

## Styles and Techniques of Anton Chekhov's Story Writing

By

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It is a well known fact that the short story is a form of literature. It must have a definite form of literature. It must have a definite form and a set of rules to govern it. However, in matters concerning style and technique the short story writer is free to use his preferred choice. It is crystal clear that novel and short story are two distinct literary genres the one giving the story of a whole life while the other offering slice of life pictures dramatizing some crises in the life of an individual. So the principles of structure and artistic impression of the short story are all peculiarly its own. In spite of all this, it would be convenient to consider the technique of the short story in its relation to that of the novel, for they are at least kindred forms of prose, fiction making use of the same elements of narrative under the same traditional principles of art. A story is an intense awareness of human loneliness that being quite rare in the novel. Randall Jarrell affirms that story is the 'dream verbalized' whereas Eudora Welty accepts the fact that a good short story is one which reveals mystery. The short story is one which reveals mystery. The short is like a polished miniature: it can be rough, cruel, heartbreaking, big hearted, yet still polished to a sheen that brings out every grain and whorl. The short story is a real test of prose writing in a way the novel often is not. The short story writer is expected to avoid any superfluous detail because it is bound to retard the progress of the short story towards the final effect. The plot must be confined to the bare essential, the characters should be just the indispensable ones, and the setting should be limited to a few suggestive hints. Actually, a short story writer must have an impression to communicate, which should engage his attention from the beginning to the end. A short story writer's first impression, however comes to him from a situation – a new grouping of circumstances, a haunting personality challenging analysis, a bit of background giving new dimension to people and events. An important aspect of the modern short story is its style and use of diction. It is expected that each word in a short story should contribute to the effect it strives for what is required in a short story are just apt words, and telling phrases, and descriptive passages are supposed to be sparingly used, and only when they can prove to be valuable in so far as they contribute to the total effect of the story.

Anton Chekhov is more difficult and advanced than Maupassant. In Chekhov's stories a plot doesn't matter much. As a pioneer of the plotless story, Chekhov introduced a number of technical innovations in the art and craft of short writing. He developed the short story as a form of literary art to one of its highest peaks and the translation of his stories into English has constituted one of the greatest single literary influences at work in the short stories of America, English and Ireland. The influence has been one of factors encouraging the short story writers of these nations to revolt against the conventional plot story and to seek in simple and realistic terms to make of the story and form that more seriously reflects life. This would be part of the exercise to trace the elements of universality in the short stories of Chekhov that make them timeless. Chekhov disapproved of the short story that had a dramatic structure with well marked beginning, middle and end, and stood in reaction against the formula-based, well made stories popularized chiefly by O. Henry. In his hand, the short story becomes the fruit of a single moment of time, a single incident and a single perception as a matter of fact, the success of a story depends on how and to what extent it deals with and dramatizes a single

incident and in doing so utterly transforms it. A successful story is a glimpse through a moment that unfolds before us a history of the millennium, an individual who gives us a feel of entire human kind, an incident which makes us aware of the vastness of life itself. It is the accomplishment in words of a single emotional or dramatic effect which leaves us with the feeling of having participated in the life and movement of the world. The best lyrical quality which is found in Chekhov's stories is rare in the stories of Maupassant, Maughm, Wolf, Mansifield, O'Henry and many other short story writer. The powerful evocation of the ultimate truth of life through imagery is the specific style of Chekhov's story writing. There is Joycean 'inomeuts of epiphany', which is very close to Ezra Pound's notion of the image or William Wordsworth's concept of insight. It gives the readers a sudden evanescent, spiritual manifestation of life's truth. A great story becomes an image of a particular emotion, and working through imagery, symbolism, suggestions and rhythmical prose, it stands very close to lyric poetry. The echoes of Chekhov's brevity, impressionism and disregard for traditional plotted stories resonate through the majority of modern literary fiction and drama.

Chekhov believed in certain basic assumptions and principles of the short story writing which he not only preached to the aspiring writers, but also practiced himself. Recognised for his originality from the very beginning, he preferred to write about ordinary events and relationship of the people in small towns and villages. Chekhov believed that even an ordinary situation like people going to offices, quarrelling with their wives and eating cabbage soup could provide sufficient material for a short story. He employed a variety of techniques, including pacing and word choices which paint imagery, to create his characters and reveal their changing moods. His stories are transcriptions and symbolic representation of life. Chekhov describe the things simply and objectively observe them minutely, and at the end the point is made without apparent effort, leaving the reader thrilled emotionally disturbed as spiritually enlightened.

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