent consequence. Despite the story's satiric vein, Gogol's Akaky is a man with whom we feel a human connection. We briefly discuss Gogol's own possible biographic link to his character and the ways in which Akaky reaches mythic dimensions. We then focus on Gogol's life, as well as the czarist Russian milieu of his time. We use the approach of contemporary literary critic Terry Eagleton to look at Gogol's story via the concept of the "superstructure." We then explore some of the story's universal and lasting motifs of isolation, suffering, and compassion and conclude with an appraisal of Gogol's more conspicuous gifts demonstrating his mastery of craft: use of setting, his nuanced character portrayals, and his extraordinary command of detail.

Outline

I. Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" is another 19th-century allegorical tale of horror, but this time based on czarist Russia's bureaucracy, corruption, and rigid hierarchy.

- **A.** The story is framed by the real and the supernatural. Gogol is considered the father of Russian Realism: He employs mimesis and verisimilitude in the service of creating a story that reflects real life.
- **B.** The story has comedic elements, as well as Surreal and Fabulist dimensions that contribute to its scathing satire of Russian bureaucracy and the byzantine hierarchies of power and position.
- **C.** "We all came out from under Gogol's 'Overcoat,'" a statement attributed variously to Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky, reveals the impact this story had on Russian writers. But it also had a great impact on Western storytelling in general and continues to hold sway as one of short fiction's masterpieces.

II. Akaky Akakievich, whose name means "dung on the shoe," is a common man, similar to Hawthorne's Goodman Brown. However, as author Frank O'Connor has noted, Akaky is perhaps "the first Little Man" in fiction: a Russian *schlemiel*, the kind of archetypical character upon whom the soup is accidentally spilled.

- **A.** The story resonates with the humanity of Akaky, to whom a fellow worker says, "I am your brother," and for whom the reader, experiencing the tedious and joyless life of the clerk and the nightmarish theft of his overcoat, cannot help but feel pathos.
- **B.** Gogol, who was ridiculed as a child and disparagingly called "the mysterious dwarf," projects something of himself onto Akaky by making his character a writer (though merely a copier, like Melville's Bartleby).
- **C.** Gogol creates a mythic little man, virtually unnoticeable throughout his life—a man whose lot in life is illustrated comedically by the sour visage he exhibits at his christening.

III. We can perhaps best understand "The Overcoat" by looking at it from the perspective of the Neo-Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton.

- **A.** For Eagleton, a character such as Akaky signifies a victim of what he called the "superstructure." The superstructure comprises the institutions that make up the social, economic, and cultural fabric of a time and place.
- **B.** The idea of the superstructure helps us understand "The Overcoat" by providing a perspective from outside the text, bringing in the institutions and cultural *zeitgeist* of the historical period during which Gogol wrote his masterpiece.

IV. We find universal and lasting motifs in "The Overcoat."

- **A.** Akaky is isolated, but that isolation shifts briefly when he enters the world and finds an identity with his new coat.
- **B.** Akaky's self expands briefly to explore the richness and color of objects, social life, and even eroticism, as we see when Akaky has a couple of drinks and entertains the impulse to run after a lady.
- **C.** Akaky transitions, in his new sartorial self, from the *schlemiel* to a swift experience of happiness and triumph.
- **D.** Ultimately, "The Overcoat" is a story about human suffering and sacrifice for a goal that is tenuous at best and held all too briefly.
- **E.** The story is psychologically prescient, probing—as Hawthorne did in "Young Goodman Brown"—the kinds of behaviors that exist under the surface of civilized and cultured politeness.

V. Gogol's genius—his mastery of craft—deserves special emphasis.

- **A.** The setting of the story is a crucial element; with great immediacy, the reader experiences the deprivation and cold of Saint Petersburg.

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B. Characterization and sketches of individual characters are both extraordinarily detailed.
   1. The narrator is a self-conscious, fastidious, and obedient character in his own right. He feels obligated to follow the rules of storytelling, whether eschewing the indecency of mentioning undergarments or complying with the supposed dictate that characters in novels must be completely described.
   2. The one-eyed, pockmarked tailor, Petrovich (whose surname indicates that he is no longer a serf), is a man whose self-image is based on the feeling that he is a special tailor, just as the person of consequence furbishes his own self-image. These portraits richly reveal to us the nature of characters who reflect the absurdity of the hierarchical social structure in which they live and work.

C. Details in the story are remarkable and fantastic. The tailor's misshapen nail and the portrait of the general on the snuff box are good examples of Gogol's sure touch with detail.

D. Gogol alludes to the "fantastic ending" of "this perfectly true story," which Vladimir Nabokov called a tale for the "creative reader." "The Overcoat" is also a story of social protest for the Bolsheviks, as well as a comedic tale of horror and the supernatural that paradoxically creates a feeling for humanity at the same time that it spells out in detail the futility of human existence.

Suggested Readings:

Eagleton, *Base and Superstructure.*

Forster, *Aspects of the Novel.*

Gogol, "The Nose."

———, "The Overcoat."

Nabokov, "Gogol's Genius in 'The Overcoat.'"

Questions to Consider:

1. How much pathos do we feel for Akaky as opposed to seeing him as a ridiculous or cartoon character?
2. How can we best characterize the narrator's view toward his fellow Russians? Toward Germans?
3. Do the supernatural appearances at the end of this story diminish its overall effectiveness or make it more powerful?

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Lecture Four

Maupassant's "The Necklace"—Real and Paste

Scope: Guy de Maupassant, is one of France's most well known writers and is often credited as one of the fathers of the short story. In this lecture, we examine the effectiveness of plot and irony in his story "The Necklace" and discuss Maupassant's role as a 19th-century Realist writer influenced by the birth of Naturalism. As we will see, the necklace is a representation of the real that is not real. We touch on the concept of the intentional fallacy in literature, then move to the story's meaning and its connections to morality, materialism, and the ephemeral experience of a joyous, triumphant moment that is ultimately transformed into a life of loss and hardship. An analysis of the two chief characters and their links to meaning in the story follows along with our interpretation of the story as a social commentary and a revelation of fate's capriciousness. The lecture concludes with a focus on the story's dramatic denouement, the Sunday meeting with Mathilde and the still beautiful and youthful-looking Mme. Forestier.

Outline

I. "The Necklace" is essentially a Cinderella story—one of uniquely palpable poignancy and darkness—that is woven carefully with realism and abides by the rule that every detail should contribute to the fabric of the tale.

- **A.** The story concerns a woman of great charm and physical attractiveness named Mathilde Loisel, who with no dowry and no social position to offer a prospective husband, marries a "little clerk"; in the ensuing years, she suffers from a kind of poverty compared to the dreams that possess her.
- **B.** A discernible link to Gogol's protagonist in "The Overcoat" can be seen in Maupassant's characters, clerk Loisel and his wife, Mathilde, who are lower class and as saddled with the necessity of self-sacrifice for the cost of a necklace as Akaky is for the overcoat.
- **C.** The story is built on plot and irony—much of the reason for its endurance.
- **D.** Maupassant brings the craft of 19th-century Realism and verisimilitude into fruition, along with what Joseph Conrad called "the importance of the factual."
- **E.** Before the birth of Naturalism with the work of Darwin and others, we find a kind of social Darwinism enveloped by Realism in Maupassant, who wanted to move us by reproducing "the spectacle of life."
- **F.** "The Necklace" is a remarkably popular story, though viewed by some as more of an anecdote and one of the least artistic of the short fiction masterpieces we will study in this course.
- **G.** To create the appearance of reality, Maupassant believed in the necessity of creating a complete illusion of reality, symbolized in the story by the necklace.
- **H.** Maupassant spoke of his intent to show that "life is unpredictable, disparate and disconnected—full of inexplicable, illogical catastrophes." In literature, however, we must always account for the intentional fallacy, the idea that even the author can't truly know what his or her intentions might have been.

II. Meaning in the story is tied to morality, just as Mathilde's dreams are tied to vanity and materialism.

- **A.** Mathilde's triumphant night at the ball, a kind of Cinderella fairy tale, represents a threat to class divisions.
- **B.** The story is a *tranche de vie* ("slice of life") but also a fable of a 10-year plight in which an ephemeral moment of joy and triumph becomes suffering and privation because the illusory is taken to be the real.
- **C.** Mathilde's transformation into an old-looking, impoverished woman carries with it a strong allegorical resonance. She loses her beauty while Mme. Forestier remains young and attractive.
- **D.** The characters Mathilde and Loisel reveal meaning in the story.
  - **1.** Mathilde doesn't want to relinquish the jewels of her girlhood convent friend Mme. Forestier at the first selection and is "lost in ecstasy" at the sight of the necklace; she kisses her friend "passionately" before "fleeing with the treasure."
  - **2.** Mathilde envies her friend but has changed irrevocably by the time she returns the substitute necklace to Mme. Forestier, who acts "chilly" when she receives the replacement.
  - **3.** Loisel strikes us as a simple, good man (like Hawthorne's Goodman Brown) whose intentions lead him on a trajectory from hope and enthusiasm to anguish and misery.

III. The story's dramatic denouement is the final meeting of Mathilde and Mme. Forestier in the Champs-Elysees.

- **A.** Mathilde uses Mme. Forestier's first name and says that her hard days and wretchedness are "because of you"; in some ways, she seems to be justifying her life over the past 10 years.

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B. The ultimate irony of the necklace having been “paste” and “worth at most 500 francs” reveals also that the reader has been in the hands of a masterful storyteller all along—one equally accomplished in the use of Realism, detail, and dramatic revelation.

Suggested Readings:

Chopin, “How I Stumbled upon Maupassant.”

Flaubert, *Madame Bovary.*

———, “A Simple Heart.”

James, “From Guy de Maupassant.”

Maupassant, “The Necklace,” translated by Marjorie Laurie.

———, *Stories.*

———, “The Writer’s Goal.”

Questions to Consider:

1. The story has been criticized as not being nearly as artful as other short fiction masterpieces. Does it deserve the mantle of masterpiece?
2. Is Maupassant rendering a final judgment on class divisions and their rigidity?
3. Is it appropriate to characterize Mathilde’s and her husband’s sacrifices on behalf of paying off the cost of the necklace as heroic?

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Lecture Five

Chekhov, Love, and "The Lady with the Dog"

Scope: Anton Chekhov, one of our greatest and most humane writers, was of serf lineage and wrote stories that were grounded in 19th-century Russia. His story "The Lady with the Dog" is unconventional in this sense, dealing with an extramarital affair at a time when the Russian Orthodox Church held sway over the morality and decisions of ordinary people. In this lecture, we discuss Chekhov's unique contribution to the genre of the short story, his wide influence on an assortment of other important fiction writers, the nature of his reading audience, and his ability to write fiction that avoided moralizing. We also focus on the changing setting and four-movement structure of the story, as well as on the characters and their relationships to one another. The lecture then explores Chekhov's remarkable deftness in the use of realistic details and concludes with a discussion of the story's meaning and modes of interpretation.

Outline

I. Grounded in the culture of 19th-century Russia and himself of serf lineage, Anton Chekhov had a deep and abiding empathy for people shackled by adversity.

- **A.** Chekhov was one of our greatest and most humane storytellers, as well as a dramatist and a physician.
- **B.** He produced hundreds of short stories and was a major influence on a score of fiction writers.

II. "The Lady with the Dog" was written toward the end of Chekhov's life and is considered one of his masterpieces.

- **A.** It is an unorthodox tale defined best by Vladimir Nabokov, who said, "All the traditional rules of storytelling have been broken in this wonderful story."
- **B.** The story has no problem or conventional climax; nevertheless, Nabokov called it "one of the greatest stories ever written."

III. The story begins with the characters Gurov and Anna meeting in Yalta by the Black Sea—a resort associated with immorality and adventure, zipless sexual encounters that, we discover, are perhaps greatly exaggerated.

- **A.** After the love affair begins, Chekhov moves us to Moscow, where we see Gurov's family life along with the big-city whirl of the bank and the club.
- **B.** In contrast, the provincial town by the Volga where Anna and her husband live is pictured as gray and drab. Ironically, a play called *The Geisha* is being performed at the local theater.
- **C.** The story is divided into four movements—the first two in Yalta; the third in Moscow and the small town where Anna and her husband, von Dideritz, live; and the fourth encompassing Anna's visits to Moscow.

IV. Character—and, more important, the roundness of character—is vital to consider in Chekhov's work.

- **A.** Gurov's wife is seen by us through his eyes: intellectual and dignified on the outside but, from his point of view, unintelligent, narrow, and inelegant. This division between selves is an important theme in the story as a whole, especially with respect to Gurov.
- **B.** We see Gurov through a sympathetic lens supplied to us by Chekhov's point of view. Gurov is afraid of his wife and regards women as "a lower race"—a misogynist—yet he is more at ease with women and, indeed, cannot live without them.
- **C.** Anna is childlike, identifiable with Gurov's young and naïve school-age daughter. She is pious and unhappy and feels sinful for her transgressive behavior but also wants desperately to live and to experience life. Like Gurov, she is trapped by marriage and the dicta of the Russian Orthodox Church.
- **D.** Von Dideritz is presented by Anna as a flunky, and when we see him at the theater, he bows repeatedly as if he is one. He has vague German associations, no great calling card to many Russians, and we can understand why Anna is unhappy.

V. The realistic details in the story reveal to us Chekhov's genius.

- **A.** The initial link made by Gurov with the dog and the humorous dialogue about Grenada that follows are splendid examples of realistic touches.
- **B.** In the first section, Anna loses her lorgnette; we later see her with one in hand at the provincial theater, used by Chekhov as a sign of her ordinariness.
- **C.** Again, we note the understated power of the details in the scene in which Gurov eats a slice of watermelon while Anna wallows in her feelings of sinfulness after the two have become lovers.

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D. Gurov is moved to reveal his feelings for Anna to a fellow club member but receives a response about the sturgeon being “off”; this scene is a turning point for him and a catalyst to go see Anna. It also reminds the reader of the earlier image of fish scales with which Gurov identifies women’s underthings when love affairs go south.

E. When Gurov goes to see Anna, we see the drabness of her life in the gray carpet made of military cloth, the inkstand gray with dust in the hotel, and the dark-gray fence around Anna’s house.

VI. “The Lady with the Dog” is not just a story of infidelity.

A. It is a story of love, the vagaries of marriage and caged destiny, and the ways in which love can change ordinary people, like Gurov and Anna.

B. It is also a story of passion and morality—Chekhov was lambasted by the critics of his day for not being moral enough, though he stated clearly in one of his letters that the writer’s obligation is to portray through actions, not through depiction of state of mind.

C. It is a story about beauty—best seen in the contemplative scene in Oreanda, a meditation by a slightly more obtrusive Chekhov on the beauty of nature and life and the eternal nature and possibility of humanity and human dignity.

D. It is a story about secret lives and Gurov’s realization that another life lurks beneath the one in which we live—the mundane and quotidian versus a hidden or real life that can be authentic and concealed.

E. “The Lady with the Dog” is a tragic but ennobling story that profoundly captures, without a conclusive ending, empathy for lives bounded and roads not taken.

Suggested Readings:

Chekhov, *Four Plays*.

———, “The Lady with the Dog,” translated by Constance Garnett.

Malcolm, *Reading Chekhov: A Critical Journey*.

Nabokov, “A Reading of Chekhov’s ‘The Lady with the Dog,’” from *Lectures on Russian Literature*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is Chekhov being too easy on adultery by not being judgmental about it or causing it to result in harsher consequences?
2. How central is Gurov’s age or the age of his daughter to his falling in love with Anna?
3. Are Chekhov’s omniscient remarks and observations about life and love a form of moralizing?

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Lecture Six

James in the Art Studio—"The Real Thing"

Scope: Henry James was a master storyteller and a writer at the crest of Realism. In this lecture, we give proper respect to the important role James played in literature and the creation of psychological realism and to his thoughts about the form of fiction, as seen in the idea of "the figure in the carpet." From there, we move to the story "The Real Thing" and its origins in James's respect for and desire to emulate Maupassant. The lecture then focuses on how the story works as a moral parable on the creation of art, on reality and appearance, and on amateurism and professionalism. We continue with an elucidation of the moral questions raised in the story and the roles of the characters in terms of the social class divide. We also discuss the perspective brought in by the narrator's painter friend, Jack Hawley, which casts the story's ultimate meaning into a kind of ambiguity. The lecture concludes with a discussion of the values and power of human transformation and memory that appear to be implicit in the story, with the caveat that there may yet be another reality underneath that appearance.

Outline

I. Henry James has earned the title of master because of his fictional work and his contributions to literary theory and criticism.

- **A.** James's brother William was a famous psychologist and the father of American pragmatism. An old saw has it that William was the psychologist who wrote like a novelist and Henry the novelist who wrote like a psychologist.
- **B.** Many of James's tales are deeply psychological—*The Turn of the Screw*, for example—and tread into nuances of human behavior. James also brings us to the crest of 19th-century Realism.
- **C.** James advanced the idea of "the figure in the carpet," by which he meant that all the details of a story should be tied in with the greater themes; every fiber of the carpet in a story must contribute to its overall loom, as opposed to a wider canvas.
- **D.** "The Real Thing" came from a story told to James by George du Maurier, which became the premise (*donnée*) for a work of short fiction by James.
- **E.** James had developed a friendship with Guy de Maupassant and wanted to write a story with a lesson, one as "admirably compact and celebrated as Maupassant."

II. The story is a parable on the nature of the creation of art.

- **A.** The Monarchs are the real thing, but art, including the literary art of creating short fiction, is, by its nature, representational. It requires alchemy or plasticity, as well as the artistic imagination, working together with the real.
- **B.** The classic literary theme of the division and interaction between appearance and reality infuses its meaning into the story. We discover that the artist requires the vehicle of imagination to transform reality into appearance, to hold the mirror up to nature in order to make something real from raw material that is not real.
- **C.** The imagination can transfigure a cockney Eliza Doolittle type, like Miss Churm, into a Russian princess or a poor Italian peasant and street peddler, like Oronte, into a gentleman.
- **D.** Subjects like the Monarchs (the name is transparently significant of how they appear) look majestic but cannot be rendered with any imaginative life beyond a kind of photographic replication. Realism needs the vitality of the imagination.

III. The story is also a representation of the social divide between classes, with the embedded irony of the Monarchs being near destitution and having to cede their rank to learn a different reality in the artist's studio. Jack Hawley becomes the "fresh eye" who sees and corroborates the chasm of the social divide and its connection to the failure of art to be ignited with real life.

- **A.** When Mrs. Monarch cries, it is because she recognizes the gap between their appearance as a couple of social class versus their need and willingness to do nearly anything to survive.
- **B.** The class divisions appear obvious, but are they? Miss Churm and Oronte have a talent for imitation and the Monarchs are amateurs. They are types, but types, we discover, are not the real thing.
- **C.** Yet the Monarchs are also noble and dignified people. They are real people, as well as representations of a certain social class of gentlefolk, a gentleman and his lady. Their marriage is "a real marriage." They are types, but they are also individuals.
- **D.** Jack Hawley's enmity against the class system and his image of the Monarchs as types lead him to believe that they don't belong in the artist's studio. But the reality is that they do, because they create for the artist another reality grounded in memory.

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IV. Values emerge from the story's lesson about appearance and reality that ultimately elevate the story to an even higher plane.

A. A friendship emerges between the narrator and the Monarchs, and the narrator gains a deeper and more compassionate understanding of the real and the appearance of the real that will enable him to grow as an artist.

B. There is personal growth and transformation in the story, as well—especially in what the narrator learns from the Monarchs. He represents the couple as colossal in his paintings, only to discover the essential humanity in both of them that makes him "content to have paid the price for the memory."

C. The story rises above many of its intricate and well-woven themes to give us a moving sense of all that can occur as a result of human contact and the value of the real memories created in that contact.

Suggested Readings:

Edel, *Henry James.*

James, *The Beast in the Jungle*.

———, *Daisy Miller*.

———, "The Genesis of the Real Thing."

———, *The Jolly Corner*.

———, "The Real Thing."

———, *The Turn of the Screw*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How reliable is the narrator in this story? Can we believe completely in his contentment with memory and his growth as an artist or are there reasons that cast doubt?
2. How does the opening paragraph of the story reveal to us many of its essential paradoxes with respect to understanding character?
3. Did James succeed in providing us a "magnificent lesson" in this story?

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Lecture Seven

Epiphany and the Modern in Joyce's "Araby"

Scope: James Joyce, one of the 20th century's most respected writers, is most well known for his inventive use of language, his incorporation of archetype and myth in this work, and his concept of the epiphany, which plays a central role in his story "Araby." Also central to the story are the Catholic Church and some of the major concerns of Modernism. This lecture explicates the archetypal journey of the young protagonist in "Araby" and the initiation into an inner world of profound darkness for both the boy and the reader. We also discuss the important role of symbolism in the story and Joyce's influence on other writers in this arena. The lecture concludes with an assessment of why the story continues to have enduring power.

Outline

I. "Araby" is from a collection of stories by James Joyce called *Dubliners*, first published in 1914. The collection as a whole gives us a kaleidoscopic picture of constricted, repressed, and impoverished lives.

- **A.** North Richmond Street, where "Araby" begins, is a dilapidated though decent neighborhood. From the outset, the street is described as "blind," and early in the story, we get a picture of children playing in shadows.
- **B.** "Araby" is a coming-of-age story, a story of adolescence and a journey of discovery.
- **C.** It is the quest of a young boy, smitten by what he believes to be love, who commits himself to an excursion to an exotic-sounding destination, the bazaar called Araby, only ultimately to be disillusioned.
- **D.** The story is an awakening but also a loss of romantic idealism, similar to the movement in literature of the time away from Romanticism to a harsher Realism and Modernism.

II. "Araby" is built, like all the stories in *Dubliners*, around the notion of an epiphany—a Joycean term that refers to an ephemeral moment of spiritual-like revelation. Such a moment occurs suddenly and may manifest itself in vulgar (common) speech, an everyday gesture, or a memorable expression of the mind. We as readers experience the protagonist's epiphany through his enlightenment at the story's conclusion.

III. Irish Catholicism is at the heart of the story and infuses its meaning. We note, for example, the juxtaposition of fantasy and the romance of the imagination with the religious world of Irish Catholic practice and the tawdry surroundings in which the boy lives.

- **A.** The Christian Brothers' School, we are told, "set the boys free," suggesting early on the metaphor of institutional imprisonment for their lives.
- **B.** A former tenant of the family, a priest, left behind in his room the romantic works of Sir Walter Scott and the yellow-leafed *Memoirs of Vidocq*, both of which offer an escape from the isolated and musty life associated with another work left behind: *The Devout Communicant*.
- **C.** Nothing frivolous, worldly, lustful, or romantic can emerge from the nearly ubiquitous power of the Church or the drabness of the Dublin world.
  1. The countenance of the boy's teacher turns to sternness at the perception of his becoming idle and, thereby, inviting the mind to become the devil's playground.
  2. The boy's aunt wants to make sure Araby is not "some Freemason affair."
  3. Mrs. Mercer, we are told, collects stamps for some pious purpose.

IV. The story immerses us in Modernism.

- **A.** The Modernist movement was steeped in criticism of the church and other powerful institutions and the portrayal of what T. S. Eliot and others would later show as urban decay tied to the industrialism of the age.
- **B.** The Modernist view was also tied to disillusionment with Romanticism and to themes of waste and spiritual desolation—themes that run strong in Joyce's story.
- **C.** The point of view in the story is of a man looking back on his moment of disillusion. The point of view in Modernism is often complex, somehow simultaneously in the present and the past.
- **D.** The story is replete with symbolism, which would become one of the hallmarks of the Modernist movement in literature, connecting back to Flaubert and Baudelaire. Moreover, Modernist symbolism has multivalent associations and meanings.

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V. Creeping past “ruinous houses” and “a twinkling river,” the boy travels on his romantic errand in a third-class carriage of a deserted train.

- **A.** The bazaar called Araby turns out to be an ordinary shop of dim lights and shop girls—from no father east than England—who are really concerned only with money.
- **B.** The epiphany occurs at the end of the story, when the boy is crushed by anguish and anger and derided by vanity—feelings tied directly to the Catholic teachings he has neglected in his pursuit of love.
- **C.** The ambiguity in the story’s meaning can be seen in the attitude of the adult narrator describing his epiphanic moment as a boy surrounded by darkness.
  - **1.** This perspective may be reminiscent of Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus in *Stephen Hero* or *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, a character who has grown from his youthful feelings of vanity and derision.
  - **2.** At the same time, the narrator may still see himself as a boy having been appropriately derided by vanity for his foolish romanticism.

VI. It is no accident that “Araby” is so often read, taught, and anthologized.

- **A.** The epiphany has a profound impact on the reader—the story takes us from the romantic idealization of youth, a kind of Blakean innocence, to the crushing sense of the real and of experience. We move through an initiation into the darkness of modernity.
- **B.** The point of view and the voice are both remarkably intricate and evocative.
- **C.** The language is richly poetic and captures the distinct voice and inner life of the unnamed boy protagonist.

Suggested Readings:

Ellmann, *James Joyce*.

Joyce, “Araby.”

———, *Dubliners.*

———, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.*

———, *Stephen Hero.*

———, *Ulysses.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How do we separate the feelings that the boy in “Araby” experiences from those of the man who is telling us the story?
2. Can this story be separated from its Irish setting or Catholic religious frame? Should it be?
3. Is the epiphany at the conclusion of “Araby” more for the boy or the reader? Or both?

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Lecture Eight

Babel's "My First Goose"—Violent Concision

Scope: This lecture begins with an overview of the vision, style, and worldview of Isaac Babel's "My First Goose." We then move on to Babel's influences and the story's autobiographical roots—the author's military experiences, his Jewishness, and his association with the Cossacks. We briefly discuss Maupassant's influence on Babel and analyze Babel's style and the major action that occurs in the story: the killing of the goose by the narrator. The lecture probes the moral ambiguity in a story, which like the work of Chekhov, is notable for its harsh Realism and lack of moralizing. We also discuss Babel's connections to his narrator, Liutov, and the larger collection of stories, *Red Cavalry*, of which "My First Goose" is a part. We note the author's ambivalence toward the experience of war and his attraction and repulsion to the Cossacks and their violence. The lecture concludes with a broader discussion of the story's power and the literary debt owed to Babel by other Russian writers.

Outline

I. "My First Goose" is a compressed tale of violence and initiation, both pervasive themes in 20th-century short fiction.

- **A.** The story offers an unrelenting and unapologetic vision of brutality without moralizing or editorializing—a type of Realism reminiscent of Chekhov.
- **B.** Babel's concise style and violent worldview anticipate Hemingway, whose first major collection of stories, *In Our Time*, was also published in 1925.

II. Babel's influences and experiences had a profound effect on his development as a writer.

- **A.** Maxim Gorky, Babel's mentor, told him to experience life, which he did via the brutality and violence of war.
- **B.** Babel fought in World War I on the Russian front and was in both the czar's army and the Soviet cavalry.
- **C.** Although Babel was a Jew, he nevertheless rode with the notoriously anti-Semitic Cossacks, infamous among Jews for their involvement in pogroms. Babel witnessed a pogrom as a boy, an experience he wrote about in a short work called "The Story of My Dovecote."
- **D.** Like the narrator of "My First Goose," who will join in supping with the Cossacks, Babel was educated—an intellectual and bookish man who wore spectacles and felt like an outsider among military men.
- **E.** Babel emulated Maupassant's firmly etched tales and, like Henry James, sought to achieve an unadorned and powerful Realism in a style both terse and lyrical—a style characterized by the educator and biographer Ann Charters as "sensual and grotesque."

III. The story presents an essential conflict or question: Can an effete intellectual with "spectacles on [his] nose" get on with or be accepted by a rough group of peasant Cossacks?

- **A.** The quartermaster, who carries the "little trunk" that one of the younger Cossacks throws over the gate, gives the narrator (Liutov) the misogynistic key to approbation and acceptance by the Cossacks: "… ruin a lady, yes, the most cleanest lady."
- **B.** After Liutov is humiliated and shamed by the contemptuous, young, flaxen-haired Cossack, he saves face and wins approval by brutally killing the landlady's goose and ordering her to cook it for him.
- **C.** The narrator temporarily overcomes his feelings of loneliness, but his killing of the "inoffensively preening" goose is symbolically identified with rape and crucifixion.
- **D.** At dinner, the narrator reads Lenin's speech from *Pravda* aloud to the Cossacks. He sees within it what the platoon leader Surovkov doesn't see—the secret motive behind the speech, which can be likened to the narrator's secret motive to gain acceptance by killing the goose.

IV. Without moralizing, Babel succeeds in communicating an unrelenting, bleak vision, albeit an ambiguous one in terms of attraction and repulsion toward violence and war.

- **A.** The story reveals a palpable sexuality connected to war and violence.
- **B.** Babel, in contrast to Gogol, portrays the Cossacks as barbaric rather than noble—though also attractive and admirable in their strength as warriors.

V. Essential elements of the story contribute to its great power.

- **A.** Though much is lost in translation, the language is supple, rhythmic, remarkably precise, evocative, and unvarnished.

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B. There is immense clarity in the story, despite its astonishing brevity, which creates a powerful, unified emotional impact similar to the epiphany in Joyce's "Araby."

C. The characterization of the narrator and the military men is strong and pungent, as is that of the landlady, with her simple repetition of the words "Comrade, this makes me want to hang myself"—deft, incisive, and trenchant.

VI. Babel had an immense influence on other Russian writers, including the Russian Jewish journalist and novelist Vasily Grossman, along with Boris Pasternak, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, and Andrei Voznesensky.

Suggested Readings:

Babel, "My First Goose," translated by Walter Morrison.

———, *Red Cavalry.*

———, "The Story of My Dovecote."

Grossman, *A Writer at War.*

Prose, "The Bones of Muzhiks: Isaac Babel Gets Lost in Translation," in *Harper's*, November 2001.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does Babel succeed in making us feel empathic toward the story's narrator?
2. Is there a specific didactic message about violence or war that emerges in this story? What is it?
3. Do the narrator's feelings of guilt and remorse override his feelings of being accepted by the Cossacks? Is Babel suggesting that he (the narrator) is really not brutal enough to be going off to the front, or does the killing of the landlady's goose ensure that he is?

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Lecture Nine

Male Initiation—Hemingway's "The Killers"

Scope: The distinctive style of Hemingway is tied to both the ideas of Formalism and to the Modernist period in which he was writing. Hemingway's work is parallel in many ways to that of Isaac Babel, though his impact on modern literature has been far greater than Babel's or most other writers of short fiction. In this lecture, we look briefly at Hemingway's collection *In Our Time*, a unified volume of stories similar to Joyce's *Dubliners* or Babel's *Red Cavalry* or later works by such writers as Sherwood Anderson, Jean Toomer, William Faulkner, and Ernest Gaines. We then turn to "The Killers," a story of violence and initiation for Hemingway's recurring character Nick Adams. We explore significant elements of Hemingway's own life and delve into his stoicism and notion of grace under pressure. We will focus on the killers, Max and Al, and on Ole Andreson, who might be seen, along with Nick, as the story's protagonist. We conclude with observations on Hemingway's lasting influence and some of the reasons that this story is still seen as a masterpiece of short fiction.

Outline

I. Hemingway's work represents a revolution in literary style.

- **A.** Hemingway is still working in a vein of Realism but with a much harder edge than the likes of Chekhov or James.
  - **1.** His work embodies the Formalist idea of Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren that style is content.
  - **2.** Hemingway's stripped-down, brutal view of the world informs his style.
- **B.** The Hemingway style and worldview are tied to Modernism and to such literary figures as Gertrude Stein (Hemingway's mentor), James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound.
- **C.** Hemingway started out as a war correspondent writing "cable-ese," using language nominally because of cost per word. He developed a signature stimulus-response style, unadorned, and with minimal use of adjectives.
- **D.** British critic Wyndham Lewis called Hemingway's style "dumb ox" because of its simplicity. Hemingway explained that his style was emblematic of what he called "the iceberg effect": One-eighth of the meaning and content of the language are above water while the rest is subtextual, or under the surface.
- **E.** "The Killers" emerged from a kind of hard-boiled, *noir* American fiction style identified with such writers as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammet.
- **F.** Other Nick Adams stories appear in Hemingway's *In Our Time*, published two years before "The Killers." We see the same the unity in this volume of short fiction that we noted in Joyce's *Dubliners* or Babel's *Red Cavalry.*

II. "The Killers" is an initiation story for Nick, though unlike Babel's "My First Goose," it can be seen as the story of two characters: Nick Adams and Ole Andreson.

- **A.** Nick is on the verge of moving into adulthood, and the story reflects his initiation into manhood and loss of innocence to the realm of experience.
- **B.** Nick learns about violence and the murderousness and evil that are in the world, as well as the concepts of Stoicism and grace under pressure.
- **C.** Stoicism is the philosophy of Zeno, which advocated submission to one's fate out of necessity without visible emotion.
- **D.** Grace under pressure is the essence of the Hemingway ethos and can be seen in Ole Andreson's reaction to the killers, Max and Al, as well as in George's reactions.

III. The killers provide the force behind the initiation in the story.

- **A.** The two men are menacing. Early on, they address both George and Nick with the derisive label "bright boy." Later, Max asks George what he's looking at, then orders Nick to join George on the other side of the counter.
- **B.** There is something palpably absurd and even comic about Max and Al, with their derby hats, tight black overcoats, gloves, and silk mufflers. We are told that they look like twins in a vaudeville team.
- **C.** Hemingway then begins to distinguish them for us; for example, according to Al, his partner, Max, "talks too much." Despite their symbiotic relationship, the two killers are different.
- **D.** When both killers tell George that he is "lucky," the implication is that both George and Nick have had their lives spared.
- **E.** The killers feminize and homoeroticize George and Nick, contributing to an even greater sense of the experience as one that impinges on manhood.
- **F.** Other characters play subaltern roles and seem powerless against the forces that intrude upon their lives.

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IV. "The Killers" is considered a masterpiece of short fiction for a number of reasons.

A. The brevity and economy of language contribute to the story's strength and impact.

B. The story has a profound emotional impact both on Nick and on the reader.

C. The Hemingway philosophy and ethos are poignantly conveyed in "The Killers."

D. The power of the story is most clearly seen in its embodiment of the archetypical themes of initiation and manhood.

E. It's hard to separate Hemingway from many of the writers who have tried to imitate him, but he was the first to express a Stoic philosophy in terms of the everyday while also conveying the threat of death as a random and capricious occurrence.

Suggested Readings:

Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms.*

———, *In Our Time.*

———, "The Killers."

———, *The Old Man and the Sea.*

———, *The Sun Also Rises.*

Hotchner, *Papa Hemingway.*

Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead.*

Young, *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What are we to make of Hemingway's intentions when we consider that his original title for this story was "The Matadors"?

2. Is Ole Andreson or even George at the center of this story rather than Nick?

3. What is Hemingway indicating to us about the nature of the violence of the killers and their obvious tendency to homoeroticize Nick and George?

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Lecture Ten

Kafka's Parable—"A Hunger Artist"

Scope: This lecture begins with a discussion of tormented Kafka's life and the contributions to the conception of "A Hunger Artist" made by his obsession with his father, his Jewishness, his work as a civil servant, and his tuberculosis and depression. We then focus on Kafka's dark humor and satire before moving to the notion of the *donnée* and how it works in "A Hunger Artist." We also discuss the established tradition of the German novella that influenced Kafka, who lived in Prague in the Austro-Hungarian Empire but wrote in German. As we will see, the hunger artist in the story is a symbol of art, of body and soul, and of faith and asceticism. Allegorically, the story suggests the move from the world of the past to the world of Modernism and its ties to conceptions about ontology and Existentialism, as well as the relationship among art, commerce, and life's insatiable hungers. Finally, we discuss the protagonist and his role at the circus and the revelatory final scene with the overseer, concluding with reflections on the story's power and the continuing impact of Kafka's writings.

Outline

I. Shards or elements of Kafka's sad and tormented life are embedded in his short story "A Hunger Artist."

A. Kafka's life, in many ways, was driven by an insatiable and unrealizable desire to please his father, a desire revealed in his "Letter to My Father."

B. Kafka was a strongly self-identifying Prague Jew who gives us, in "A Hunger Artist," a story about the quest for spiritual and artistic fulfillment and the nature of suffering.

C. One also sees in the story Kafka's experience with the tedious, repetitive work of a bureaucratic civil servant.

D. Kafka suffered from advancing tuberculosis while writing this story. His illness rendered him unable to eat, and he was literally starving to death while writing "A Hunger Artist."

II. One of Kafka's most famous aphorisms about literature was that it can serve as an axe for the frozen sea within us. Max Brod, Kafka's close friend and biographer, said that the writer often laughed when reading stories, and there is indeed dark humor and satire in "A Hunger Artist."

A. A good example of Kafka's dark humor is the fact that the "permanent watchers" selected by the public to monitor the hunger artist are mostly butchers.

B. The story also satirizes the cliché of the starving artist. Like Kafka, the hunger artist would ultimately give up almost everything for his art but is neither appreciated nor understood by the public.

III. The story's *donnée* (its premise) gives us a history of a phenomenon that we must accept as real—hunger artistry—much as we accept the idea that Gregor Samsa wakes up as a cockroach in "The Metamorphosis."

A. The existence of hunger artistry is made utterly real through Kafka's descriptions of its decline in popularity.

B. Kafka was influenced by the German novella (rooted in work by Goethe), a genre in which everything in the fiction changes with a central turning point. The turning point in "A Hunger Artist" comes when the art of fasting suddenly loses its currency and popularity.

C. The hunger artist signs on as a circus display and becomes largely a figure of nostalgia for those who recall his earlier popularity.

D. Kafka gives us imagined details about hunger artistry, including the ritual and showmanship of the performance, the 40-day period of fasting, the accompanying band and hoopla, and the escorting ladies who seem friendly to the hunger artist but who are, in reality, cruel.

E. The split between the world of the past and the world of the present is highly suggestive of an allegory of the move to modernity and Modernism. Kafka reveals to us the shift in public interest as time moves forward.

IV. The hunger artist functions as a religions, ascetic, and artistic symbol.

A. The hunger artist is portrayed as a troubled spirit who is isolated and hungry for recognition as the greatest performer of his art but feels dissatisfied and cheated because of the manner in which his performance is turned into commerce.

B. Art is shown as a perversion of truth. At the end of 40 days, the impresario presents the artist as needing to stop the performance, but in truth, the artist wants desperately to continue starving himself.

C. The artist is famished for starvation—highly suggestive of the need and pathology of mortifying the flesh in order to elevate the spirit or soul.

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D. Kafka contrasts the hunger artist with the hunger for life of the panther—emblematic of our animality—opposing our ontology (being) to what we might imagine our souls to be.

V. The hunger artist nourishes his faith in his life performances through abstention from nourishment—a profound paradox and parable of faith and asceticism.

- **A.** The hunger artist is a suffering martyr, but what his martyrdom signifies remains a mystery.
- **B.** The hunger artist is alienated from everything other than the desire to prove his greatness and remain true to his art. At the story's end, however, we discover that the artist couldn't find any food that he liked, that his asceticism may be linked to being a picky eater!
- **C.** Among all who observe the hunger artist at the peak of his popularity he is the only one dissatisfied with the proceedings. He stands alone, literally, against the world, in his alienation.

VI. One associates the hunger artist finally with the "bread and circuses" from Juvenal's satire of the decadent Roman Empire and its popular debasement of entertainment for the masses.

- **A.** Placed next to the menagerie of animals, it is, ironically, the geography of his cage that draws crowds to the hunger artist—he becomes a relic of the past, overlooked or ignored by the crowds.
- **B.** In the last scene with the overseer, the hunger artist reveals the essential paradox of his life and all that had driven him: He wanted to be admired but felt he shouldn't be because he was unable *not* to fast and couldn't find food he liked. Now that he has apparently been able to eclipse all records in hunger artistry, no one knows or cares.

Suggested Readings:

Brod, *Franz Kafka: A Biography.*

Juvenal, *The Satires.*

Kafka, *The Castle.*

———, "A Hunger Artist," translated by Willa Muir and Edwin Muir.

———, "In the Penal Colony."

———, "Letter to My Father."

———, "The Metamorphosis."

———, *The Trial.*

Pawel, *Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What are we to make of the fact that the hunger artist reveals that he cannot *not* fast?
2. How believable is this story? Does it matter that Kafka invents his own version of hunger artists?
3. What exactly is Kafka suggesting about life and death by the replacement of the hunger artist in his cage with the large, hungry cat?

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Lecture Eleven

Lawrence's Blue-eyed "Rocking-Horse Winner"

Scope: "The Rocking-Horse Winner," by D. H. Lawrence, seems, in some ways, like a dark fairy tale. In this lecture, we look at how the story works in terms of its *donnée* and how Lawrence moves us along by craft and pacing. We reflect on Lawrence's biography and philosophy and explore the major contributions he made to modern literature and painting. We then focus on what critic Janice Harris identifies as the social, psychological, and familial levels of meaning in "The Rocking-Horse Winner" and on the story's religious dimension. We conclude with an appreciation of the rich, multilayered meanings suggested by the story (including those germane to imperialism), its inherent mysticism, and its emphasis on human values over materialistic ones.

Outline

I. "The Rocking-Horse Winner" is a fairy-tale story based on the *donnée* of a boy, Paul, looking for "luck" (money) by riding his rocking-horse.

- **A.** The story begins with a description of Paul's mother, Hester, who harbors a secret: She cannot love her children.
- **B.** Paul, too, harbors a secret. We learn as the story progresses that Paul is betting on horses, but only toward the end do we discover the secret of how Paul gets his luck.
- **C.** Lawrence masterfully controls the reader as he builds up the emotional and supernatural effects of the story. Even the house in which the characters live is haunted by the need for money. Paul's family, the rocking-horse, the doll, and the puppy all seem to hear the haunting phrase repeated by the house itself: "There must be more money!"

II. Critic Janice Harris aptly describes the story as social, psychological, and familial.

- **A.** The story is rooted in social hierarchy and the need for a particular family to live in style and to move up into the superior strata of the British class system.
- **B.** The supplanting of life and love by money or materialism is Hester's legacy to her son. (Her name is ironically associated with the heroine of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, about which Lawrence wrote a well-known essay.)
- **C.** Money is demonic and connected to a kind of shame and humiliation at one's inability to keep up social position and outward appearances.
- **D.** The oedipal relationship is key in the story and in the life of D. H. Lawrence.
  - **1.** The poet and critic W. D. Snodgrass likens Paul's behavior on the horse to masturbation and links it to Paul's oedipal drive to replace his father.
  - **2.** Masturbation for Lawrence was a form of solipsism, the belief that the only reality is subjective reality.

III. The story has a significant religious dimension.

- **A.** When Basset, the gardener, discusses Paul, he is "as serious as a church" and speaks of the young master "in a secret religious voice."
- **B.** Luck, the mother tells Paul, comes from God, and with his talent, Paul is (at least, according to Basset) receiving messages from heaven.
- **C.** We sense, however, that Paul is actually more in touch with demonic forces. Uncle Oscar twice calls him "poor devil" at the story's end, and there appears to be a kind of Faustian bargain between Paul and whatever supernatural force is supplying him with the names of the winning horses.
- **D.** The pursuit of money hardens Hester's heart and turns Paul's eyes into a petrified demonic blue with "an uncanny cold fire in them." What appears heavenly to Basset is indeed hellish.

IV. The names Singhalese and Malabar call to mind British colonialism and the idea of the Sun never setting on the British Empire in this rich, multilayered, and remarkable story. "The Rocking-Horse Winner" remains anomalous in Lawrence's canon but a masterpiece of compelling storytelling with an embedded morality.

Suggested Readings:

Harris, "Levels of Meaning in Lawrence's 'The Rocking-Horse Winner,'" from *The Short Fiction of D. H. Lawrence*.

Lawrence, "The Horse Dealer's Daughter."

———, *Kangaroo.*

———, *Lady Chatterley's Lover.*

———, *The Plumed Serpent.*

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———, "The Rocking-Horse Winner."

———, *Sons and Lovers*.

Snodgrass, "The Rocking-Horse—The Symbol, the Pattern, the Way of Life," in *The Hudson Review*, vol. xi, no. 2, Summer 1958.

Questions to Consider:

1. What do we conclude from Oscar Creswell's final remarks?
2. What does this story reveal to us ultimately about the nature of luck? Of luck and money?
3. What forces beyond our own does Paul appear to be able to ride to in order to find out the winners of the horse races that he, Basset, and Uncle Oscar bet on?

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Lecture Twelve

Female Initiation—Mansfield's "Party"

Scope: This lecture begins with a look at Mansfield's life and her association with the Bloomsbury Group of artists, including Virginia Woolf, and other influential writers, such as D. H. Lawrence. We then probe the character of Laura in "The Garden Party" and the initiation and growth she experiences at the psychological center of the story. We also discuss Mansfield's position as a woman writing at a time before the acceptance of the feminist perspective that we find in the work of Betty Friedan, Simone de Beauvoir, Grace Paley, and others. We follow with a discussion of the story in the context of class division, the ways in which the story emotionally affects readers, and its revelations about Laura's perspective on death. We end the lecture with a comparison of this story to another one by Mansfield in the same collection, "Her First Ball," and tie it as well to Luigi Pirandello's "War."

Outline

I. "The Garden Party" is based on an incident in Mansfield's life: her mother giving a garden party at their home in Wellington, New Zealand, after an accident had killed a neighbor living in a nearby poor quarter.

- **A.** Mansfield's experiences living in London gave her grist for a deeper understanding of class differences, which she put at the center of this story.
- **B.** Like Kafka, Mansfield suffered from tuberculosis, and the loss of her brother brought her closer to earlier material in her life as a girl in New Zealand.
- **C.** She was a friend of D. H. Lawrence but influenced most by Chekhov and Joyce and the idea of a story's emotional impact being central to its experience.
- **D.** Mansfield was part of the famed Bloomsbury group of artists and writers.

II. The plot of "The Garden Party" is what Willa Cather characterized as "a trivial incident" turned into a psychological drama. It is an initiation story centering on Laura's character. Mansfield's personal history is relevant here, as is the evolving role of women writers.

- **A.** Laura's ambivalent encounter with death—seeing it in the face of the workman—brings bewilderment, aesthetic elevation, and a visceral sense of contentment. After seeing the dead man, Laura's already abstract feelings about death become abstract in a different sense.
- **B.** In keeping with her adolescent nature, Laura's character shifts throughout the story.
  1. When she asks the workmen about the marquee, she tries to sound like her mother but then stammers "like a little girl."
  2. She insists that the party be stopped after the workman's death but is then caught up with how charming she looks in the mirror wearing the hat her mother gave her.
- **C.** Laura is presented as artistic (versus her practical sister Jose), self-conscious, and sensitive about the workers, in contrast to Jose, who feels perfectly comfortable ordering servants around.

III. "The Garden Party" is a story of class division.

- **A.** Mansfield employs an omniscient point of view that comes across as both Laura's and her family's. The cottages in the impoverished section of town, for example, are "far too near," "an eyesore," and "had no right to be in the neighborhood at all."
- **B.** As children, the Sheridans were forbidden to go into the impoverished quarter, but they did so with the ethic that one must see and experience everything.
- **C.** Mansfield's status as an expatriate enables her to portray class differences from the vantage point of an outsider, a perspective she shared with James, Joyce, Hemingway, Márquez, and James Baldwin.
- **D.** Mansfield's work begins to bring short fiction written by women into prominence, though many years would elapse before women writers received appropriate recognition.

IV. The story is created by atmosphere and setting, but the focus on Laura and her growth are the heart of the story's unity and its emotional effect on the reader.

- **A.** Laura's experience of the garden party as "a perfect afternoon … slowly faded, … its petals closed" leads, as the story progresses, to the encounter with the poor. It is a movement from innocence to experience, dawn to dusk, light to dark, life to death.

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- **B.** Her attitude toward her hat shifts from vanity to self-consciousness and embarrassment. Her experience of the afternoon changes from the gaiety of the party to the woman on a crutch, the widow's sister, and her oily voice and smile—from cream puffs to death.
- **C.** Laura's response to the dead workman is both contentment and tears, which she sheds in "a childish sob." Her sister Jose's song contrasts her attitude toward death, but Laura's response is ultimately an ineffable one. In both, we see the ineluctable link between life and death.
- **D.** Feminist critics have interpreted the story as revealing a young woman's coming into the recognition of her own identity, though ultimately, Laura looks to her brother, Laurie, for affirmation.

V. The story is a masterpiece, yet it has had somewhat of a mixed critical reception.

- **A.** Critic Warren Walker wrote of Mansfield's "near perfection" as a short story writer, and Virginia Woolf said that Mansfield's was the only writing she was jealous of.
- **B.** There remains critical dispute over the efficacy of the ending, but few would take issue with the overall deftness of craft and the Chekhovian mastery with character, subtlety of language, and the wonderful attention to detail, such as "the sunbeam playing on an inkwell."

Suggested Readings:

Beauvoir, *The Second Sex.*

Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic.*

Mansfield, "The Garden Party."

———, "Her First Ball" and other stories in *The Garden Party.*

Pirandello, "War."

Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two.*

Walker, "The Unresolved Conflict in 'The Garden Party,'" in *Modern Fiction Studies* (Winter 1957–1958).

Questions to Consider:

1. To what extent does the story appear to embody feminist values?
2. How tied to her artistic sensibility is Laura's concern about class differences or her feelings about the workman's death?
3. What does the ending tell us about what Laura learns from her encounter with the dead man?

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Lecture Thirteen

Jackson's Shocking Vision in "The Lottery"

Scope: Shirley Jackson modeled the small town in "The Lottery" on her own home in Vermont, and the extraordinary impact of the story's publication added to her existing paranoia about the small-mindedness of her neighbors. Despite the story's horrifying *donnée* and obvious deeper meanings, Jackson insisted that "The Lottery" was "just a story." In this lecture, we explore the story as a reflection of the notion of the scapegoat so prevalent in many cultures and note the importance of such works as Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and the historic backdrop of the Holocaust to our interpretation. The lecture then focuses on the pacing and careful setup of "The Lottery," as the author builds suspense by hiding the true nature of the town's annual event. Jackson's characters, such as Tessie and Old Man Warner, are often thin and one-dimensional characters, but her characterization raises important questions about Tessie's role in the town and establishes the communal nature of the town and townspeople. The lecture concludes with a discourse on the story's impact and its enduring effect on readers.

Outline

I. We begin with a look at the background of the story, its author, and the impact of its publication.

- **A.** Shirley Jackson's Vermont town was her model for "The Lottery." Jackson's husband, literary critic Stanley Edgar Hyman, was a professor at Bennington, and she was a wife and mother whose life revolved around "washing, cooking, dishes and mending."
- **B.** The story, according to Jackson, was written from beginning to end without a pause. Such output would be rare by the standards of any serious writer of short fiction.
- **C.** Editors at *The New Yorker* (where the story first appeared) requested that the date of the lottery in the story coincide with the story's publication date.
- **D.** *The New Yorker* received more mail in response to Jackson's story than any the magazine had ever published. Jackson said of that initial flood of responses that the respondents gave her a view of human beings as "gullible, rude, frequently illiterate and horribly afraid of being laughed at."
- **E.** Reactions to the story changed as years passed and the work was anthologized, dramatized, televised, and even made into a ballet.

II. Meaning, historical context, and setting play crucial roles in "The Lottery."

- **A.** Jackson repeatedly insisted that "The Lottery" was "just a story." However, as Kafka had done with the *donnée* of the historical hunger artists, Jackson created—with the lottery—a fictive reality and a metaphor for the human condition.
- **B.** The story reflects ritual sacrifice and the concept of the scapegoat in Hellenistic culture (the Oedipus story) and Christian culture (the Christ story)—stories revelatory of attempts to ensure fertility.
- **C.** In these cultures, fertility is celebrated while barrenness or sterility is scapegoated, both in ways that link to James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. In Jackson's story, Old Man Warner says, "Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon."
- **D.** Brutal ancient rites and myths of human sacrifice tie into the present in the story's post–World War II, small-town setting.
- **E.** The story strongly echoes Hawthorne: It is a moral allegory in a New England setting. Under the surface of the folksy, friendly, civilized men and women, we find violence, inhumanity, and evil.
- **F.** The Holocaust serves as an important historic backdrop to "The Lottery."

III. Jackson is brilliant in her pacing, which is essential to the story.

- **A.** The folksy opening, with talk of rain, tractors, and taxes; the gossip of the women; and the stone collecting by the children keeps us unaware of what is to come. Literary critic William Sheidy compared the initial picture of the village to "a cute Norman Rockwell painting."
- **B.** The word "soberly," connected to Mr. Summers, shifts the initial mood, as does "the sudden hush" that falls on the crowd.
- **C.** After Tessie is selected as the scapegoat and objects to the unfairness of the lottery, Mrs. Delacroix tells her to "be a good sport." The irony implicit in her language becomes evident when we finally learn what precisely will occur.
- **D.** The story moves from the boys' gathering stones and Tessie's forgetfulness, to Mr. Summers talking "interminably to Mr. Graves and the Martins," and finally, to his command, "Let's finish quickly."

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E. The suspense builds as we read, prompting us to wonder about the nature of the lottery and the events that will transpire.

IV. We move next to the characters and characterization in the story.

- **A.** The characters, including Tessie Hutchinson, are often flat, one-dimensional, or stereotypical—plot and impact are what matter.
- **B.** Nonetheless, we must ask whether it is accidental that Tessie is the one who is ultimately selected; after all, she is late, she objects to the outcome of the lottery, and she even tries to bring her married children, Don and Eva, into the selection.
- **C.** Old Man Warner symbolizes the traditional nature of the lottery, maintained despite changes through the decades. The maintenance of the ritual is an important motif.
- **D.** We view the townspeople in a communal sense; they are not rounded or fully drawn characters.
- **E.** The fact that little Davy Hutchinson is given pebbles to cast has both oedipal and biblical associations and reveals the essential inhumanity of the villagers, even where motherhood is concerned.
- **F.** Jackson's omniscient narrator tells us, "Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use the stones." In many ways, this line is the most frightful, compelling, and climactic one in the story.

V. "The Lottery" has an impact on readers beyond its ability to shock and horrify.

- **A.** It is a shocking story, but it is really a story about the pointlessness of human violence and inhumanity.
- **B.** The story is cathartic in its effect; readers become vicariously involved in the basic action of the story, experiencing its nightmarish quality and the effect of a dark fairy tale in which the character does not make it out of the forest.
- **C.** Readers identify also with the capriciousness of fate. During the Vietnam War, a lottery was held for conscription, though lotteries have since become more associated with winning money. Tessie wins, but her victory costs her her life; her fate is consummated by a random and capricious, luck-based process of selection.
- **D.** The last line of the story—"and then they were upon her"—adds to the climactic power of the conclusion and its effect on the reader: one of horror.

Suggested Readings:

Conrad, *Heart of Darkness.*

Frazer, *The Golden Bough.*

Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House.*

———, "The Lottery."

———, "The Morning of June 28, 1948, and 'The Lottery'" from "Biography of A Story," in *Come Along With Me*.

———, "The Possibility of Evil."

Questions to Consider:

1. Is it somehow just or appropriate that Tessie Hutchinson becomes the chosen one in the story, or does it merely seem to be utterly coincidental and capricious?
2. Does the lack of roundness of Jackson's characters detract from the overall sense of the story's greatness?
3. Is the ending of "The Lottery" still nearly as shocking as it was when the story first appeared?

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Lecture Fourteen
O’Connor’s “A Good Man Is Hard to Find”

Scope: This lecture begins with a consideration of Flannery O’Connor’s Catholic faith and her vision of her work as being concerned with moments of grace. As we will see, however, a story like “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” is often read from an antithetical perspective. We discuss the role of theological mystery in the story and explore the other lynchpin of O’Connor’s work—according to the author—manners. In the grandmother, we find the archetypical figure of the southern lady, but The Misfit exhibits both the manners of a gentleman and common speech. As The Misfit tells his story to the grandmother, we see him in a number of different lights, as both a prophet and a satanic figure. We conclude the lecture by noting a number of concepts that have become strongly identified with both Flannery O’Connor as a storyteller and specifically with this story, including dark humor, the grotesque, the Gothic, and the story as parable.

Outline

I. Flannery O’Connor was an Irish Catholic in evangelical and southern Baptist Georgia, which gave her, to some extent, the perspective of an outsider.

- **A.** O’Connor’s faith and its theology were central to her life and work.
- **B.** She made clear that her intention in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” was to show mystery and a moment of grace for the grandmother when she touches The Misfit and calls him one of her children.
- **C.** O’Connor wrote of the touch by the grandmother as “the right gesture” and of grace occurring in moments of violence or terror, when we are faced with imminent death.
- **D.** O’Connor’s intentions notwithstanding, the story can also be read as one of existential despair or nihilism—a family slaughtered by a serial killer in a setting described as having neither Sun nor cloud.

II. Theological mystery abounds in this story: The grandmother speaks of The Misfit with anxiety in the beginning of the tale, then meets up with and identifies him, ensuring the destruction of the entire family and raising questions concerning the movement of fate.

- **A.** O’Connor wrote that her intention was to make The Misfit a prophet gone bad, but he has often been identified as a satanic figure. He is also associated with death and the dragon in the epigram from St. Cyril.
- **B.** The woods are described by O’Connor in the story as “tall, dark and deep” and harken back to the mystery and evil of the woods in Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown.”
- **C.** The Misfit speaks of punishment and of Jesus setting things off balance, citing as an example our inability to determine if he really raised the dead. For all her talk of Jesus, the grandmother tries mainly to save herself. She loses faith for a moment when she says that perhaps Jesus did not raise the dead, but at story’s end, she is “like a child” and is “smiling up at the cloudless sky.”

III. O’Connor believed that mystery and manners were at the heart of her fiction.

- **A.** Mystery was often tied to grace and Catholic faith and theology in O’Connor’s work.
- **B.** Manners in O’Connor’s stories were based on folkways, idioms, and characters identifiably southern.
  1. The grandmother is a southern lady, a figure tied to the Old South who fits what W. J. Cash calls (in *The Mind of the South*) the proto-Dorian mode: the woman on a pedestal.
  2. The grandmother is full of nostalgia for the South of *Gone with the Wind*; such thinking leads her to memories of the old southern house where she wants to go.
  3. The fictive story the grandmother “craftily” tells the children about family silver hidden in a secret panel is connected to Sherman’s march and, thus, once again, to the Old South.
- **C.** The Misfit, aside from being a killer, has the mannered earmarks of a southern gentleman, though he is also—despite the grandmother assuring him otherwise—“common.”
  1. The Misfit greets the family with a “good afternoon” and blushes at Bailey’s profanity after the grandmother recognizes who he is.
  2. The Misfit apologizes to the grandmother for not wearing a shirt in her presence, thus acknowledging her role as a southern lady.

IV. The Misfit is both a symbol and a character beyond southern manners.

- **A.** The Misfit’s narrative expresses a longing for absolute belief and for forgetting what he has done or may have done.
- **B.** His assertion that he did not kill his father raises the question of whether, in fact, he did.

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C. Like the grandmother, The Misfit undergoes change in the course of the story, first proclaiming "no pleasure but meanness," then, following his shooting of the grandmother, "no pleasure in life."

V. "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" brings together a number of concepts and techniques that are often associated with O'Connor's writing.

A. There is a good deal of dark humor throughout the tale. One of the finer and more understated examples is the grandmother's realization that the house she had been thinking about was in Tennessee, not Georgia, and her decision not to mention her mistake.

B. The "grotesque" is often singularly identified with O'Connor's work, though its pedigree in American literature goes back to Sherwood Anderson.

C. O'Connor likened her fiction to the literal quality associated with a child's drawing.

D. "Gothic" is another descriptive term often applied to this story and others by O'Connor because of their sinister, gloomy, mysterious, and violent content.

E. The story is a parable of good and evil anchored in violence—again, like those by Hawthorne and Shirley Jackson, with parallels to Babel, Lawrence, and Hemingway.

VI. Other characters in the story also contribute to its richness and overall effect.

A. "The children's mother" is given no other name and is portrayed enigmatically as having a cabbage face and rabbit-looking ears; she is utterly passive and ineffectually deferential.

B. Bailey, the grandmother's son, says ominously after being goaded by the children to stop: "This is the one and only time"—a statement as ironic in its way as his daughter's expression of disappointment, following the accident, that no one is dead.

C. John Wesley and June Star are nasty, spoiled kids but not deserving of their fate. We note the irony in their names: John Wesley was a Christian theologian and one of the founders of the Methodist religion, while June Star combines one of the most pleasant months of the summer with images of the stellar.

D. Red Sammy of the Tower is an advertising veteran who is mean to his wife and appears as a kind of stock southern character. He is identified with the title, as well as with the monkey chained to a small chinaberry tree outside his barbecue place that catches fleas and eats them. The tableau suggests a kind of reverse Darwinian evolution of those who eat inside the Tower and the monkey who eats outside it.

VII. Flannery O'Connor was a genius of dark humor in many respects.

A. For example, in "Good Country People," another O'Connor story, a con man induces an educated young woman to take off her wooden leg, which he runs off with as a souvenir.

B. O'Connor was quite ill with lupus when she wrote "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." The knowledge that she would probably die at a young age certainly affected her vision.

C. "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" was influenced by a couple of newspaper stories—one about a small-time thief who called himself The Misfit and wound up in a mental asylum. It's interesting to note that O'Connor once described her town of Milledgeville, which had one of the world's largest mental hospitals, as a town of 8,000 of whom 4,000 were locked up.

VIII. The ambiguity of the story rests in the final image of the grandmother, lying in a puddle of blood and facing up to the heavens with a smile.

Suggested Readings:

Cash, *The Mind of the South*.

Dickey, *Deliverance*.

O'Connor, *Complete Stories.*

———, "Good Country People."

———, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find."

———, *Mystery and Manners.*

———, *Wise Blood.*

Williams, *The Glass Menagerie.*

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Questions to Consider:

1. Is the story true to its author's Catholic beliefs, or is there a deeper sense in the story of a picture of a world that defies faith?
2. How do we see The Misfit ultimately—as a soiled prophet, an agent of the devil, as death itself, or as all of the above?
3. How does the fact that no characters appear to be very sympathetic in this story affect its ultimate meaning?

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Lecture Fifteen
Paley on Survival and "An Interest in Life"

Scope: We begin this lecture by keying in on Grace Paley's singular role as a feminist fiction writer who concerned herself with women's issues before the wave of modern feminism made its major mark on the world of letters. Paley presents the lives of the urban proletariat in her fiction: Irish Catholic in this story and of both genders in her first volume of stories, *The Little Disturbances of Man*, which includes "An Interest in Life." We examine Paley's political sensibility and how it seeps in but hardly dominates her work as a fiction writer. Still, sexual politics plays a considerable role in "An Interest in Life," and we try to elucidate its workings in the story. We also look at other stories by Paley that help us understand her central themes. We touch on two of the qualities in this and other Paley stories that have made her work so enduring: voice and irony. Paley manages to create a singular, distinctive, and complex woman's voice and has Virginia, her protagonist in "An Interest in Life," use irony as both a defense and an instrument of humor. We then discuss Virginia's relationship with her husband and the framing of the story: We meet the mother of a man Virginia didn't marry, John Raftery, early in the story, and the work ends with Virginia's fantasy about the return of her miscreant husband. We close by discussing the masterpiece status of Paley's work and consider some of the impact she has had on other writers.

Outline

I. Paley's work—what she called "kitchen drama"—represents the first drops in the early wave of feminist writing.

- **A.** Paley tried writing like a man in the male-dominated 1950s world of fiction but eventually discovered and plumbed her own voice.
- **B.** Common folk, or the urban proletarian, were the lives Paley presented in her fiction—mostly Jewish but Irish Catholic in "An Interest in Life." She also spoke in her stories in voices both male and female.
- **C.** A strong political sensibility infuses Paley's work. She was, most of her adult life, a fully committed activist, a self-proclaimed gentle anarchist, but not didactic in her fiction. In "An Interest in Life," she shows the social and moral challenges of a woman who has been abandoned and must rely on inadequate and perhaps even malignant social welfare services.
- **D.** The presence of sexual politics is implicit in the fact that Virginia's husband gives her a broom for Christmas, then tells her before leaving that a new broom sweeps clean.
- **E.** Virginia is left to survive without a male in her life for either herself or her children, a fact that makes her more willing, ultimately, to take John Raftery as her lover.
- **F.** Sexual politics plays a significant role in Virginia's taking responsibility for the consequences of her sexuality and blaming herself for her husband's lack of success in life.

II. The voice in "An Interest in Life" is distinctive and makes use of humor and irony throughout as a defensive shield.

- **A.** The voice in the story can be bluntly humorous, as when Virginia responds to John Raftery's remark that children are from God: "You know damn well where children come from."
- **B.** There is irreverence and perhaps even a touch of the heretic in Virginia's distinctive and ironic voice when she claims her list of travails could have brought tears to the eyes of God "if He had a minute."
- **C.** Virginia's humor, good nature, sense of irony, and interest in life—all of which come out in her voice—allow her to survive.
  1. Virginia is ironic in her descriptions of her children. She calls both Philip and Gerard liars, though lovingly, and she describes in hyperbole the sibling strife of her children as brother constantly raising his hand against brother and "the girls ready to go to court over the ownership of Melina Lee," a doll.
  2. The husband for whom Virginia gave up an allegedly wild life sadly and ironically remains her main interest.

III. Paley's unique perspective and manipulation of voice and framework contribute to the story's status as a masterpiece.

- **A.** "An Interest in Life" is perhaps the first seminal story moored to women's dilemmas and women's sexual politics.
- **B.** The story is a multidimensional portrait of a woman enduring great upheaval and inordinate responsibility but with an individualized voice that retains its own vital qualities, as well as its distinctiveness and believability.
- **C.** The story is masterfully framed, with Mrs. Raftery, John's mother, early on somewhat drunkenly pushing Virginia to pay respects to a neighbor woman who has died and ending with Virginia acknowledging that John and his mother and she, Virginia, are all hypocrites.

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D. Virginia's fantasy about her husband leaves readers with an understanding of the truth behind this sympathetic and practical-minded, modern transgressive woman. Virginia, for all her faults, remains a most memorable, human character with an interest in life—an affirmation of humanity.

Suggested Readings:

Dreiser, *Sister Carrie.*

Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique.*

Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers."

Paley, "A Conversation with My Father."

———, "An Interest in Life."

———, *The Little Disturbances of Man.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Do we see Virginia as an early example of burgeoning feminist autonomy, or is she too male-dependent for that?
2. What does the final scene imagined by Virginia of her husband's homecoming after a two-and-a-half-year abandonment reveal about Virginia and her character? Is she simply foolish or loyal or both?
3. John Raftery becomes a kind of father surrogate to Virginia's four children. Is Paley saying that children need a father figure? If so, what are we to conclude about her belief or attitude toward single mothers?

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Lecture Sixteen
The “Enormous Wings” of García Márquez

Scope: Born in Aracataca, Colombia, Gabriel García Márquez is a Nobel laureate in literature. He was raised by his grandparents and strongly influenced by the fantastical stories told to him by his grandmother. Other influences include the work of Kafka, Faulkner, and Sophocles. In this lecture, we look at fiction and credibility in García Márquez’s tale “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings,” with mention of Coleridge’s idea of the willing suspension of disbelief, the folkloric and allegorical roots of the story, and the significance of its subtitle, “A Tale for Children.” We then explore the literary subgenre of Magical Realism, including the controversy surrounding this label. This part of the lecture concludes with a brief consideration of García Márquez’s story as a variation on the Icarus myth. We then look at how the author incorporates mystery, satire, and humor in “A Very Old Man” before turning our focus to the shifting nature of art and commerce—how the angel in the story is made into a remunerative attraction for mobs seeking entertainment, miracles, a spectacle, or a cure. We conclude with an assessment of the story’s power and the universal motifs it shares with the work of other South American writers.

Outline

I. Gabriel García Márquez was born in Colombia in 1928 and is one of the 20th century’s most famous and respected writers.

- **A.** He was raised by his maternal grandparents and was strongly influenced by the supernatural and fantastical stories told to him by his grandmother.
- **B.** An early chance encounter with Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” greatly influenced García Márquez’s writing.
- **C.** García Márquez has acknowledged Sophocles and the novels of William Faulkner as other great influences on his work.

II. “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” stretches credibility, but its improbability falls within that type of Realism based on a *donnée*, as we’ve seen in the work of Kafka and Jackson.

- **A.** Samuel Taylor Coleridge put forth the idea of the willing suspension of disbelief.
- **B.** Fiction is itself fiction—it is not real. This story certainly falls in that category, but it is also fiction that is unlikely and based essentially on provincial Latin American folklore.
- **C.** The story is allegorical and is subtitled “A Tale for Children.”

III. Magical Realism is the term often used for works by García Márquez and many other Latin American fiction writers. We see, in such work, the blending or fusion of the real and the fantastic—the intrusion of the unexpected or miraculous into everyday life.

- **A.** Some argue that the term Magical Realism has been used to marginalize Latin writers.
- **B.** In García Márquez’s story, we see the fantastic and extraordinary (the enormous wings) literally on the ordinary (a very old man). The revelation in the story comes in how he is treated and the reactions he causes among the people of the town and those beyond who hear of him.
- **C.** Elements in this story connect us as well to the Icarus myth and the artistic imagination.

IV. As we saw in O’Connor’s story, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” impenetrable mysteries occur in “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings.”

- **A.** Odd consolation miracles occur and appear to be linked to the angel/old man.
- **B.** The girl who danced all night and defied her parents turns into a large tarantula but retains her maiden’s head—a joke perhaps on maidenhead and a salute to Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis.”

V. Satire and humor pervade García Márquez’s story.

- **A.** The “wise” woman is a subject of satire—in fact, the story satirizes all authority figures, right up to the pope.
- **B.** The villagers are satirized in their desire to make the angel/old man a world mayor, a five-star general, or in the case of the “visionaries,” a stud.
- **C.** Father Gonzaga is satirized for his notion that the old man cannot be an angel unless he speaks Latin and for his appeal to higher Church authorities.

VI. “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” is also a tale of art and commerce.

- **A.** The angel/old man makes Pelayo and Elisenda rich as a kind of sideshow freak, but he remains cooped up and underfoot, bringing them trouble, especially with the mobs that appear.

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B. The crowd—like the one in “A Hunger Artist”—is fickle. The tarantula girl has a moral lesson to impart about the consequences of being a disobedient daughter; her appeal draws the crowds away from the angel/old man, relieving Father Gonzago of his insomnia and making Pelayo’s courtyard empty again.

C. The tarantula girl is also a storyteller and can tell her tale, but the angel/old man speaks in a dialect no one understands. Her story is one of brimstone and punishment, and she does not appear haughty or arrogant, as the old man does.

VII. Readers are charmed by the humor in “A Very Old Man” but realize that the story has something quite profound to convey about human nature.

A. The details in the story are sensory and compelling, particularly the disgusting ones associated with the angel/old man.

B. The satire is both Juvenalian and Swiftian—which is to say, it is both instructive and critical.

C. García Márquez succeeds in doing what the great Roman poet and satirist Horace said great literature needs to do—entertain and instruct.

D. The story suddenly shifts by providence, bringing the traveling show of the woman who had been changed into a tarantula and dramatizing once again the unpredictability of fate.

E. The story has universal appeal to both children and adults. It reflects a rising existential consciousness and shows parallels to the work of other South American fiction writers.

Suggested Readings:

Cervantes, *Don Quixote*.

García Márquez, *The Autumn of the Patriarch.*

———, *Love in the Time of Cholera.*

———, *One Hundred Years of Solitude.*

———, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings.”

Malamud, “Angel Levine.”

Questions to Consider:

1. What, in the final analysis, do we feel for the old man who has given this story its title? What do we come to believe he is?
2. The author is ridiculing authorities or would-be higher authorities, as well as the fickle nature of the public. Is there a serious argument or position underneath the ridicule? If so, what is it?
3. Miracles occur in this story, but what kind of miracles are they?
4. What is García Márquez suggesting about the nature of the miraculous as it occurs or seems to occur in the context of the everyday?

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Lecture Seventeen

A New World Fable—Malamud's "The Jewbird"

Scope: This lecture begins with a synopsis of "The Jewbird"; some biographical background on its author, Bernard Malamud; and some introductory remarks about Jewish American writing and the universality of Jewish themes. We link the *donnée* of this story to the work of García Márquez in its defiance of Realism and the willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader. We explore the story's cartoon-like effect and connect it to the work of other Jewish authors, such as Franz Kafka and Art Spiegelman. The character Schwartz embodies Old World Jewish values of the Eastern European *shtetl* and *Yiddishkeit* and is identified with both the folkloric character of the *schnorrer* and victimization. An adversarial relationship develops between the Jewbird and his host, Harry Cohen, which prompts us to reflect on the experience of Old World and New World Jews and the nature of assimilation of Jews in the United States. Malamud portrays Harry Cohen as distinct from his wife and son and compels us to see him as a force of anti-Semitism and Jewish self-hatred. We explore Cohen's entrapment in American values of status, the ironic meaning of his name, and Jewish folklore and traditions tied to treating those in need with respect and generosity in order to redeem and save the world. The lecture concludes with an analysis of the elements of myth and fable in the story and with a brief look at Malamud's contribution to a remarkable outpouring of ethnic writing.

Outline

I. As García Márquez did in "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," in "The Jewbird," Malamud gives us an improbable and richly symbolic premise that violates the boundaries of Realism and requires suspension of disbelief: Instead of an old man with enormous wings, in this story, we have an old man who is a bird.

II. The character of the bird, Schwartz, has a cartoon-like effect that fuses with human qualities and characteristics—evocative of such works as Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" or Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, in which the Jews are mice and the Nazis are cats. The cat in this story persecutes and torments poor Schwartz.

III. Schwartz is associated with the Old World of ghettoized, Ashkenazi, *shtetl* Jewry—the world of *Yiddishkeit*, or Yiddish culture, that occasionally still perches itself in a Jewish home like the Cohens'.

- **A.** Schwartz speaks in Yiddish and of the *shtetl*. His early exclamation "*Gevalt*, a pogrom!" not only signifies his Yiddish roots but may indicate that he has experienced or been victimized by a pogrom. The bird also uses other Yiddish words, such as *grubber yung* (meaning a lowlife or vulgar person, used twice by Schwartz to describe Harry Cohen) and *chutzpa*.
- **B.** Schwartz speaks with an accent and in cadences that are distinctly Yiddish-based and idiomatic.
- **C.** Schwartz is nearly a stock Old World Ashkenazi Jewish character. He eats herring and drinks schnapps, characterizes himself as an old radical and a *malamud* ("teacher"), and epitomizes a folk character known as a *schnorrer*, one who lives off the charity of others. Often in the folklore and myths of Yiddishkeit, the redemption or messianic salvation of the world was thought to be tied to how such beggars were treated.
- **D.** The Jewbird is black and his name, Schwartz, derives from *shvartze*, meaning "black." Hence, aside from being a Jewbird (which Schwartz tells Cohen is once removed from a Jewfish), he is the perennial outsider, the marginal victim figure who is the target of hatred for both Jews and blacks.
- **E.** After the Second World War, Jews and their history of dislocation, exile, and victimhood became representative of the human condition in literature.

IV. Cohen hates Schwartz both because he is Jewish and represents Cohen's own Jewish heritage and because he is black; bigotry and anti-Semitism operate together in this story.

- **A.** Our first image of Cohen depicts him eating a thick lamb chop, wearing "beefy" shorts, and drinking beer—an image antithetical to the stereotypes of a Jew and more fitting with the way many Jews have stereotypically characterized *goyim*, or non-Jews.
- **B.** Edie bows her head when Schwartz prays—but not Cohen. The son, Maurie, also rocks with prayer. When Cohen asks the bird why he has no hat or phylacteries (for prayer), Schwartz explains that he is "an old radical." But the old radical continues to be observant in his fashion, while Cohen appears to have no feeling at all for religion, charity, or the Yiddish language.
- **C.** The fact that Cohen's mother is dying and his son's mediocrity in school move the story toward resolution. Cohen wages all-out war against his adversary, Schwartz, this emissary from the past and Jewish roots.

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D. Cohen, a Jew, becomes the force of anti-Semitism that Schwartz fears—in contrast to Cohen's more tenderhearted wife and son.

E. Cohen is entrapped by American status values, as we see in his excitement at the mistaken notion that his son, Maurie, might be on a path toward admission to a prestigious Ivy League school.

F. In the caste hierarchy of traditional Judaism, those of the noblest and highest status were the Cohayns. It is especially ironic that Malamud's character has this name.

V. The binary of old *shtetl* and Americanized Jewish males—vulnerable Schwartz versus beefy Cohen—is at the core of this fable, in which the self-hating Jew destroys the shabby and embarrassing remnant of his past.

A. Cohen's hatred for Schwartz goes beyond what Schwartz represents—he hates the bird's smell (though Schwartz points out that Cohen smells, too) and his snoring. He even accuses the old bird of wanting to sleep with his wife, Edie, which elicits the most singularly amusing line in the story: "Mr. Cohen, on this rest assured. A bird is a bird."

B. Ultimately, "The Jewbird" is a moral fable about the loss of Jewish identity that assimilation brings—though Cohen is left, because of the bird, with a grossly swollen nose, a caricature and stereotypical mark of Jewish identity.

C. Maurie, Cohen's tenderhearted son, is moved by memory in the mythic resurrecting spring and weeps for the loss of the bird and its hideous death, which includes, like the death of Oedipus, plucked-out eyes. In the final line of the story, Edie, Maurie's mother, attributes Schwartz's awful death to what Schwartz had been trying to escape: "Anti-Semeets."

D. Malamud establishes with this fable a firm place for American Jewish identity in short fiction that helped to open the barriers for fiction emblazoned with an identity derived from ethnic material.

Suggested Readings:

Howe, *The World of Our Fathers.*

Malamud, *The Assistant.*

———, *The Fixer.*

———, *Idiots First* (stories).

———, "The Jewbird."

———, *The Magic Barrel* (stories).

Rosten, *The Joys of Yiddish.*

Spiegelman, *Maus.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How does Malamud manage to impress upon us the humanity of Schwartz despite the fact that Schwartz is a bird?
2. Is there hope in this otherwise dark story in the portrayal of young Maurie and the kind heart he appears to possess?
3. Is there reason to feel sympathy for Harry Cohen?

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Lecture Eighteen

Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues"—A Harlem Song

Scope: James Baldwin, along with Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, was among the most distinguished and important African American fiction writers of the 20th century. In this lecture, we see the development of African American fiction and Baldwin's identity as a writer through such influences as the Harlem Renaissance and such figures as W. E. B. Du Bois, Ellison, Wright, and others. We consider Baldwin's roots in both Harlem—its religious and musical influences—and in the artistic tradition of Henry James; both are writers who are deeply concerned with the demands of their literary art. As we work through the multilayered thematic significance of "Sonny's Blues," we will see the older brother come to a deeper and more enlightened understanding of his younger brother, despite the gaps that exist between them. The story also reflects the world of music and the musician—particularly the jazz musician—and explores themes of drug addiction and prophecy. Music, particularly the blues, links the brothers and is tied to the African American experience and, ultimately, to a greater spirituality and a deeper humanity. We also consider the prophetic dimension of the music in "Sonny's Blues" and how Baldwin brings us to Isaiah at the story's conclusion.

Outline

I. James Baldwin was one of the most distinguished and important African American fiction writers of the 20th century.

- **A.** On one level, "Sonny's Blues" is simply a story of an older brother coming to a greater understanding of his younger brother—the younger brother whose first words he heard and whom he caught from falling with his first steps.
- **B.** The narrator, from the story's opening, is disturbed and frightened by the story of his brother's arrest for heroin that he reads in the newspaper.
- **C.** The narrator wants to understand his brother, to know about his inner life. Ultimately, he learns about Sonny through his music, and his brother becomes "real."
- **D.** The brothers represent two polarities. There is tension in the narrator's decision to live a family life and teach algebra versus Sonny's decision, as he describes it to his brother, "to play jazz."
- **E.** Before her death, the mother entreated the older brother to watch out for his younger brother and to keep him from falling. The desire of the older brother to keep his younger brother safe and guide him to "equations" of respectability and sobriety represents the basic conflict in the story.
- **F.** The chasm that exists between the two brothers is best seen in Sonny's creation of another family, which he chooses, in one of the story's flashbacks, over his narrator brother. Sonny's world is music, and the narrator must enter it and really hear the music in order to understand who and what his brother is.
- **G.** A revelatory moment occurs when the narrator refers to Louis Armstrong as a jazz figure, but Sonny corrects him, mentioning the more current name of Charlie Parker. Sonny tells his brother that playing is the only thing he wants to do. We see the brotherly divide in philosophy in the narrator's attitude concerning how one ought to live one's life.

II. Music is an important form of communication and expression in the story, and it is the vehicle through which the older brother can understand his younger brother.

- **A.** The blues link the brothers—the blues, spirituals, and the songs of slaves are all part of the jazz pedigree.
- **B.** Throughout the story, other figures, not just Sonny, express themselves in different ways via music. Music plays an integral role in the lives of these African Americans living in Harlem.
  1. Early in the story, a boy whistles a complicated tune, as though he is a bird, recalling for us the nickname of Charlie Parker.
  2. In the narrator's memory of his parents seated in church, he highlights "the jangling beat of a tambourine from one of the churches close by."
  3. The mother's story of the father's brother includes the fact that the brother had a guitar, sang, and was whistling on the night he was run down by drunken white men.
  4. The narrator whistles after he and Sonny fight, and a woman sings before the two of them head off, toward the end of the story, to Greenwich Village where Sonny plays.
  5. The street music heard from the revival meeting is the music of spiritual sustenance, and we are told that it "seemed to soothe the poison out."
- **C.** When the narrator really hears Sonny's blues—and listens to what the music communicates—he understands Sonny in a deeper and more meaningful way. At the same time, he also understands himself and the links to suffering, darkness, and menace that are felt throughout the story.

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D. Ultimately, music links the brothers (and the reader) to the human condition and to what may be “the only light in all the darkness.”

E. Baldwin was giving Pentecostal sermons (his father was a clergyman) as a boy in Harlem at age 14. The story’s ending is prophetic and sermon-like, highlighting the message the narrator derives from the power of the music, which is really the power of his people’s history.

F. Isaiah holds the messianic prophecy, and there is a direct link between the message in that prophecy and the music—as if the music is directly tied to the word of God.

III. Two African American psychiatrists, Grier and Cobbs, posited a link between the rage of American blacks and what W. E. B. Du Bois and (in a later essay) Baldwin called “dual consciousness”—the idea that blacks see themselves in terms of *who* they are but are inevitably seen in terms of *what* they are.

A. We are told that the children in the story’s opening scene will grow up in a rush and that their heads will bump “abruptly against the low ceilings of their actual possibilities.”

B. We see rage in the narrator’s view of his neighborhood and of Harlem and what he calls “the vivid, killing streets” of his and Sonny’s boyhood years. Their youth is characterized by images of thieving, too-early sex, and violence—a debilitating environment, from which even those who escape leave something behind. It is not a childhood of jacks and swings and jump rope.

C. Menace is tied to the reality of the characters’ experience in the story, and the story the mother tells of her husband’s brother only authenticates that menace.

D. The issue of race is highlighted in the “dicty” parents of Isabel. In one of the flashback scenes, we learn that they are separated from Sonny by their middle-class status and fail to understand what it means to “live with sound.” But even the blacks characterized as dicty feel the fear and anger of the racial divide.

IV. “Sonny’s Blues” is also a story about drug addiction.

A. The story opens with the narrator’s feeling of ice in his own veins as he reads about Sonny’s arrest for possession of heroin. Sonny’s friend is also an addict and is looking for money from the narrator for his next fix.

B. In the scene before the brothers go to Greenwich Village to hear Sonny play, Sonny says that he needs drugs to be able to stand “it.”

C. Suffering is seen as a cause of drug addiction, though the theme of suffering is also tied to the loss of Grace, the narrator’s daughter. The narrator himself does not fall into drug addiction but certainly comes to a clearer understanding of Sonny and others who are addicted.

D. The story also has strong generational ties. Sonny, as he points out in his letter to the narrator, wishes he could have the faith his mother had. After she tells the story of the father’s brother’s death on that long, dark road in the past, she says, “I praise my Redeemer.” Without faith, there seems to be left only music or drugs.

V. “Sonny’s Blues” works on many levels and provides keen insight into the inner life of a jazz musician, the scourge of drugs, and the stunted and painful experience of growing up in Harlem. Baldwin’s mastery of language and craft also contribute to the story’s endurance.

A. The language of the story is soaring and lyrical and, toward the end, takes on a musicality and evocative power of its own—in reading, we experience what Nietzsche called “the pure form of music.” The language also conveys a sense of the improvisational nature or spirituality of the blues. The stylistic shift that Baldwin employs in the nightclub scene is nothing short of astonishing.

B. The story reveals the sociological distress experienced by many African Americans. Though Baldwin has often been criticized for not being militant or political enough, “Sonny’s Blues” has a strong sense of black alienation and the inability of blacks to meld into the meting pot—a key point of the Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal in his famous book on the United States: *The American Dilemma*.

C. Baldwin weaves in a number of flashbacks with deftness and fluidity. He also breaks with the conventional “show, don’t tell” rule for narrative art, combining exposition and storytelling.

D. Above all, “Sonny’s Blues” is a powerful work of art, a masterpiece of short fiction that inaugurated great storytelling from succeeding generations of African American fiction writers. Ralph Ellison once said that if he wanted to preach, he would have become a sociologist rather than an artist. Baldwin manages artistry and preaching.

Suggested Readings:

Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain.*

———, *Notes of a Native Son.*

———, “Sonny’s Blues.”

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Cobbs and Grier, *Black Rage.*

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk.*

Ellison, *Invisible Man.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How do you interpret the final reference in the story to the “cup of trembling” in terms of race or drugs?

2. Why is this a story of hope as much as of suffering?

3. In many ways, the brothers are split between conformity and artistry and between bourgeois and bohemian values. Does Baldwin seem to take sides or favor one over the other?

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Lecture Nineteen

Updike's "A & P"—The Choice of Gallantry

Scope: John Updike's "A & P" is a rite-of-passage story with links to Updike's own background. The narrator in the story, Sammy, grows from innocence to experience and seeks out an identity that will move him beyond the boundaries of boyhood. In this lecture, we focus our attention on the likable Sammy and his shift from boyhood to manhood when three girls in bathing suits enter the A & P, where he works. As we'll see, Sammy's voice and his character are connected, in some ways, to J. D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield, including his idealism, his cynicism, and his imaginative way of seeing, along with his puerility and misogyny. We take up setting and class differences in the story and its greater themes of identity, nonconformity, and Existentialism. "A & P" has achieved masterpiece status because of its universal themes, its clever use of language, its voice, and its presentation in short story form of a "bildungsroman"—a form usually associated with the novel.

Outline

I. "A & P" is a rite-of-passage or generation-gap story set in modern New England by one of America's leading writers of 20th-century fiction. Though John Updike was from Pennsylvania, he was, like his protagonist, Sammy, from a working-class background and possessed of a highly eroticized imagination.

II. Sammy is still connected to boyhood in many ways; he has gotten a job because of his parents' friendship with Lengel, the manager of the A & P, and he is wearing a shirt his mother ironed for him the night before.

- **A.** Sammy's decision to quit his job after Lengel embarrasses the girls marks his transition from boyhood to manhood—ultimately sad for his family but not "so sad" for him.
- **B.** The young girls who enter the supermarket in their bathing suits have an effect on Sammy, as well as his 22-year-old fellow employee, Stokesie, who is a married father of two.
- **C.** Images of bathing suits with straps down and key signifiers, such as "naked" and "bare," indicate the erotic effect of the visual and libidinal on the boys' imaginations. Lengel tries to repress these effects by upbraiding the girls about indecency and indicating that they should leave the store.
- **D.** Sammy's speech is adolescent, credible, and wonderfully rendered by Updike in the tradition of J. D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield.
- **E.** Sammy feels a need to follow through on his initial impulse and act like a protector toward the girls in response to Lengel's reaction to them.
- **F.** Sammy is idealistic yet cynical in his views of Lengel and the supermarket customers. He brings up the Salem witch trials and varicose veins, calling the women who shop in the A & P "sheep" and "house-slaves."

III. Setting and class differences play essential roles in "A & P."

- **A.** Set in a New England supermarket in the 1960s, the story illustrates the vestiges of Puritanism as a new era of liberation dawns.
- **B.** The supermarket is five miles from the beach and north of Boston, setting up a dichotomy of place: Supermarkets are modern places, identifiable with freedom, though it's also possible that Updike was lampooning the whole A & P phenomenon.
- **C.** The class divide is reflected in Sammy's vision of "the Queen's" family from the "fancy herring" she buys for them. The contrast in class to his own family is dramatic. The class gap also affects Sammy's decision to quit; here is a working-class kid reacting to the humiliating treatment of a girl he sees as a queen.

IV. "A & P" has a lasting effect on readers and has achieved masterpiece status.

- **A.** It is a story of nonconformity in the midst of women, who Sammy tells us, would still be checking their shopping lists even if dynamite were set off in the store.
- **B.** It is a story of identity—not only of a boy moving into the "hard" world on his own and away from his parents, but also, curiously enough, of his identification with his grandmother and her generation.
- **C.** In Sammy's image of the future (1990), the Russians may have taken over the United States, and Stokesie may be managing the Alexandrov and Petrooshki Tea Company. In the present, however, Sammy is free to make a complete gesture of freedom as he hits "No Sale" and turns in his apron.
- **D.** The last phrase of the story, "how hard the world was going to be to me hereafter," suggests, especially with the use of "hereafter," a punishment to come for poor Sammy.

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E. Updike's ability to establish strong motifs and capture a youthful and genuine, sustained and highly imaginative voice are hallmarks of this masterpiece.

F. Updike's sheer virtuosity, clever pacing, and innovative use of language heighten the emotionally uplifting impact of the story.

Suggested Readings:

Blake, *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*.

Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Updike, "A & P."

———, *A & P: Lust in the Aisles.*

———, *Pigeon Feathers* (stories).

———, *Rabbit Quartet* (*Rabbit Run, Rabbit Redux, Rabbit Is Rich*, and *Rabbit at Rest*).

———, *Trust Me* (stories).

Questions to Consider:

1. How important are the minor characters in "A & P"? Who are they?
2. What is Updike communicating in the story about the nature of choice?
3. Is "noble" too strong a word to describe Sammy?

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Lecture Twenty

Kingston's *Warrior* Myth—"No Name Woman"

Scope: Maxine Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman" is one of the pieces that makes up *The Woman Warrior*, a highly autobiographical and mythic collection of stories interconnected in the ways we've seen stories interconnect in *Dubliners*, *Red Cavalry*, and *In Our Time*. The story engages us in an understanding of Chinese American identity as it relates back to the story's narrator, to China, and to the village from which the narrator's aunt and family hailed, as well as to the world of America and American culture in which the narrator, Little Dog, grows up. This lecture begins with a discussion of the unifying myth of the woman warrior Fa Mu Lan. Kingston and her narrator seem to merge with this figure in the formation of an identity that begins with the initial story of the no-name aunt, told in "talk story" fashion by the mother, Brave Orchid. Our focus then turns to the connection of the narrator's own identity to her aunt's story and how the story serves as a warning to Little Dog against transgressive behavior. Both the narrator and the reader are drawn into the process of imagining the aunt's story; Little Dog becomes part of the story, as well, through her own complicity in the erasure of the aunt's identity. We conclude by noting the importance of the story in the blended use of autobiography and fiction and in its contribution to the canon of ethnic, cross-cultural, and feminist writing.

Outline

I. Maxine Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman" is part of a collection called *The Woman Warrior.* The selections cohere like a novel but are also autobiographical and are based in the Chinese myth of the woman warrior Fa Mu Lan.

- **A.** Kingston changes the Fa Mu Lan story by blending her own experience and philosophy with that of the woman warrior—weaving together legend and feminist ideology.
- **B.** The story plants us in the nexus of Old World Chinese tradition and the formation of identity of a young Chinese American girl, Little Dog, being told a secret story by her mother—a story her father does not want her to know.

II. The narrator's story and her identity as a woman are inextricably linked to the story of her no-name aunt.

- **A.** The story of the aunt takes place in 1924 in China but is told to the girl narrator 50 years later, just as she is beginning to menstruate.
- **B.** The tension for the narrator rests on what to do with the skeletal facts of the story she is told and how to absorb it into her own identity. How can she merge Chinese tradition with America and its popular culture?
- **C.** The story is a warning to Little Dog not to humiliate her family and become a no-name woman like her aunt.
- **D.** The story is one of transgression and punishment that Little Dog must understand and interpret. Her imaginative collaboration is key to our understanding of the aunt's story, but as readers, we are also drawn in and are part of the process of how the story is told and interpreted.

III. The story of the narrator's aunt is one of a woman effaced from family memory and who—as the title suggests—has no name.

- **A.** The aunt's husband went off to "Gold Mountain" (America) and was gone for a year before she became pregnant.
- **B.** The villagers, wearing white masks, raid the aunt's family home and pillage, kill animals, smear blood, and destroy property. The child is born in a pigsty, and the aunt kills both the child and herself.
- **C.** The existence of the aunt is essentially erased by her own brother. Little Dog is not only hearing the story, but she is discovering an aunt she never knew she had and is compelled to engage her own imagination in the construction of the story.
- **D.** Little Dog concludes that adultery was an extravagance that women in China did not choose. She speculates that her aunt was forced by some man, who may have later led the raid against her.
- **E.** A dialectic is set up in the narrator's mind, not only about her aunt's identity and motives but also about the phantom lover and his motives. Little Dog surmises that the child born to her aunt was "probably a girl" and imagines her aunt's pain and the reasons she went to the pigsty.

IV. Little Dog wants to be "American feminine," with her aunt as her "forerunner." But she does not succeed in making her aunt her forerunner and ultimately feels complicit in concealing her aunt's story.

- **A.** Little Dog reconstructs the story of a half century of neglect as it was told to her 20 years earlier by her mother. The story includes memories of her mother threading her hairs into a bun with a depilatory string and telling Little Dog and her sister that they were lucky not to have had their feet bound at age seven.

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- **B.** The story represents the kinship of the village in opposition to transgression and the consequences of "the breaking of roundness." These become lifetime lessons, still integral to the narrator's consciousness as a woman and her increased awareness of her own personal, sexual, and ethnic identities.
- **C.** The narrator admits to her own participation in the aunt's punishment, yet paradoxically creates the story that gives her existence. The aunt and her child have, however, become ghosts, and superstition and tradition have continued to keep them ghosts.

V. Kingston's "No Name Woman" is a story that melds fiction and autobiography, revealing the indistinct and often indistinguishable territory that separates the two. The narrator creates a personal and collective history that links to her ethnic identity as a Chinese American woman and contributes in no small measure to the host of cross-cultural fiction writing that proliferated at the end of the 20th century.

Essential Reading:

Kincaid, "Girl."

Kingston, *China Men.*

———, *The Fifth Book of Peace.*

———, "No Name Woman."

———, "On Mortality."

———, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book.*

———, *The Woman Warrior.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How does time work in this story as a means of our understanding the relationship of the present to the past, given the years separating the narrator from the time the story was told to her by her mother and the time the story actually took place?
2. Does the mining of autobiographic material in this story make it less fictional?
3. Can Kingston's Little Dog really expect to be able to glean lessons from her no-name aunt's story that apply to her formation of a hybrid American Chinese identity?

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Lecture Twenty-One
Atwood's "Happy Endings" as Metafiction

Scope: Margaret Atwood took "furtive glee" in her story "Happy Endings," writing in what she thought was an experimental and innovative form, only to discover that the form itself had already been named metafiction. This term describes fiction that comments on the art of fiction or the telling of stories, forging a collaboration with the reader and breaking down what is known as the "third wall." Atwood's unusual and unique story parodies such genres as soap opera and pulp fiction, while the story's real discourse concerns the nature and craft of storytelling, particularly, how stories end. "Happy Endings" is broken into six sections—marked A through F—which, together, form a self-reflexive work on the art of storytelling that encompasses the author's ideas about such weighty subjects as sex roles and death. Atwood creates a miniature instructor's manual on story writing and stretches the boundaries of genres to set up plots that reveal where all plots ultimately lead. The story is a call to action, as well as a revelation of what makes storytelling anything but easy—all rendered with humor, parody, and cleverness. Ultimately, "Happy Endings" shows us the lines that separate life and fiction and life and death.

Outline

I. Margaret Atwood described her story "Happy Endings" as a mutation that gave her "furtive glee" and compared writing it to scribbling anonymously on a wall with no one looking.

- **A.** Atwood further compared writing "Happy Endings" to finding a white frog. She thought she was being experimental and innovative, only to discover that the form of what she was creating had already been named metafiction.
- **B.** This term describes a form of fiction that comments on the art of fiction or the telling of stories and is anchored in self-reflexivity—one of the hallmarks of Postmodernism.
- **C.** "Happy Endings" is designed around the notion that a reader, whose role is highly collaborative, knows what is expected and what is supposed to come—but doesn't.

II. Atwood compared stories to riddles or joke telling, but "Happy Endings" is parody—not a real story so much as a cluster of alternative plot ideas or the raw material for plots, moored in history or chronology.

- **A.** Much is tongue-in-cheek in "Happy Endings," and the writing parodies soap operas, pulp fiction, and other genres.
- **B.** The story incorporates the movement toward death in the clusters of plots but also in the final, thrice-repeated idea that "all stories end in death."
- **C.** The most essential element embedded in the story is how the author elicits curiosity and moves the plot forward.
- **D.** "Happy Endings" breaks with convention by addressing the reader directly in the third line—penetrating the wall that fiction narratives often set up between a reader and the text.
- **E.** The story ridicules the traditional short story form.

III. A through F, the letters Atwood uses to separate her plots, are also the grades used by instructors, and the story is set up like a lesson in writing fiction. The story's real discourse, however, concerns the nature of storytelling and the ways in which stories make up our lives.

- **A.** The first option (A) is written in sentimental and flat, cliché-ridden language. This is the happy ending, as good as it gets but without conflict or color or unpredictability.
- **B.** The plot elements are linked, and section B moves us to conflict, with Mary's self-deluded hopes for John's reciprocal love, the love triangle with Madge, and Mary's suicide.
- **C.** In section C, we become aware that the story is aware of itself; Atwood talks about "the thin part of the plot" but ends with a violent shooting death.
- **D.** Section D features a natural disaster—a tidal wave—and hints at the story that isn't told about what caused the tidal wave and how Fred and Madge escaped from it.
- **E.** Section E continues the open-ended plot and the option for the storyteller or the reader to fill in the details of the story. All the options that make up "Happy Endings" and offer the reader a choice are reflected in the options that appear at the end of this section.
- **F.** Initially, the last section ironically poses a *donnée* of political intrigue with a revolutionary and a counterespionage agent. After the initial anti-bourgeois setup, the author steps in and breaks conventions by giving us her real belief about happy endings.
- **G.** The last sentence is a challenge, as well as a call to action. It's what makes storytelling anything but easy.

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IV. "Happy Endings" is clever, parodic, and masterful in its shifting from one style and tone to another with ease and fluidity.

   A. The story engages yet dissociates the reader from the summary narratives that are described. Then, like a Brechtian lesson on dissociation, it succeeds in distancing the reader so that he or she can learn from the narratives. The effect is one of building toward a kind of writing instruction, as well as significant lessons related to feminist thought, the art of storytelling, the creation of fiction, and the writing process.

   B. The story furnishes us with a sense of the lines not only between life and fiction but also between life and death. Though it is ultimately a testament about the finality and ineluctability of death, it also reveals the unmistakable cleverness, humor, fun, and pure invention (including inventiveness that parodies invention) that can enter the process of storytelling.

Suggested Readings:

Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale.*

———, "Happy Endings."

———, *Oryx and Crake.*

Cooke, *Margaret Atwood*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does the effect of this story differ from the effect of a conventionally told, well-plotted story?
2. What does one actually learn from this story about the craft of creating stories?
3. Does it matter that we hardly enter the lives of the characters Atwood sketches other than learning the events that occur in their lives?

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Lecture Twenty-Two

Gordimer's "Moment Before" Apartheid Fell

Scope: Nadine Gordimer, winner of the 1991 Nobel Prize in Literature, has lived all her life in South Africa and was a staunch anti-apartheid activist. Her work is strongly influenced by Chekhovian Realism and the theories established by the Hungarian Marxist literary critic Georg Lukács. In "The Moment Before the Gun Went Off," she gives us an inherently political story shaped by a point of view antithetical to her own. The story takes place at a time when violence was rife in South Africa and apartheid was beginning to crumble with the repeal of such laws as the Immorality Act. The story is told from the point of view of a man who strongly supports the system and institutions of apartheid and is a friend of the protagonist, Marais Van der Vyver. In this lecture, we focus on the story's pacing and craft; Gordimer's views of the genre of the short story; and the political, historic, and literary factors that elevate this story to a level of greatness.

Outline

I. Nadine Gordimer's "The Moment Before the Gun Went Off" is based in Realism but fused with a strong political intent. We can discern this intent despite the shibboleth of the intentional fallacy, yet the story is not polemical.

- **A.** Gordimer, the daughter of Jewish immigrants, was a staunch opponent of apartheid. She has written short stories, novels, and essays; has been awarded a host of honors; and has devoted herself to political activism.
- **B.** Gordimer was strongly influenced by Chekhov's brand of Realism and by the Hungarian Marxist philosopher and literary critic Georg Lukács, who believed in Realism as a form of social criticism.

II. "The Moment Before the Gun Went Off" is set in the late 1980s, when apartheid was beginning to crumble; the narrative defines and clarifies that historical moment.

- **A.** The Immorality Act, prohibiting miscegenation, had been repealed in South Africa, and we are told by the narrator, "Blacks can sleep with whites … It's not even a crime any more."
- **B.** Violent acts were being carried out by blacks against whites. The narrator makes us aware of the burning of urban police stations, as well as the necessity for increased security among white farmers.

III. Broader perspectives are dramatized by the story's point of view—that of an apartheid supporter who clearly holds sympathies with white supremacy.

- **A.** This point of view creates even greater irony and unmasks the cruelty and damage wrought by apartheid.
- **B.** The narrator has a close relationship to the story's protagonist, Marais Van der Vyver, and knows his family and his secrets, including the fact that Van der Vyver weeps in the police station and his true relationship to the black youth, Lucas.
- **C.** The narrator is part of the wider farming community that understands to a deeper degree what Van der Vyver has experienced: the emotional effects versus the news reports and the political view of the world at large.
- **D.** The narrator's human view of what underlies the surface is different from the easily politicized appearance, though he does not see the reality beneath his own reality, which would reveal the moral evil and the consequences of apartheid.

IV. Van der Vyver, a leading member of the ruling party, is also a victim of the system and a man who has broken the law under apartheid.

- **A.** The unreliable narrator of the story creates for us a rounded characterization of Van der Vyver.
- **B.** We find out about Van der Vyver's early shyness and about his relationship with his father and his belief in a farmer's sacred duty to raise game as well as cattle.
- **C.** We discover that his mother felt he didn't "mix well as a child." His wife, Alida, believes this quality has prevented him from becoming his party's candidate for the district.
- **D.** We learn of Van der Vyver's relationship—including his blood tie—with the young black farmhand, Lucas. Van der Vyver taught Lucas hunting and tractor maintenance, but Lucas is accidentally killed by Van der Vyver's father's rifle—another symbolic link to the apartheid past.

V. The pacing of the story is inevitable but fluid in its representation of time.

- **A.** The story moves from the fact of Lucas's death and how it happened, to the funeral, then once again back in time to that moment before the gun went off.
- **B.** The final O. Henry–like revelation from the narrator seems almost itself like a shot being fired.

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VI. The story is gripping and well told; it is also infused with politics and a message about the way stories are told in public versus how they truly unfold and the historical reality underneath that reality.

- **A.** The unreliable narrative point of view is deft and remarkably effective—reminiscent of the narrator in Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*.
- **B.** The accidental death of the young black farmhand becomes the centerpiece of deconstruction for the historic legacy of apartheid and the humanity of both sides suffering because of it.
- **C.** Gordimer's craft is of a high order, evident in every aspect of the story, from her scene painting, to her characterizations, her use of irony, and even such details as the uncomprehending sympathy of the police captain as Van der Vyver weeps over Lucas's death.
- **D.** Gordimer combines great storytelling with a strong political message about the evil of apartheid, at the same time making us aware of the process by which stories are created.

Suggested Readings:

Gordimer, *Jump.*

———, "The Moment Before the Gun Went Off."

Heywood, *Nadine Gordimer.*

Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*.

———, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What do we assume about the feelings Van der Vyver has about Lucas's death?
2. What do we surmise about the emotions between Van der Vyver and Alida at the funeral?
3. How is Gordimer able to make a freak accident a political issue unrelated to guns?

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Lecture Twenty-Three

Carver's "Cathedral"—A Story that Levitates

Scope: In this lecture, we turn to "Cathedral," a story by a writer who has been called America's Chekhov, Raymond Carver. Here, the distinctive voice of the narrator, a sense of transcendence and intimacy, and consciousness-expanding substances all work together to give us—at last—a truly uplifting story. In addition to his characterization as the American Chekhov, Carver has also been labeled minimalist, and his work often focuses on the working class. In "Cathedral," we find a portrait of a dysfunctional, perhaps even crumbling, marriage and a study of the shifting relationships among the narrator, his wife, and her blind friend, Robert. The story becomes an exploration of the intimacy that grows between the two men, initially separated by stereotyping and jealousy on the part of the narrator. "Cathedral" is the crowning masterpiece of our selections in this course—a story of transcendence and the power of art to bring spiritual uplift and human connectedness into our everyday lives.

Outline

I. Raymond Carver is America's Chekhov—a Realist who wrote stories deeply tied to humanity in an American context.

- **A.** Carver's stories are about the working class and set in the Northwest.
- **B.** Carver's characters and stories have been described—not pejoratively—as "low-rent tragedies."
- **C.** The narrator of "Cathedral" is alienated, in the Marxist sense, from work. We don't know what kind of work he does, but we know that he doesn't like it and has no choice but to do it.
- **D.** The narrator and his wife have a new sofa and a color television that they "traded up for," but his idiom and vernacular speech are essentially working class.
- **E.** The portrayal of the narrator reaches into a life governed by the emptiness of habit and a quiet despair anesthetized by alcohol, television, and marijuana. At the same time, we sense the narrator's desire for intimacy and love in a dysfunctional marriage.
- **F.** The story is based on an actual encounter with a blind man who was a friend of Carver's second wife, the poet Tess Gallagher. She also wrote a story, after Carver's story appeared, about the same episode from her point of view.

II. "Cathedral" is a story of human transformation.

- **A.** The narrator and the blind visitor, Robert, establish intimacy after the narrator gets past his stereotyping and jealousy and after the two have indulged in eating, drinking, and smoking marijuana.
- **B.** The narrator resents the blind man's coming to his home and is jealous of the intimacy between his wife and the man—he reacts initially with sarcasm.
- **C.** His attitude begins to change when he realizes that Robert challenges his stereotypes. The narrator admires the adroit way Robert eats, smokes cigarettes down to the "nubbin," and smokes marijuana as if he had been doing it "since he was seven years old."
- **D.** The wife leaves Robert and her husband alone; when she returns, they are drawing a cathedral together. Robert, through his warmth and good fellowship, has made a deep human connection with the narrator.
- **E.** Robert's character creates the breakthrough or "channeling" that occurs during late-night television.
- **F.** Robert is upbeat and full of bonhomie, a man's man who manages to raise the narrator's consciousness to a much higher level.
- **G.** The story illustrates the spiritual transformation of a nonbeliever, with a cathedral as the central signifier of faith and communion building to celestial majesty.

III. "Cathedral" is also a portrait of a marriage.

- **A.** We see the wife's history unfold from the narrator's point of view, and we get glimpses into their marriage and her previous marriage.
- **B.** The narrator's wife craves the kind of intimacy she has had with Robert in her marriage and is insecure about not having her husband's love.

IV. Carver's "Cathedral" is a crowning masterpiece.

- **A.** Tobias Wolff remarked after first reading the story that he felt as if it "levitated" him off the couch.
- **B.** Despite the substances that affect the narrator, the story's final lines are spiritually uplifting and transcendent, confirming the power of art and of the story itself.

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C. “Cathedral” virtually lifts us into a more spiritual realm of human connection within the mundane world of the ordinary.

Suggested Readings:

Carver, “Cathedral.”

———, *Cathedral*.

———, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love.*

———, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*

Runyon, *Reading Raymond Carver.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Does all of the imbibing of alcohol and the use of marijuana take away from the intensity of the experience the narrator goes through in the story?
2. What does the narrator actually see?
3. Describe the nature of the intimate human emotions that Carver is able to communicate in this story.

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Lecture Twenty-Four

Why Short Fiction Masterpieces?

Scope: We begin this last lecture with observations about why we need short fiction. From there, we consider the brevity of short fiction and the paradoxical fact that all great fiction is based on the ability to see truth—or enter into the world of great writers—through the lie of fictive art. As we have seen throughout the course, great fiction speaks to the nature of the human condition, even if the picture is one of horror or despair. Our focus then moves to the creative process, which characteristically begins with an idea or image, a kernel or piece of a story or experience. We peer into the shift from the novel to the short story, although the market for short fiction has diminished and the landscape of publications that accept short fiction has changed. We conclude by looking at changes in the short story genre, the emergence of different forms, the increasing democratization of the short story, and the introduction into the canon of new voices and a wider range of storytellers.

Outline

I. We read great fiction—great short fiction—for knowledge, excitement, expansion of our sensibilities, and for all the gifts that literature offers us in a compact (and, perhaps, more accessible) form.

- **A.** We potentially gain more from spending time with 23 short fiction masterpieces—23 great authors—than we do from reading a single novel.
- **B.** V. S. Pritchett said of the short story that it "… wakes readers up and answers a craving for primitive art."
- **C.** Gordimer's illuminating flash, Joyce's epiphany, and Maupassant's and James's lessons in stories all help us understand the value of short fiction.
- **D.** Short fiction heightens our understanding of literature's interrelatedness.
- **E.** Short stories act on us quickly and do, as we have seen, teach and entertain.
- **F.** We have seen both the *scenic* single event (in, for example, Joyce, Babel, and Mansfield) and the more *panoramic* expanse (in Chekhov, Lawrence, and Malamud).
- **G.** If there is a hierarchy within the pantheon of masterpieces, perhaps the "crown jewels" are those stories that allow us to grow and expand the most in our humanity—those that portray ordinary lives in extraordinary ways with which we can empathize, identify, and feel our own humanity.
- **H.** Many of the great writers we have discussed are also great novelists, but they are able to compress something quite different—for example, a profound cultural or historical moment—into their short tales.
- **I.** Most difficult in writing short stories are the takeoffs and the landings; the fun of the story is all that goes in between.
- **J.** Short story writing has a necessity for intensity and narrative drive. The passion of youth and, perhaps, the knowledge that one is fatally ill have played a role in many of the stories we've read in this course.

II. Masterpieces of short fiction have, until recently, been overshadowed by the novel, which was generally accorded higher esteem because of its larger canvas and expansiveness.

- **A.** The novel as a genre has received much more scholarly and critical attention.
- **B.** The increasing pace of life and the brevity of email and Internet messages have caused a shift in traditional attitudes toward short fiction.
- **C.** It is increasingly difficult for short fiction writers to find publishers, though *The New Yorker* remains the gold standard and publishes some of the world's finest living writers. Such publications as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's* are also excellent sources for short stories.
- **D.** Although traditional venues for literature have changed, the need for great literature remains; as Margaret Atwood says, "From listening to the stories of others, we learn to tell our own."

III. We have read great masterpieces in this course, and within this genre, the emphasis ought to be on "pieces," because great stories are pieces of life.

- **A.** Many of the great pieces of short fiction, as we've seen, have grown harsher in their view of life and the human condition.
- **B.** Despite the downbeat and tragic content in many works of fiction, we still find stories that can amuse us, like Atwood's; that can lift us, like Carver's; and that enhance our understanding of humanity.
- **C.** The novel may, as V. S. Naipaul and others have said, be playing itself out, but it's doubtful that the short story will. As Nadine Gordimer suggested, "It appears to be the literary form for our era. …"

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IV. The combination of democratic principles that have gained hold in the West and burgeoning international literacy contributed to the shift, in literature, toward realistic renderings of the voices of the unacknowledged or marginalized. These same forces have facilitated the experimentation we have seen by such authors as Joyce and Márquez.

A. The short story has been a truly democratizing genre.

B. The old canon, free of color and ethnicity, has opened up—and continues to open up—to a globalized world of storytelling and storytellers.

V. John Cheever said, "So long as we are possessed by experience that is distinguished by its intensity and its episodic nature, we will have the short story in our literature, and without our literature we will, of course, perish." Worlds of great storytelling are out there for us to engage in.

Suggested Readings:

Charters, *The Story and Its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction.*

Cheever, *The Stories of John Cheever*.

Leavis, *Valuation in Criticism and Other Essays.*

Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction.*

Pritchett, *The Oxford Book of Short Stories.*

Additional Recommended Short Stories:

Anderson, Sherwood, "Death in the Woods."

———, "I Want to Know Why."

Bambara, Toni Cade, "The Lesson."

Barth, John, "Lost in the Funhouse."

———, "Night-Sea Visitors."

Barthelme, Donald, "The School."

———, "Views of My Father Weeping."

Borges, Jorge Luis, "The Circular Ruins."

———, "The End of the Duel."

Boyle, T. C., "Greasy Lake."

Caputo, Philip, "In the Forest of the Laughing Elephant."

Cheever, John, "The Country Husband."

———, "The Swimmer."

Cisneros, Sandra, "The House on Mango Street."

Coover, Robert, "The Babysitter."

Danticat, Edwidge, "Night Women."

Erdrich, Louise, "The Red Convertible."

Faulkner, William, "That Evening Sun."

———, "A Rose for Miss Emily."

Flaubert, Gustave, "A Simple Heart."

Jen, Gish, "In the American Society."

Kincaid, Jamaica, "Girl."

Lahiri, Jhumpa, "Interpreter of Maladies."

———, "The Third and Final Continent."

Le Guin, Ursula, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

Lessing, Doris, "Our Friend Judith."

———, "To Room Nineteen."

Mason, Bobbie Ann, "Shiloh."

Mukherjee, Bharati, "The Management of Grief."

Munro, Alice, "Boys and Girls."

———, "The Turkey Season."

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Oates, Joyce Carol, “How I Contemplated the World from the Detroit House of Corrections and Began My Life Over Again.”
———, “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”
O’Brien, Tim, “The Things They Carried.”
Ozick, Cynthia, “The Shawl.”
Packer, Z. Z., “Drinking Coffee Elsewhere.”
Porter, Katherine Anne, “Flowering Judas.”
———, “Pale Horse, Pale Rider.”
Silko, Leslie Marmon, “Storyteller.”
———, “Yellow Woman.”
Stone, Robert, “Helping.”
Tan, Amy, “Half and Half.”
———, “Rules of the Game.”
Viramontes, Helena Maria, “The Moths.”
Walker, Alice, “Everyday Use.”
Wharton, Edith, “Roman Fever.”
Wolff, Tobias, “Hunters in the Snow.”
———, “The Rich Brother.”
Woolf, Virginia, “Kew Gardens.”

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the value for you personally in reading great short fiction?
2. What are reasons for valuing short fiction over the novel or vice versa?
3. As the market for short fiction masterpieces has declined, will there have to be changing criteria for determining what is and isn’t a masterpiece?

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Timeline

1350–1354 .... Giovanni Boccaccio writes the *Decameron*.

1387–1400 .... Geoffrey Chaucer writes The *Canterbury Tales*.

1678 .... John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* published.

1741 .... Jonathan Edwards delivers his sermon entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

1775–1783 .... American Revolution.

1787–1799 .... French Revolution.

1812–1822 .... Appearance of three volumes of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*.

1819–1820 .... Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" both appear in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*.

1835 .... Gogol's "The Overcoat" first published in *St. Petersburg Stories* and Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" in *New England Magazine*.

1842 .... Poe's "The Importance of the Single Effect in a Prose Tale."

1846 .... Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" published in *Godey's Lady's Book*.

1850 .... *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (later known as *Harper's Magazine*) founded.

1857 .... *Atlantic* magazine (later known as *Atlantic Monthly*) founded.

1884 .... Maupassant's "The Necklace" published in a Paris newspaper and included in the anthology *Tales of Days and Nights*.

1890 .... James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* published.

1892 .... Henry James's "The Real Thing" published in *Black and White* magazine.

1899 .... Chekhov publishes "The Lady with the Dog."

1911 .... Katherine Mansfield's *In a German Pension* published.

1913 .... D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* published.

1914 .... Joyce's *Dubliners* published, including "Araby."

1914–1918 .... World War I.

1915 .... Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" published.

1916–1921 .... Easter Rising and Irish War of Independence.

1916–1922 .... Constance Garnett translates Chekhov's stories.

1917 .... Bolshevik Revolution.

1918 .... Breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

1919 .... Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* published.

1922 .... Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party" first published in a collection called *The Garden Party and Other Stories*.

1923 .... Jean Toomer's *Cane* published.

1923–1925 .... Stories from *Red Cavalry* by Babel appear in Soviet publications.

1924 .... Kafka's "A Hunger Artist" published in a collection of four stories titled *A Hunger Artist*.

1925 .... Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time* published.

1925 .... *The New Yorker* founded.

1926 .... Lawrence's "The Rocking-Horse Winner" published in *Harper's Bazaar*.

1927 .... Hemingway's "The Killers" published in *Scribner's Magazine*.

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1929 .... Babel's *Red Cavalry* published, including "My First Goose."

1939 .... *Scribner's Magazine* ceases publication.

1939–1945 .... World War II.

1948 .... Jackson's "The Lottery" published in *The New Yorker*.

1955 .... Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" published.

1955 .... Gabriel García Márquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" published in *Leaf Storm and Other Stories*.

1957 .... Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" published.

1959 .... Grace Paley's "An Interest in Life" published in *The Little Disturbances of Man*.

1961 .... Updike's "A & P" published in *The New Yorker*.

1963 .... Malamud's "The Jewbird" published in *Idiots First*; Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is also published.

1976 .... Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* published, including "No Name Woman."

1983 .... Atwood's "Happy Endings" published as part of *Murder in the Dark*.

1984 .... Carver's *Cathedral* published.

1988 .... Gordimer's "The Moment Before the Gun Went Off" published.

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Glossary

allegory: Representation through symbolic figures that convey a deeper, often moral meaning.

anecdote: Reports, observations, or short, significant or humorous encapsulated narratives.

apartheid: The system of segregation of the non-white population that existed in South Africa.

arabesque: An ornamental style of intricate patterns in fiction.

archetype: An original or prototypical model, pattern, or character in literature tied to myth.

Ashkenazi: Jewish person of Central or Eastern European origins who used Yiddish as opposed to Ladino, the language of the Sephardic Jews.

bildungsroman: A novel of the growth from innocence to experience that emerged from German literature of the 19th century.

Calvinism: The theology of John Calvin based on the belief in predestination.

carnivalesque: Having the festive and merrymaking costumes and rituals associated with carnivals.

catharsis: A purging or releasing of the emotions.

Comintern: The Communist Third International, dedicated to international communist revolution.

Czarist Russia: The line of rulers in Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution.

denouement: The final resolution of a plot.

dialectic: A form of logical process going back to Hegel and Marx that sees forces in opposition ultimately synthesizing—as was posited by Marx about feudalism and capitalism synthesizing into socialism.

dicty: A pejorative term used among some African Americans during the first part of the 20th century to describe African Americans who were snobbish and had lighter skin tones.

didactic: Intentionally designed to teach or to be instructive.

donnée: The given in a story that the reader accepts; it may be implausible but once accepted becomes the fulcrum or departing point of the story.

epic theater: Bertolt Brecht's notion that staged drama could keep an audience removed in order for them to learn and be politicized.

epiphany: In literature, a term from James Joyce tied to an illumination or revelation.

Existentialism: A philosophy based on the individual's responsibility for choice.

Fabulism: A kind of fiction writing particularly linked to myth and fable.

Formalism: A school of literary criticism connected to Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren that sees the meaning and interpretation of literary works as essentially being tied to the text.

gevalt: A Yiddish exclamatory word of surprise or disbelief.

hubris: The Greek notion of pride commonly connected to arrogance.

Immorality Act: Under apartheid, the law forbidding sexual relations between whites and non-whites.

intentional fallacy: The notion put forward in literary criticism by Monroe Beardsley and W. K. Wimsatt that one cannot determine authorial intention in a work of literature.

intertextuality: The belief in literary criticism and analysis of literature that meaning in a text is derived from its relation to other texts.

Magical Realism: A term coined by German art critic Franz Roh in 1925 to refer to a style of painting, but which has come to mean in literature the fusion or blending of the real with the fantastic or supernatural.

metafiction: Fiction that is reflexive of fiction or its conventions.

mimetic: Mimicking or representing reality in literature in whatever the form.

Minimalism: A style in literature based on simplicity, sparseness, and unadorned language.

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Modernism: A term applied to the movements in literary style and innovation associated with the 20th century.

Naturalism: A philosophy prevalent in literature throughout the 20th century that views human behavior as deterministic.

pièce-à-thèse: A term used largely in dramatic literature to represent a work that has a clear and apparent thesis embodied in it.

pogrom: An attack or massacre against Jews living in the Russian *shtetls*.

Postmodernism: In literature, a movement away from the Modernism of the early and middle parts of the 20th century. Postmodernism emphasized such elements as self-reflexivity and the fantastical.

prelapsarian: Before mankind's Fall from Eden when Adam and Eve were still in the garden.

proletarian: Of or related to the working class.

Puritanism: The principles and practices of the Puritans tied to the theology of John Calvin and often identified with strictness and austerity.

secular: The view that separates itself from religion or religious policy or policies.

shtetl: A Jewish village in Eastern Europe.

solipsism: The philosophic belief that meaning comes only through the self or subjectivity.

Stoicism: The philosophy from Zeno of unemotional removal of the self and resignation to one's fate.

superstructure: A Marxist idea that posits a relationship to the base or mode of production and the social order that enforces it to the entire remainder of society, culture, and institutions.

Symbolism: In literature, the finding of symbolic meaning in a text. Based on the Symbolist movement that took place largely in France in the 19th century.

third wall: The imaginary barrier that separates a narrator or narrative voice from a text (also referred to as the "fourth wall").

Trotskyite: A follower of Leon Trotsky whose communist ideology differed from that of both Lenin and Stalin and emphasized a dictatorship of the proletariat and an international revolution of socialism.

unreliable narrator: A narrative voice that is lying, self-deceiving, or too biased to be reliable.

verisimilitude: Something in literature that is true to life and gives every appearance of being truthful or true to life.

willing suspension of disbelief: A notion from the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge that readers will willingly suspend their disbelief if engaged strongly enough in a tale.

Yiddishkeit: The culture of Eastern European Jewry built around the Yiddish language and tales.

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Biographical Notes

Margaret Atwood (1939–): Born in Ottawa, Ontario, in 1939, Atwood was the daughter of an entomologist and a dietician and was expected by her parents, especially her father, to become a scientist. Instead, she fell in love with literature and studied at the University of Toronto and at Radcliffe and later taught at a number of universities. Her interest in science continued throughout her life and can be seen particularly in her dystopian novels *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*. Known chiefly as a short story writer and a novelist—and the recipient as a novelist of the coveted British Booker Prize, as well as a number of Canadian Governor General's Awards—Atwood has also published poetry, essays, and literary criticism. She is a political and social activist, a writer who once defined being an artist as being a guardian of the moral and ethical sense of the community. An active environmentalist and feminist, she was involved for many years in the Writers' Union of Canada, Amnesty International, and International PEN. Though she once described herself as a Red Tory, she has been a member of the Green Party.

Isaac Babel (1894–1940): Babel was born in 1894 in Odessa in the Ukraine. At that time, Jews were prohibited from residing in most of the major Russian cities and, after graduating from university at Kiev, Babel went with a fake passport to Saint Petersburg to study literature. He was a playwright in addition to being a short story writer, and he worked on a number of films, including with the famed Russian master filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. His best-known works are the stories in *Red Cavalry* and *Tales of Odessa*. Babel had a close friendship with Maxim Gorky, who was a mentor and supporter of his, and he was employed with the commission of education and the secret police. He was murdered, we now know, on Stalin's orders in 1940 for espionage, which amounted to charges of being a Trotskyite. For years, his fate had been unknown, and it was believed that he had died in a forced labor camp. He is widely regarded, despite a small oeuvre, as one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. All charges against Babel were officially dropped posthumously by the U.S.S.R. in 1954.

James Baldwin (1924–1987): In addition to being a short story writer, Baldwin was a novelist and an essayist. He was born in Harlem, where his stepfather was a clergyman; his grandfather had been a slave. As a boy, Baldwin preached in the Pentecostal church but gave up preaching while he was still in high school and went off to live in Greenwich Village, where he met Richard Wright. In 1953, Baldwin published his groundbreaking autobiographical novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. "Sonny's Blues" appeared in 1957. Baldwin was a novelist in the tradition of Henry James—deeply concerned with both the demands of a higher and noble artistic calling and with his own black identity and racial justice. Baldwin was rooted in Harlem and Greenwich Village and nourished in the great tradition of the spirituals, gospel, the blues, and jazz. The Harlem Renaissance flourished in the 1920s and saw one of the greatest outputs of black identity and artistry that would carry on in Baldwin's own boyhood and youth. He left the United States and lived most of his adult life in France. Baldwin's great theme throughout his writing career was freedom, and as a black homosexual man, he understood forces that oppressed freedom. He died in 1987.

Raymond Carver (1938–1988): Carver was born in 1938 in Clatskanie, Oregon, and grew up in Yakima, Washington. His father was a mill worker, and his mother, a retail clerk and waitress. Both Carver and his father were alcoholics. By the age of 20, Carver was married with two children—a boy and a girl—and he struggled through many menial and service-type jobs to provide for his family. He would later write that providing for and taking care of children was his greatest single obstacle as a writer and a source of deep resentment. Still, he managed to become educated in California colleges, including Chico (where his mentor was the novelist John Gardner) and Humboldt State, and later on, at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. He published his first story in 1960 and continued to publish both short stories and poems, often written out of economic necessity. He also wrote essays and reviews and was a literature teacher at a number of universities, with most of his teaching career spent at Syracuse University in upstate New York. "Cathedral" was published in 1981 in *The Atlantic Monthly* and as a volume under that title in 1984. Carver, a heavy smoker all of his adult life, died of lung cancer in 1988.

Anton Chekhov (1860–1904): Chekhov's grandfather was the grandson of a former serf. Though serfdom was officially abolished in 1861, the year following Chekhov's birth, peasants remained woefully unequal both socially and economically in Russia throughout Chekhov's lifetime. Chekhov had a deep and abiding empathy for this class of people, who were still shackled by poverty, quite possibly at least partially the result of his own lineage. He is one of our greatest and most humane storytellers, as well as a dramatist and a physician. As a doctor, Chekhov treated scores of poor people for free. He once said, "Medicine is my lawful wife and literature is my mistress." He produced hundreds of short stories, four plays, and a novel and was a major influence on a score of fiction writers. Chekhov's source of humanity is often attributed to his soft and kind storytelling mother, as opposed to his tyrannical, abusive, and religiously fanatic father. He married the actress Olga Knipper in 1901. Chekhov died in 1904 of tuberculosis. He was first diagnosed with it in 1897 while in Moscow and spent the years after living in Yalta with his mother and sister and traveling to Moscow where Olga, his wife, resided.

Gabriel García Márquez (1928–): Born in Aracataca in Colombia in 1928, García Márquez is a Nobel laureate in literature (1982) and one of the 20th century's most famous and respected writers—author of the famous novels *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, and *Love in the Time of Cholera*. García Márquez was educated in the law at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá; has been a journalist and screenwriter, as well as a novelist and short story writer; and has

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been known throughout his life as a political activist. He was raised by his maternal grandparents and strongly influenced by the supernatural and fantastical stories his grandmother told him throughout his childhood. He wanted to write stories in a fashion similar to the way his grandmother told them—"with a brick face" was how he phrased it—and an early chance encounter with Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" seemed to free him. He was also greatly influenced by Sophocles, the Greek dramatist and author of *Oedipus*, and by American Nobel laureate William Faulkner. He spent time living in Venezuela and under asylum in Mexico because of his radical political activities. He became identified in his literary career with Magical Realism, a form of writing that blends the real and the fantastical and is largely associated with writers of Central and South America.

Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852): Nikolai Gogol was born in the Russian Ukraine in 1809 to a fairly prosperous family. Gogol's father was educated and a writer. The family name was originally Ianovskii, but Gogol's grandfather changed it in order to claim noble Cossack ancestry. Gogol was sent off as a boy to boarding school, and we know that he was physically so unattractive that he was teased by his classmates and called "the mysterious dwarf." Some of those earlier experiences may help to account for Gogol's empathy for a character like the hapless and much-teased Akaky of "The Overcoat." Gogol wanted initially to be a poet. He had a close relationship with the great Russian writer Aleksandr Pushkin and was deeply affected by Pushkin's death, only three years before the publication of "The Overcoat." Gogol settled in Saint Petersburg, Russia's capital city, and there is much in the story "The Overcoat" that is tied to that city and to its mythology, as well as to the experiences Gogol had working there at a number of minor governmental jobs. Gogol went on to work as a teacher and private tutor and published a volume of short stories in 1835 called *St. Petersburg Stories*. "The Overcoat" was part of a collection called *The Overcoat and Other Stories of Good and Evil*, published in 1842. Gogol had an enormous influence on short fiction and produced novels, drama, and satires. He died in 1852.

Nadine Gordimer (1923–): The daughter of Jewish immigrants and anti-apartheid activists, Gordimer was born in the mining town of Springs in 1923. She once said, "Politics is character in South Africa." She settled in Johannesburg after receiving an education (but not graduating) from Witwatersand University. Gordimer published her first story at the age of 15 and has commented that not even winning the Nobel Prize (which was awarded to her in 1991) was as thrilling as seeing a story of hers in print at that age. Her first collection of stories, *Face to Face*, was published in 1949. She once remarked that "the short story is the literary form of our age," but she has also written many novels and essays and has been awarded a host of honors in addition to the Nobel, including the Booker Prize and the Orange Prize, a prestigious British literary prize for the best original novel by a woman of any nationality writing in English. Gordimer refused to accept the Orange Prize in 1988 because it is awarded only to women. She also was awarded a literary prize by the French Legion of Honor. Three of Gordimer's books were banned during the apartheid years. She was a member of the African National Congress (ANC) when that group was officially banned, and she was a long-time friend and supporter of ANC leader Nelson Mandela, who would become head of state in South Africa following the abolition of apartheid. In addition to her leadership and activism in the fight against apartheid, Gordimer has been involved in anti-censorship activism, served as vice president of International PEN, and worked on behalf of causes related to HIV/AIDS.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864): Hawthorne was born in the infamous Salem, Massachusetts, and descended from ancestors who participated in the Salem witch trials and believed in a stern form of Puritanism tied to the teachings of John Calvin. His ancestor William Hathorne was a colonial magistrate who persecuted Quakers, and William Hathorne's son John was a Puritan investigator of those accused of witchcraft. Hawthorne was obsessed with Puritanism and his Puritan ancestors. He wrote of them in a work called "The Custom House," which is often considered an introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, and it seems clear that his guilt about the sins of the fathers and his own need to exorcize that guilt are part of the genius behind "Young Goodman Brown." Hawthorne's father died in 1808, when the author (born in 1804) was only four years old, and his mother became a recluse. Hawthorne would also live an isolated life—which shaped both his character and his vision—though all of that would change and he would wind up a famous and prosperous man. He was an editor and novelist, as well as a short story writer, and he wrote children's stories, travel sketches, Gothic tales, and a children's history of the world that sold more than a million copies but made him all of $100.00—the fee paid to him for the book. A college classmate and close friend of America's 14th president, Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne wrote a presidential campaign biography for Pierce and was appointed by Pierce to Liverpool as U.S. consul. Hawthorne published his first tale in 1830 and, five years later, published "Young Goodman Brown" in an issue of *New England Magazine*. The story later appeared in a short story collection of Hawthorne's called *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Hawthorne died in 1864.

Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961): Hemingway was born in 1899 and grew up in Oak Park, a suburb of Chicago, which he once derogated in a much-quoted remark as a place of wide lawns and narrow minds. His introduction to violence came early when he went with his father (a country doctor) to an Indian camp and was exposed to suicide, an experience turned into a fictional piece in his 1925 volume *In Our Time*. He was a reporter for the *Kansas City Star* before volunteering to serve in an American ambulance unit during World War I. He then served at the front in Italy, where he was wounded before his 19th birthday as a volunteer ambulance driver, an experience that helped to shape much of his vision as an author. Hemingway helped revolutionize prose fiction with his concrete and compact writing style that emphasized action. In addition to short stories, he published many novels and was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954 after the publication of *The Old*

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Man and the Sea. Both Hemingway's father and Hemingway committed suicide—Hemingway taking his life in 1961 with a shotgun in Ketchum, Idaho.

Shirley Jackson (1919–1965): Jackson was born in San Francisco in 1919. She attended the University of Rochester and Syracuse University and married the literary critic Stanley Edgar Hyman; the couple settled down in Vermont, where he taught as a professor at Bennington. She was a mother of four and a housewife who managed to produce a good deal of published work. Jackson became famous after the publication of "The Lottery," which created a major sensation after it first appeared in *T*he *New Yorker*, though she regularly insisted, "It was just a story." She was repeatedly asked about the meaning of the story and told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, her hometown paper, that the story is about "pointless violence and general inhumanity." Though known mostly for "The Lottery," Jackson was also the author of a number of novels, children's books, and short stories that were published in many of the most popular women's magazines of the day, such as *McCall's*, *Women's Day*, and *Good Housekeeping*. She won a coveted Edgar mystery award for one of her stories, "The Possibility of Evil," published in 1965 as part of a bushel of unpublished work discovered posthumously, and wrote an influential horror novel, *The Haunting of Hill House*. Jackson, a lifetime agoraphobic, was saddled most of her adult life with neurotic fears that would later turn into psychotic paranoia. She died in 1965.

Henry James (1843–1916): James has earned the title of master because of his body of fiction writing and his contributions to literary theory and criticism. His output was prodigious. One would be hard-pressed to find a more consummate man or woman of letters. James wrote novels, biography and autobiography, journalism, plays, travel accounts, reportage, literary criticism, and 112 stories. He published his first story when he was 21. He was prolific, was deeply and passionately committed to the literary life, and made his living as a writer. James published "The Real Thing" in 1891 when he was 48. Another famous James story, *Daisy Miller*, was published in 1878, and James was still publishing great stories, such as "The Beast in the Jungle" and "The Jolly Corner," in 1903 when he was 60. He was born in New York City in 1843 and came from a distinguished and prominent New York family—though he spent much of his early life in Europe and wound up an American expatriate in Britain, renouncing his American citizenship and becoming a naturalized British citizen after the United States would initially not join Britain and France in the First World War. James's father was a religious philosopher and his brother William was a famous psychologist and the father of American pragmatism. Henry James died in 1916.

James Joyce (1882–1941): Born in 1882 in Dublin, Joyce—one of the 20th century's most respected and revered writers—became an expatriate living in Zurich, Trieste, Pula, Rome, and ultimately, Paris. He was a cosmopolitan in his living quarters but returned ineluctably to his roots and the regional world of Dublin. He was educated in Jesuit schools and at University College Dublin but left both nation and the Catholic Church to devote his life to literary art. Joyce wrote famous novels, perhaps the century's most famous, *Ulysses*, as well as the semi-autobiographical *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Finnegans Wake*. He is best known for his inventive and original use of language; his mastery of the stream-of-consciousness technique that was also used by such writers as Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner; and his use of archetypes, myth, and what he called the epiphany, a moment of revelation of truth for a character in a story. Joyce's influence on the modern short story is inestimable. He (along with the poet William Butler Yeats and such playwrights as Lady Gregory and Sean O'Casey) was singular in hastening an Irish literary revival and literary renaissance that would see a spate of short fiction literary talent in such writers as Liam O'Flaherty, Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, and later on, Samuel Beckett, Edna O'Brien, and Mary Lavin. James Joyce died in 1941.

Franz Kafka (1883–1924): Kafka was born in 1883 into a middle-class Jewish family in Prague—then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He remained single his entire life and lived mostly with his parents, though he was fearful throughout his life of his authoritarian and strict father. Only a few of his stories and none of his fragmentary novels were published during his lifetime and, though he gave every outward indication that he did not want them ever to be published, this was not the case with "A Hunger Artist," written and published in a collection of that title near the end of Kaka's life, when he was dying of tuberculosis. His friend and literary executor Max Brod defied his request to burn his novel manuscripts and saw to it that *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and *Amerika* were published after his death. Kafka became, posthumously, one of the most revered and influential writers of the 20th century. He was a civil-servant claim investigator most of his adult life. Though a law graduate and the inventor of the first civilian hardhat, Kafka worked for a year for an Italian insurance company and for a number of years for the Bohemian workers accident insurance claim company. He died in 1924 of starvation from a throat condition, caused by the tuberculosis, which made eating painful.

Maxine Hong Kingston (1940–): Kingston was born in 1940 in Stockton, California, the eldest of six children. Her father had been trained in China as a scholar but in the United States worked in a laundry and as manager of a gambling house. Her mother had trained in China in medicine and midwifery but worked in the United States in a laundry and as a field hand. Kingston graduated from the University of California at Berkeley and married an actor named Earl Kingston. Her work, especially *The Woman Warrior* from which "No Name Woman" is taken, has had enormous influence on Chinese and Chinese American writing, as well as on ethnic and feminist writers. She is an emeritus professor of English at UC Berkeley and was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 1997 by then President Bill Clinton. For many years, she has been a peace activist and continues to work voluntarily as a writing teacher with veterans of war.

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D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930): A son of the working class and of a lower-class, impoverished background, Lawrence was born to a miner father and schoolteacher mother in 1885 in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, in central England. He became educated, like his mother, and married Frieda von Richthofen, the wife of a German professor who was also the mother of three children. Lawrence was accused of spying for the Germans in World War I and arrested and accused by the Germans of being a British spy. Lawrence remained, throughout his lifetime, generally removed from politics and dedicated to art. He had a credo predicated on the efficacy of sexuality and spontaneity and living on the basis of one's impulses and virility, intuition and blood, as well as on a philosophy tied to androgyny. A prolific writer, he published short stories, novels, poetry, travel writing, and essays throughout his life and was also an Impressionist painter. He was vilified as being obscene and pornographic, particularly after the publication of his last novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*—published first in 1928 in Florence after a number of court battles to overcome the fact that it had been banned. To the present day, Lawrence is considered one of the world's greatest writers, and "The Rocking-Horse Winner," one of his and the world's finest stories. He died in 1930.

Bernard Malamud (1914–1986): A novelist as well as a short story writer and the recipient of two National Book Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, and an O. Henry Award, Malamud was born in Brooklyn in 1914 to Russian Jewish immigrant parents. He went to City College and Columbia and taught English at Oregon State and Bennington. "Jewbird" was part of his second collection of short stories, *Idiots First*, which appeared in 1963. The first collection featured one of Malamud's other most famous stories, the title story, evocative of Magical Realism, "The Magic Barrel." Malamud was often identified with Saul Bellow and Philip Roth as part of a triumvirate of Jewish American male writers. Roth, a younger writer than the other two, eulogized Malamud upon his death as a man of stern morality whose conscience "was tortuously exacerbated by the pathos of human need unabated." Malamud worked much stronger and more intensely than the other two with traditional Jewish themes of suffering, victimization, exile, the role of being marginal or an outsider, and the paramount importance of law and morality. One of the most famous statements Malamud made was "All men are Jews though few men know it," by which he meant that life universally involves suffering and the Existential condition of being a potential victim simply because one is human.

Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923): Born Katherine Beauchamp in 1888 to a prominent New Zealand family in Wellington, by high school, Mansfield was publishing short fiction—though her first love was the cello. She changed her last name to Mansfield in 1911 after her first collection of short stories, *In a German Pension*, was published. She had been sent by her mother to Bavaria after becoming pregnant, though she ultimately suffered a miscarriage. For a time, she lived a bisexual and bohemian life in London that included a marriage that lasted only a few days and a serious case of gonorrhea. She died—like Chekhov and Kafka—of tuberculosis in 1923 at the institute of the Russian mystic George Gurdjieff in Fontainebleau, France. Her last words were "I love the rain. I want the feeling of it on my face." Mansfield's total output as a short story writer included more than 60 published stories and 26 unfinished. She was a friend of D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf and a member of the renowned and influential Bloomsbury Group of artists, writers, and thinkers. She and her second husband, literary critic and editor John Middleton Murry, were close friends of Lawrence and his wife, Frieda, though she and Lawrence had a serious falling out. As a writer, Mansfield was most significantly influenced by Chekhov and Joyce and the idea of a story's emotional impact being central to it as an experience. Her work continues to be internationally of great and enduring influence.

Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893): Maupassant was a novelist and editor who also wrote travel books and poetry and was a newspaper reporter. He was the author of hundreds of short stories, some of them horror-type stories inspired and greatly influenced by Poe. Maupassant was born Henri René Albert Guy de Maupassant in 1850 to a noble and old Lorraine family settled in Normandy. Maupassant is often described as one of France's most famous writers, one of the fathers of the short story, and along with such figures as Émile Zola, one of the fathers of Naturalism. He was a protégé of Gustave Flaubert, the author of *Madame Bovary*, who was a childhood friend of Maupassant's mother and Uncle Alfred. Maupassant's maternal grandfather was Flaubert's godfather, and Flaubert was a literary godfather to Maupassant, mentoring him, introducing him to other distinguished literary figures of his day, and helping him establish himself as a career writer. Maupassant's parents separated when he was quite young, and as a young man—before he established himself as a writer of wide fame and fortune—Maupassant was expelled from a seminary. He went to Paris at age 21, where he worked as a civil servant. He died of syphilis before his 43rd birthday in 1893 and left a dark and revelatory epitaph that he wrote for himself: "I have coveted everything and taken pleasure in nothing." Maupassant was influenced by the Naturalists and his work is a guidepost of Naturalism beginning to make its headway into short fiction.

Flannery O'Connor (1925–1964): Born in 1925 in Savannah, Georgia, to Roman Catholic parents, O'Connor held devoutly to that faith throughout her life. In 1938, the family moved to Milledgeville, near Macon, Georgia. She attended Georgia State College for Women and the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. A novelist as well as an essayist and short story writer, she is internationally recognized as a great fiction writer. O'Connor's work is often viewed as reflective of her Catholic faith and seen as grotesque and mysterious—quintessential southern Gothicism. Her father died of the autoimmune disease lupus, which Flannery was also diagnosed with in 1950. After that, she returned from the east and lived on her

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family's farm with her mother and raised peacocks. In 1956, she was awarded the National Book Award for fiction. Her reputation as one of the 20th century's greatest storytellers is assured.

Grace Paley (1922–2007): Paley was born Grace Goodside in the Bronx in 1922, one of three children, to a Russian Jewish immigrant family. She was educated at Hunter, New York University, and the New School for Social Research, where she studied with the famed poet W. H. Auden. She wanted to be a poet and published a great deal of poetry over a lifetime, but her real gift was fiction, and she produced many wonderful stories with their own peculiar rhythm and cadence evocative of New York. She said of her stories: "None of it happened and yet every word of it is true. It's truth embedded in a lie." She was also known for her social and political activism and described herself as "a combative pacifist" and "a gentle anarchist." Her life ended with breast cancer when she was 84 and living in Vermont as that state's poet laureate.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849): Poe was born in 1809 to poor thespians. He was adopted at age three, after his mother died, by John Allan of Richmond, Virginia. Poe was educated in Virginia and England and expelled from West Point. He married his 13-year-old cousin Virginia Clemm when he was 27. Clemm died some 11 years later. Poe's life, most of it in Baltimore, was one of poverty, depression, illness, and addiction but also of prolific writing, including more than 70 stories, poetry, essays (especially his famous one on the short story), and a novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. He also worked as an editor and achieved international recognition during his lifetime. Poe will be remembered as one of the most important figures in American literature—laying the cornerstones of the genre of the short story as both a writer and a theorist. Edgar Allan Poe died in 1849.

John Updike (1932–): As a child, Updike lived in the small Pennsylvania town of Shillington in a working-class milieu. His father was a junior high teacher. Updike went to Harvard on a full scholarship, edited the Harvard *Lampoon*, and studied at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art in Oxford, England, before taking a job at *The New Yorker*. In 1957, he and his family moved to Massachusetts. He has published stories, novels, poems, and essays and has become one of American literature's most distinguished 20th-century literary figures—acclaimed as a chronicler of American life and manners and of American civilization. He received the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1983 for his collection of essays and criticism *Hugging the Shore.*

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Bibliography

Unless otherwise indicated, all stories and many of the essays cited in this course can be found in *The Story and Its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction* by Ann Charters (7th ed., New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press), abbreviated in the listings that follow simply as "in Charters." The collection is the best and most diverse I have found and includes a splendid array of stories from writers from many different backgrounds, as well as solid introductory material to each story and relevant commentaries by selected authors and critics about individual stories and the genre of short fiction. Included are casebooks on major short fiction writers and a casebook on graphic storytelling; appendices that offer good overviews of the elements of fiction, a brief history of the short story, and sections on writing about short stories, elements of literary theory, and critical perspectives; and a glossary and chronology. The sixth edition of Charters has what I feel is the best translation of Isaac Babel's "My First Goose" and many additional stories that are not included in the seventh edition, as well as different stories and commentaries. It does not include the graphic fiction. Both are excellent volumes, and the sixth edition includes all the stories listed as essential reading that are also in the seventh edition except for the selection by Babel.

The Norton Introduction to Literature (9th ed., New York: Norton, 2006), edited by Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter, and Kelly J. Mays, also has a fine selection of stories, as well as poetry and plays. The volume includes stories featured in this course by Poe, Hawthorne, Chekhov, Lawrence, García Márquez, Baldwin, and Atwood, with good grounding in the elements of fiction and useful, practical introductory material. This source is hereinafter cited by title.

Suggested Readings:

Aristotle. *Poetics.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981. The classical rendering (written in 335 B.C.) of a theory of tragedy by the great Greek philosopher who, for centuries, helped to define the nature of the elements of tragedy.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985; New York: Vintage, 2007. Atwood's dystopian novel about the subjugation of women in a theocratic state. A good example of the author's unusual powers of imagination and narration.

———. "Happy Endings." First published in 1983 in *Murder in the Dark: Short Fictions and Prose Poems*. In Charters and in a new edition of *Murder in the Dark*, Dallas, TX: Texas Bookman, 1996. This is the great Canadian author at her best—clever, parodic, wise, and full of fun and mischief but intent on showing the how and the why of storytelling.

———. *Oryx and Crake*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2003; Garden City, NY: Anchor, 2004. A later dystopian novel featuring the last man on Earth and genetic engineering, as well as other futuristic scientific advances based on the science that was percolating at the time Atwood wrote the novel. Another example of her sure sense of craft as a storyteller and her ability to weave in science and technology.

Babel, Isaac. "My First Goose." Published in *Konarmiia* (*Red Cavalry*) in 1926. Also in *Red Cavalry*, New York: Norton, 2003, translation by Peter Constantine, and Charters (6th ed.), translation by Walter Morrison (the best translation). Morrison's translation is more lyrical and closer to the mark as far as approximating the poetic and connotative power of Babel's prose, though if you can read Babel in the original Russian, you will see how formidable and challenging it is to translate his work.

———. *Red Cavalry*. New York: Norton, 2003. This collection, first published in the 1920s, provides a splendid portal into Babel's world of violence and war.

———. "Story of My Dovecote." Appears in *Red Cavalry and Other Stories*. Penguin Classics, 2006. The story is of a boy in Russia experiencing a pogrom is included in the collection of vivid war stories by the great Russian Jewish author set during the Soviet-Polish war.

Baldwin, James. *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. New York: Dell, 1980; New York: Dial Press Trade Paperbacks, 2000. The passionate and emotionally jarring Harlem-set story of a young African American boy and his family's travails (originally published in 1953). Full of soaring, lyrical writing and trenchant insight into black idioms and culture, as well as racism and black spirituality.

———. *Notes of a Native Son*. Boston: Beacon 1984. This collection of Baldwin's essays, first published in 1955, reveals his narrative powers and his strengths as a polemicist and expository writer. The essays in the collection traverse his life and provide a historic lens into understanding the civil rights movement and Baldwin's personal movement toward expatriating.

———. "Sonny's Blues." First published in 1957 in the *Partisan Review*. In Charters and in *Going to Meet the Man: Stories*, New York: Vintage, 1995. A remarkable story about Harlem, the blues, drug addiction, and literal brotherly love by one of America's finest African American authors.

Blake, William. *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. London: Tate Publishing, 2007. These poems by Blake (first published in 1789 and 1794) contrast the duality he saw of the human soul and its division between the innocence of childhood and the experience of the years following. The two most exemplary poems in the two books are "The Lamb" and "The Tyger," each embodying innocence and experience. The poems are particularly important intertextually, that is, in the way they affect, influence, and tie in with other literary works.

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Brod, Max. *Franz Kafka: A Biography*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1995. This is the biography of Kafka written by his close friend and first published in 1938. It gives us a lucid and detailed view into Kafka's life from a unique perspective.

Carver, Raymond. "Cathedral." First published in 1981 in *The Atlantic Monthly*. In Charters and *Cathedral*, New York: Vintage, 1989. The story seen by the majority of critics as the most powerful of those written by this gifted author of short fiction and poetry. Here, sight, wisdom, and transcendence come to an everyman from an encounter with his wife's friend, who is blind.

———. *Cathedral*. New York: Vintage, 1989. This volume of a dozen later published Carver short stories includes some of the author's finest work.

———. *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love: Stories.* New York: Vintage, 1989. Seventeen stories appear in this volume which established Carver's worldwide iconic reputation.

———. *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* New York: Vintage, 1992. Twenty-two of Carver's early stories were published in this collection when he was under the strong editorial influence of *Esquire* editor Gordon Lish.

Cash, W. J. *The Mind of the South*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992. Cash was a genius at weaving together a psychohistory of the American South and revealing a mentality and sensibility that are distinctly southern. The book is invaluable in providing a deep understanding of southern writers.

Cervantes, *Don Quixote*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2005. The classic episodic Spanish bildingsroman and universally admired novel of the adventurers Don Quixote and his loyal sidekick Sancho Panza.

Cheever, John. *The Stories of John Cheever.* New York: Vintage, 2000. This volume, originally published in 1978, is a collection of stories by one of America's finest and most admired short story writers from the post–World War II era. The stories capture Cheever's versatility as a storyteller and the suburban world that he so handily made his own.

Chekhov, Anton. *Four Plays* (*Seagull*, 1896; *Uncle Vanya*, 1897; *Three Sisters*, 1901; *The Cherry Orchard*, 1904). New York: Norton, 1977; London: Nick Hern Books, 2005. Each of these Chekhov plays provides a wider lens for seeing the extension of the author's genius into drama. The four plays have been widely acclaimed and frequently produced through the years. Each has remarkable power, but *Uncle Vanya* is most often designated as the great masterpiece.

———. "The Lady with the Dog." First published in Russian ("Dama s sobakoi") in 1899. In Charters as "The Lady with the Little Dog," translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, and as "The Lady with the Dog" in *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, translated by Constance Garnett (the better translation). The Garnett translation is also in *Anton Chekhov's Short Stories*, edited by Ralph Mattlaw, New York: Norton, 1979. Garnett's work as a translator continues to hold up best despite later translations of this beloved author's story—a powerful and enduring tale of forbidden love between a married man and a married woman.

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Chopin, Kate. "How I Stumbled upon Maupassant." In Charters. A short essay of appreciation for Maupassant by the author of *The Awakening* and other works of fiction.

Cobbs, Price, and William Grier. *Black Rage*. New York: Basic Books, 1968; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2000. An early work by two black psychiatrists focusing on the nature of racial identity in America for blacks. The book continues to have relevance to black identity and experience in the United States.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. New York: Dover, 1990. The classic novel of Belgian colonialism in the Congo that continues to evoke controversy over its depiction of Africans but remains one of the great novels of the early 20th century (first published in 1902). Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now* was based on *Heart of Darkness*.

Cooke, Nathalie. *Margaret Atwood.* Toronto: ECW Press, 1998. A good overview of Atwood and her importance not only as a Canadian writer but internationally.

de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. New York: Penguin,2007. An ambitious book for its time (published in 1949) and one that continues to resonate, despite the fact that many of the feminist views espoused in it have become integrated into Western thinking. The important thing to remember in reading this book is that it provided a historic foundation to much of modern feminist thinking and was, in its time, groundbreaking.

Dickey, James. *Deliverance*. New York: Delta, 1994. A novel by an American poet laureate that takes its readers into a heart of darkness in rural Georgia and helps us to understand the Gothic and frightful world that Flannery O'Connor projects in her stories. It was published in 1970 and made into a major motion picture in 1972.

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———. “The Moment Before the Gun Went Off.” First published in 1988 in *Harper’s Magazine*, then in a collection entitled *Jump*, New York: Penguin, 1992. Also in *The Twentieth Century and Beyond: The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*, Toronto: Broadview Press, 2006 (hereinafter cited as *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*). A heartbreaking story by a Nobel laureate fiction writer of an accidental death as South Africa begins its break with apartheid.

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———. *In Our Time* New York: Scribner Classics, 1986. Quintessential Hemingway. A mixture of stories, some involving Nick Adams, and prose poetry; first published in 1925. An excellent supplement to Hemingway’s short fiction, including “The Killers.”

———. “The Killers.” First published in *Scribner’s Magazine* in 1927. Also in *Concise Anthology of American Literature* (6th ed.), edited by George McMichael and James S. Leonard, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006 (hereinafter cited by title), and *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998. America’s lionized Nobel laureate’s classic story of hired assassins coming for retribution.

———. *The Old Man and the Sea*. New York: Scribner, 1995. A later Hemingway novella (1952) and the last work of fiction produced in the author’s lifetime. The story of an old Cuban fisherman and his stoic endurance. The novel helped Hemingway to win the Nobel Prize for literature.

———. *The Sun Also Rises*. New York: Scribner, 2006. The wastelander expatriates in a novel of doomed love and the Hemingway ethos. Based on Hemingway’s personal experiences in Europe, this is considered by many to be his seminal and best novel. Originally published in 1926.

Hotchner, A. E. *Papa Hemingway.* New York: Random House, 1966; New York: Carroll & Graf, 1996. A personal and favorably biased memoir of the public Hemingway by a man who was a friend and close associate, offering a good though slanted picture of Hemingway.

Howe, Irving. *The World of Our Fathers.* New York: Galahad Books, 1994. A full and detailed history, by one of America’s important literary critics, of the migration of Eastern European or Ashkenazi Jews to the United States and the obstacles and

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prejudices they faced. A first-rate recreation of the early immigrant experience and a distillation of adaptation to America. First published in 1976.

Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House.* New York: Penguin, 1984. A haunting, scary story of the supernatural and madness that shows Jackson's skill in creating fright and sustaining a narrative that juggles around a number of characters. Originally published in 1959.

———. "The Lottery." First published in *The New Yorker* in 1948. In Charters and in *The Lottery and Other Stories*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982. In one of the most controversial short stories ever published, Jackson tells the dark tale of the violence that lurks beneath a seemingly tranquil and ordinary, small 20th-century town.

———."The Morning of June 28, 1948, and 'The Lottery.'" In *Come Along with Me*. New York: Viking, 1968. Also in Charters. In this essay, Jackson documents how she came to write the story that made her famous and what aftereffects and aftershocks occurred following its publication.

———."The Possibility of Evil." In *Shirley Jackson: Collected Stories*. Princeton, NJ: Peterson, 2001. The story of a seemingly innocuous woman with the conspicuous name of Strangeworth in a town called Pleasant; it was published in 1965, after the author's death, and won an Edgar Allan Poe mystery story award. It is American Gothic in the tradition Jackson established with "The Lottery." We enter into a world where anonymous malicious notes are sent out by the woman to her neighbors and fellow townspeople.

James, Henry. *The Beast in the Jungle*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003. A later novella (1903) by James that takes us into the relationship of a man and a woman prevented from reaching fruition because of the man's fears. An unsettling but moving tale of love unrealized until too late.

———. *Daisy Miller*. New York: Penguin, 1987. A fine introduction to Henry James as a novelist in a short (especially for James), early (1878) work of an American woman abroad and the kinds of New World versus Old World conflicts that abound.

———."From Guy de Maupassant." In Charters. This is Henry James in appreciation of Guy de Maupassant's style, talent, and craft and serves as a worthwhile introduction to the connection of these two masterful storytellers.

———."The Genesis of 'The Real Thing.'" In Charters. Here is Henry James describing how he came to write "The Real Thing" and the nature of his intentions. A rare look into a short fiction writer's intentionality and the way it evolved.

———. *The Jolly Corner*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004. Another much-beloved James ghost story that also involves a romance and the unusual facet of the ghost being the protagonist's alter ego. Originally published in 1908.

———. "The Real Thing." First published in 1892 in *Black and White* magazine. In Charters and in *Henry James: Selected Short Stories*, New York: Penguin, 1963. One of the finest and most accessible stories by the great American master—all about art and life and life and art.

———. *The Turn of the Screw*. New York: Dover, 1991. A novella (published in 1898) that demonstrates the skills James possessed in telling a story that is not just a garden-variety ghost story. Though touching on the paranormal and the supernatural, the story really embodies a Modernist sense of ambiguity and uncertainty. It is, above all, a scary story exceedingly well told.

Joyce, James. "Araby." First published in 1914 in *Dubliners*. In Charters and in *Dubliners*, Clayton, DE: Prestwick House, 2006. The story by the great Irish literary genius of a Dublin boy's quest for romantic love and his suffering.

———. *Dubliners.* New York: Viking, 1967. The collection of 15 epiphany stories, originally published in 1914, in which the setting of Dublin plays a central role and Joyce demonstrates his extraordinary powers as a storyteller who focuses on ordinary lives.

———. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* New York: Bantam, 1998. Joyce's 1916 novel that shows his skills in portraying, through a semi-autobiographical character named Stephen Dedalus, the escape from institutions and conventions and the development of an artistic consciousness and an artist's sensibility

———. *Stephen Hero*. New York: New Directions, 1963. The earlier version of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, written between 1904 and 1906 and published in 1944. This work shows much of the earlier defiance, rebellion, and aesthetic development of young Stephen Dedalus and his move toward exile.

———. *Ulysses.* New York: Vintage, 1990. The great, mythic, all-in-one-day novel featuring Stephen Dedalus and his search for a father figure in the Jewish character of Leopold Bloom, husband of the irrepressible Molly. A rich harvest of language embedded with great erudition and stunning wit. *Ulysses* is a true novel masterpiece. First published in 1922.

Juvenal. *The Satires.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Sixteen satiric poems from ancient Rome in five separate books of verse that represent classical satire written between A.D. 100 and A.D. 120.

Kafka, Franz. *The Castle* New York: Schocken, 1998. Kafka's unfinished novel (published in 1926) about the land surveyor K, who is unable to penetrate the mysteries of the castle or the world of those in the village he has presumably been

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summoned to work in. The novel serves as an initiation into the surreal, impenetrable, and enigmatic view of life that makes up Kafka's vision.

———. "A Hunger Artist." Published in German in a collection by the same name (*Ein Hungerkünstler*) in 1924. In Charters translated by Willa and Edwin Muir (6th ed.) and by Charters (7th ed.). Also in *The Complete Stories*, New York: Schocken, 1995. The Muir translation in the sixth edition of Charters is preferred. I give Charters high marks for grappling with Kafka's language and working through her own translation from the German, but I find I am more moved by the Muir translation and feel that it is closer to the true spirit of Kafka's vision of the artist. This is an astonishing story of asceticism and martyrdom by one of the 20th century's most acclaimed and disturbing writers of fiction.

———. "In the Penal Colony." In *The Metamorphosis, In the Penal Colony, and Other Stories*. New York: Schocken, 1995. A Kafka short story that immerses us in the surreal world of torture and a machine that brands and executes. Well plotted and one of Kafka's best tales; first published in 1916.

———. "Letter to My Father." In *The Sons*. New York: Schocken, 1989. A letter Kafka wrote to his father (in 1919) that provides great insight into the author's abiding fear of his father and how this fear in many ways warped and possessed the son.

———. "The Metamorphosis." In *The Sons*. New York: Schocken, 1989. Kafka's great story of a man, Gregor Samsa, who wakes up to discover that he is a cockroach or dung beetle, an insect; his life gets worse from there. A novella of identity and a searing, grotesque parable of human existence reduced to the creepy and crawly stage. Originally published in 1915.

———. *The Trial.* New York: Random House, 1995. Kafka's dense and labyrinthine novel (also unfinished; published in 1925) about the plight of Joseph K, his arrest for a crime that is never specified, and the consequences that befall him. We as readers grapple with the strange and unsettling occurrences in Joseph K's life. A mystifying and brilliant story of alienation.

Kincaid, Jamaica. "Girl." In *At the Bottom of the River.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988. Also in Charters. Though it seems more like a monologue than a short story, "Girl" has within it the story of the troubled relationship between a girl and her mother and the values that prevail upon the women of a colonized race. Astonishingly compressed and effective prose narration.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Fifth Book of Peace.* New York: Knopf, 2003. A personal mixed narrative work of remembrance and meditation on war and peace and Kingston's own loss of her fourth book of peace in a fire.

———. "No Name Woman," in *The Woman Warrior*, New York: Vintage, 1975 and 1989. A story of an awakening to ethnic identity and the significance of a long-buried family secret by a distinguished and richly talented Chinese American woman novelist and short story writer.

———. "On Mortality." In *China Men*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980. A Taoist parable from Kingston's collection with strong cosmologic and mythic elements reflecting gender differences.

———. *Tripmaster Monkey.* New York: Vintage, 1990. A novel about a Chinese American, 1960s hippie and would-be playwright. Any Kingston writing is worth reading, including this first foray of hers into a novel that sometimes created confusion.

———. *The Woman Warrior.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976. The subtitle is *Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, and the ghosts are the supernatural kind in the stories of the young girl's Chinese past and the California Caucasians of her present life. A powerful, unified collection of autobiography, myth, and what the Chinese call "talk story" brought together in a unique and remarkably written volume about Chinese American and gender identity.

Lawrence, D. H. "The Horse Dealer's Daughter." In *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*. A Lawrence short story about love and its power and spontaneity. One of his best and most powerful stories, embodying many of the Freudian and erotic ideas that were ripening in his thinking and that would become singularly identified with his writing. First published in 1913.

———. *Kangaroo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Not Lawrence's best novel (his eighth, published in 1923), this book nevertheless reveals many of his ideas about love and politics. It also includes vivid accounts of his World War I experiences and his attitudes toward fascism, as well as enduring descriptions of the novel's setting in New South Wales.

———. *The Plumed Serpent.* New York: Vintage, 1992. Lawrence's novel of an Irish woman in Mexico and the appeal of ancient and primal pagan spirituality combined with the author's distinct and revelatory views of sexuality and the battle of the sexes. Much politically incorrect content (it was first published in 1926) but definitely worth the read.

———. "The Rocking-Horse Winner." First published in 1926 in *Harper's Bazaar*. In Charters and in *D. H. Lawrence: The Complete Short Stories* (2 vols.), New York: Penguin, 1976. A mystical and Faustian tale of a boy's love for his mother and the darker regions to which he will travel to acquire it.

———. *Sons and Lovers.* New York: Modern Library, 1999. Lawrence's first autobiographical novel (published in 1913) is a landmark achievement of a high order that takes us into his own peculiar oedipal and class-divided life, rendered with great skill and melded into a most memorable novel.

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Leavis F. R. *Valuation in Criticism and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. A career collection of essays and reviews by one of the 20th century's most distinguished literary critics. Of particular note for the purposes of this course are Leavis's fine essays on D. H. Lawrence and Henry James.

Lubbock, Percy. *The Craft of Fiction*. New York: Penguin, 1955. A primer work of literary criticism that continues to provide much useful illumination.

Lukács, Georg. *History and Class Consciousness.* London: Merlin, 1967. This work by an important literary critic is heavily marinated in Marxist theory and extends Marx into a more contemporary context. A major influence on South Africa's Nadine Gordimer. First published in 1923.

———. *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism.* London: Merlin, 1963. Another work drenched in Marxist theory but useful in understanding Realism and Modernism. It includes some interesting writing on Kafka.

Mailer, Norman. *The Naked and the Dead.* New York: Picador, 2000. Mailer's novel set in the South Pacific in World War II remains a classic and his best work of fiction.

Malamud, Bernard. "Angel Levine." In *The Magic Barrel*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999. A magical short story by the masterful Malamud about a man experiencing Job-like personal suffering who meets a black angel.

———. *The Assistant.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. Suffering and Jewishness fuse in this tale of a poor grocer and his Italian assistant. A testament to Malamud's storytelling powers, it is a story about love and redemption and living by the law.

———. *The Fixer.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004. Another Malamud novel about Jewishness and suffering set in Russia and based on an actual case that Malamud turned into fiction. Not as riveting or well written as *The Assistant* but well worth the read.

———. *Idiots First*. New York: Dell, 1966. The second volume of Malamud stories; includes "The Jewbird" and a range of the author's fine and enduring short fiction.

———. "The Jewbird." First published in 1963 in *Idiots First*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Also in *American Short Stories Since 1945*, edited by John G. Parks, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 (hereinafter cited by title). One of the great and most masterful Jewish American storytellers gives us a mythic tale of the old world of the *shtetl* violently colliding with American assimilation.

———. *The Magic Barrel.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999. Malamud's first collection of short stories. The title story, concerning a rabbinical student and a matchmaker, is a gem, as are others in this wonderful volume.

Malcolm, Janet. *Reading Chekhov: A Critical Journey*. London: Granta Books, 2003. The talented *New Yorker* essayist goes to Russia in search of a deeper understanding of Chekhov.

Mansfield, Katherine. "The Garden Party." First published in 1922 in *The Garden Party*. Also in *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*. This story of a young woman's awakening to the intersections of life and death and the chasms of the classes is generally regarded as one of Mansfield's most compelling, well-crafted, and aesthetically pleasing works.

———. *The Garden Party.* New York: Penguin Classics, 1998. Also in *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*. A terrific sampling of 15 stories by one of the 20th century's finest storytellers.

Maupassant, Guy de. *The Complete Short Stories* [in 3 vols.]. London: Cassell, 1970. The prolific, enduring output of one of the fathers of the short story.

———. "The Necklace." First published in French ("La Parure") in 1884 in the anthology *Tales of Days and Nights*. In Charters translated by Marjorie Laurie and in *Selected Short Stories* translated by Roger Colet, New York: Penguin, 1971. The Marjorie Lurie translation is the better of the two simply because it gets us closest to the subtleties of expression used by Maupassant and the declarative and unvarnished style so closely associated with his brand of storytelling, which is epitomized by the shocking ending of this classic tale.

———. "The Writer's Goal." In Charters. A short essay by Maupassant on how writers need to select from life and create the illusion of what is real.

Melville, Herman. "Bartleby the Scrivener." In *Billy Budd*. New York: Signet Classics, 1998. One of Melville's great works of short fiction. Set in Wall Street in the 19th century, this story is about a man who, quite simply, would prefer not to.

———. "Benito Cereno." In *Billy Budd*. New York: Signet Classics, 1998. A dark, haunting, and powerful tale of slaves taking over a slave vessel, the Spanish captain who is overpowered by them, and the good-natured Yankee captain who boards the ship.

———. "Billy Budd." In *Billy Budd*. New York: Signet Classics, 1998. A novella about an innocent young sailor impressed into service and falsely charged with conspiracy to mutiny by the motiveless, malignant John Claggart. A gripping story with a serious meditation on the nature of the law and how it is executed.

———. "Blackness in Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown.'" In Charters. Melville reviews Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse* and focuses on blackness in Hawthorne's classic Salem-based tale "Young Goodman Brown."

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Meyers, Jeffrey. *Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Legacy.* New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000. An excellent look into Poe's life and character.

Nabokov, Vladimir. "Gogol's Genius in 'The Overcoat.'" In *Nikolai Gogol*. New York: New Directions, 1961. Also in Charters. The Russian born author of *Lolita* writes an appreciative essay of Gogol and his classic tale that enhances our understanding.

———. "A Reading of Chekhov's 'The Lady with the Dog.'" In *Lectures on Russian Literature*. New York: Harvest/HBJ Books, 2002. The essay is an interpretation and assessment by the great Russian author Vladimir Nabokov of Chekhov's story in a collection of Nabokov's essays on Russian writers.

O'Connor, Flannery. *Complete Stories*. London: Faber, 2000. The complete stories of one of America's greatest short story writers. You might include the adjectives American or southern or woman, but she is one of the greatest with or without them.

———. "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." First published in 1955 in a collection of the same title. In Charters and in *The Complete Stories*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971. America's great southern Catholic fiction writer's most widely anthologized and published story of evil and grace in Georgia as a family meets up with a mass murderer.

———. *Mystery and Manners.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969. Prose selections by O'Connor about the craft of writing, the role of spiritual mystery, and southern mores and manners. A valuable work to read before or after reading O'Connor's fiction.

———. *Wise Blood.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967. O'Connor's novel of religious fanaticism in the South cast in comedic and satiric veins. Not as powerful as many of her stories but indicative, like her short fiction, of her genius and her inimitable prose style.

Paley, Grace. "A Conversation with My Father." In *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute.* New York: Vintage, 1974. A work by another great American woman short story writer from the post–World War II era. This story concerns a fiction writer and her father arguing about fiction at the father's deathbed. It embodies Paley's American philosophy about storytelling versus the older, European view.

———. "An Interest in Life." First published in *The Little Disturbances of Man*, New York: Penguin, 1985. Also in *American Short Stories Since 1945.* One of America's earliest and best feminist writers tells the story of a likable woman's survival by taking a lover after her husband abandons her.

———. *The Little Disturbances of Man.* New York: Penguin, 1985. Paley's first and most celebrated volume of 11 stories about ordinary men and women "at love," written in the distinctive style of storytelling that ensured lasting literary fame for her as a writer of short fiction.

Pawel, Ernst. *Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984. The best extant biography of Kafka, with rich insight into his life and times and his genius.

Peeples, Scott. *The Afterlife of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Camden House, 2007. An English professor and Poe scholar examines the author's life and work and comes to a number of original conclusions.

Pirandello, Luigi. "War." In *The Medals and Other Stories*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1939. Also in *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*, edited by Richard Bausch, New York: Norton, 2005. A remarkably concise, dramatically moving story by a writer more known for his plays than for his short stories. The story takes place aboard a train and dramatizes a conversation between two men, one who has recently lost his son to the war at the front.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Cask of Amontillado." First published in 1846 in *Godey's Lady's Book*. In Charters and in *Complete Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, New York: Doubleday, 1984. This classic story of horror and revenge by America's great spellbinding storyteller brings us into a world of codes of honor and carefully planned murder.

———. "The Fall of the House of Usher." In *Concise Anthology of American Literature* and in Charters. A frightening Gothic story of an entombed twin sister and a decaying house that exemplifies Poe's ideal of the story being unified by all of its details toward the effect of a single impact.

———. "The Impact of the Single Effect in a Prose Tale." In Charter. The seminal essay on the short story that puts forth Poe's theory of the aesthetics of the genre. A must read for understanding the theoretical basis of the short story.

———. "The Tell-Tale Heart." In *Concise Anthology of American Literature* and in Charters. Another one of Poe's frightening stories and one of his most famous—a pulse-throbbing tale of murder and guilt.

Pritchett, V. S., ed. *The Oxford Book of Short Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. A first-rate volume of short stories compiled and with an introduction by famed literary critic Pritchett.

Prose, Francine. "The Bones of Muzhiks: Isaac Babel Gets Lost in Translation." *Harper's Magazine*, November 2001. Also in Charters (6th ed.). A gifted critic and fiction writer, Prose muses on how Babel's translators fail to get the full effect of his brilliant style.

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Reynolds, David. “The Art of Transformation in Poe’s ‘The Cask of Amontillado.’” In *New Essays on Poe’s Major Tales*, edited by Kenneth Silverman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Also in Charters. An excellent analysis of the morality and effect of Poe’s famous horror story by an astute and insightful literary critic.

Rosten, Leo. *The Joys of Yiddish*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968. A classic introduction to the rich multiple and historic meanings of Yiddish words, presented with a good deal of wit and charm.

Runyon, Randolph Paul. *Reading Raymond Carver*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994. A critical study of much of Carver’s work that seeks to show connections between different stories in different volumes.

Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. New York: Penguin, 1994. The classic American novel that tells the story of a disturbed adolescent boy and his journey at this crucial phase of his life. The only novel by Salinger, who published three volumes of short stories and a novella.

Smith, Angela. *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999. A thoughtful analysis of how these two important women writers influenced and mirrored each other’s work, as well as an exploration of their friendship.

Snodgrass, W. D. “The Rocking Horse: The Symbol, the Pattern, the Way of Life.” In *The Hudson Review*, vol. xi, no. 2, Summer 1958. This essay, by a distinguished American poet, had a weighty influence on how Lawrence’s “Rocking-Horse Winner” was read. Based on Freud’s Oedipus complex, Snodgrass’s reading may seem quaint to some in our present era but continues to resonate as a way of seeing deeper meaning in the story.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. New York: Random House, 1986. A graphic novel by an American cartoonist about his father’s experiences during the Holocaust and as a Holocaust survivor and of his own life and relationship with his father. All groups are presented as animals: Jews as mice, Nazis as cats, Poles as pigs, and Americans as dogs. A seminal work.

Updike, John. “A & P.” First published in *The New Yorker* in 1961. In Charters and in *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories*, New York: Ballantine, 1996. A charming story of a boy growing up and entering into the real adult world by one of America’s most celebrated contemporary writers of fiction.

———. *A & P: Lust in the Aisles*. Minneapolis: Redpath Press, 1986. The first published version of this story from Updike’s volume of short stories *Pigeon Feathers*.

———. *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories*. New York: Knopf, 1962. An early, classic volume by a young, stylistically dazzling, and inventive Updike; includes the story “A & P.”

———. *Rabbit Quartet* (*Rabbit Run,* 1960; *Rabbit Redux*, 1971; *Rabbit Is Rich*, 1981; and *Rabbit at Rest*, 1990). New York: Knopf. Four novels about Harry Angstrom, known as Rabbit, as we watch him develop through life and see, through Updike’s considerable skills, a detailed rendering of American cultural history.

———. *Trust Me*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996. A volume of contemporary stories by the contemporary masterful American storyteller.

Walker, Warren. “The Unresolved Conflict in ‘The Garden Party.’” In *Modern Fiction Studies*, Winter 1957–1958. An essay by a literary critic who praised Mansfield’s story but is troubled by its ending.

Williams, Tennessee. *The Glass Menagerie.* New York: New Directions, 1999. The poignant, tender, semi-autobiographical family play by one of America’s finest playwrights. Williams experiments with lighting and music in ways that are reminiscent of Brecht and the epic theater. One of his best plays.

Young, Philip. *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1986. One of the best critical studies of Hemingway’s work by one of the world’s leading Hemingway scholars.

Additional Recommended Short Stories (Lecture Twenty-Four):

Anderson, Sherwood. “Death in the Woods.” In Charters (6th ed.).

———. “I Want to Know Why.” In Charters.

Bambara, Toni Cade. “The Lesson.” In *Gorilla, My Love*. New York: Vintage, 1992. Also in Charters.

Barth, John. “Lost in the Funhouse” and “Night-Sea Visitors.” In *Lost in the Funhouse*. Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1988. “Lost in the Funhouse” is also in Charters.

Barthelme, Donald. “The School.” In *Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts*. New York: Bantam, 1969. Also in B. Minh Nguyen and Porter Shreve, *The Contemporary American Short Story*. New York: Longman, 2003 (hereinafter referred to by title).

———. “Views of My Father Weeping.” In *American Short Stories Since 1945*and *The New Yorker* (December 6, 1949).

Borges, Jorge Luis. “The Circular Ruins.” In *Ficciones*. New York: Everyman’s Library, 1993. Also in Charters.

———. “The End of the Duel.” In *A Personal Anthology*. New York: Grove Press, 1994. Also in Charters (6th ed.).

Boyle, T. C. “Greasy Lake.” In *Greasy Lake and Other Stories*. New York: Penguin, 1986. Also in Charters.

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Caputo, Philip. "In the Forest of the Laughing Elephant." In *Exiles.* New York: Random House, 1998.

Cheever, John. "The Country Husband" and "The Swimmer." Both in *The Stories of John Cheever*. New York: Vintage, 2000. "The Swimmer" is also in Charters.

Cisneros, Sandra. "The House on Mango Street." In *The House on Mango Street*. London: Bloomsbury Pub. Ltd., 2004. Also in Charters.

Coover, Robert. "The Babysitter." In *Pricksongs and Descants*. New York: Grove Press, 2000. Also in *American Short Stories Since 1945*.

Danticat, Edwidge. "Night Women." In *Krick? Krack!* New York: Vintage, 1996. Also in Charters.

Erdrich, Louise. "The Red Convertible." In *Love Medicine*. New York: Perennial Classics, 2001. Also in Charters.

Faulkner, William. "A Rose for Miss Emily" and "That Evening Sun." In *The Collected Stories of William Faulkner*. New York: Vintage, 1995. Both also in Charters.

Flaubert, Gustave. "A Simple Heart." In *Three Tales by Gustave Flaubert*. New York: Limited Editions, 1978. Also in Charters.

Jen, Gish. "In the American Society." In *Who's Irish?* New York: Vintage, 2000. Also in *The Contemporary American Short Story*.

Kincaid, Jamaica. "Girl." In *At the Bottom of the River*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000. Also in Charters.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. "Interpreter of Maladies" and "The Third and Final Continent." In *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

Le Guin, Ursula. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." In *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2004. Also in Charters.

Lessing, Doris. "Our Friend Judith" and "To Room Nineteen." In *Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1980.

Mason, Bobbie Ann. "Shiloh." In *Shiloh and Other Stories*. New York: Modern Library, 2001. Also in Charters.

Mukherjee, Bharati. "The Management of Grief." In *The Middleman and Other Stories*. New York: Grove Press, 1999. Also in Charters.

Munro, Alice. "Boys and Girls." In *Dance of the Happy Shades*. New York: Vintage, 1998. Also in *The Norton Introduction to Literature*.

———. "The Turkey Season." In *The Moons of Jupiter and Other Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1991. Also in *The Contemporary American Short Story*.

Oates, Joyce Carol. "How I Contemplated the World from the Detroit House of Corrections and Began My Life Over Again" and "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" In *Wheel of Love*. New York: Vanguard, 1970.

O'Brien, Tim. "The Things They Carried." In *The Things They Carried*. New York: Chelsea House Publications, 2004. Also in Charters.

Ozick, Cynthia. "The Shawl." In *The Shawl*. New York: Vintage, 1990. Also in Charters.

Packer, Z. Z. "Drinking Coffee Elsewhere." In *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere*. New York: Riverhead Trade, 2004. Also in Charters.

Porter, Katherine Anne. "Flowering Judas" and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." In *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter*. New York: Harvest Books, 1979.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. "Storyteller" and "Yellow Woman." In *Storyteller*. New York: Arcade, 1989. "Storyteller" is also in *American Short Stories Since 1945*. "Yellow Woman" is in Charters.

Stone, Robert. "Helping." In *Bear and His Daughters: Stories*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997. Also in *American Short Stories Since 1945*.

Tan, Amy. "Half and Half" and "Rules of the Game." In *The Joy Luck Club*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

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