
UNIT 1 SHORT FICTION / STORY

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to provide a working definition of short fiction/ story and a basic background to an understanding of this genre. In this unit we shall trace the origins of short fiction/ story in European/ mainstream English Literature, the development of the Australian short fiction/ story and look at some of the important influences on this genre.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Fiction means something made up of or created by an author/ narrator/ storyteller. Today the word means a prose piece based on the imagination of the writer and not on literary facts. Fiction has its roots in ancient myths and folk tales in other words in the oral tradition. In this unit we have used the term short fiction / to essentially mean the short story. As we are aware most novels are long and reading them requires dedication, motivation and time on the part of the readers. **Edgar Allan Poe** (1809-1849) the American short fiction/ story writer believed that a short, concentrated story or what he called a "brief prose tale", was better suited to the times as people lacked leisure hours. He was also of the opinion that such a story could create a powerful, strong, single impression on the reader. His views made practical sense and prompted many writers to work in the short fiction/ story form. Several writers have collected their works for inclusion in single volumes. Writers like **William Faulker**, **F Scott Fitzgerald**, **Ernest Hemingway**, **Guy de Maupassant** are good examples of short fiction writers who have also had their stories collected in this way. Let us now take a look at the origin of the short fiction/ story in mainstream English Literature.

1.2 SHORT FICTION / STORY -HISTORY AND SCOPE

The short story as a genre defies all attempts at classifications and is extremely elusive. It is a genre that has descended from the myth, legend, parable, fairy tale, fable, anecdote, exemplum, essay, character study, fabliau and the ballad. The short story as a work of 'prose fiction of indefinite length' was developed and established only in the nineteenth century. In 1842, **Edgar Allan Poe** reviewed **Hawthorne's**

Twice Told Tale and expressed a rather apt precept on the short story, by which he meant 'a prose narrative requiring anything from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal of the tale, that, concentrates on a unique single effect and one in which the totality of effect is the main objective,' (J A Cuddens, *Literary Terms*). The short story has however, achieved such flexibility and variety that its possibilities now seem almost endless. For instance it could be concerned with a scene, an episode, an experience, an action, the exhibitions of a character or characters, the day's events, a meeting, a conversation or a fantasy.

If the attempts of a few Elizabethans like **Thomas Nashe** are not taken into account, the early pioneers of the genre (**Sir Walter Scott, Washington Irving, Hoffman and Hawthorne** deserve special mention here) paved the way for **Edgar Allen Poe**, who, is regarded by many as the first modern short story writer. Poe excelled in the detective story (*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*), the Gothic thriller (*The Pit and the Pendulum*) and a kind of early science fiction tale (*The Gold Bug*). He was greatly influenced by the German Romantics and their Gothic stories, and particularly by **Hoffman**. Another major influence was **Gogol** whose story *The Overcote* profoundly affected later Russian writers. Between the 1830-40s period and the end of the nineteenth century three other Russian and four French writers gained prominence with their exploration of possibilities with this form. These three Russians were: **Turgenev, Chekov and Tolstoy**, while the Four French writers were **Merimee, Flaubert, Dardet and Maupassant**. However, **Anton Chekov and Guy de Maupassant** are generally considered to be the masters of the short story in this period. Let us take a quick look at short fiction in nineteenth century America and England before we talk about Australian short fiction.

1.2.1 19th Century American, English and Australian Short Fiction

In American Literature the period between the Civil War (1861-64) and the outbreak of World War I (1914) may be considered to be the golden age of short fiction or the short story. As in France, Russia, England, in America too the short, effective, single blow story line began to dominate fictional literature. As in Australia, in America too, four stages may be traced in the development of short fiction/ story. In American short fiction owed its origin to the eighteenth century tales that were often colourless, formless, maybe even undramatic, and essentially serving only one function- Puritanical propaganda. Stories of this type like *Chariessa, or a Pattern for the Sex* and *The Danger of Sporting with Innocent Credulity*, (Carey's *Columbian Magazine*, estd in 1786), satisfied the readers for nearly half a century. This stage was followed by the writings of **Washington Irving**, who blended the moral tale with the Addisonian essay skillfully. Irving added to the moral tale of his day, characterisation, humour, ambience and literary charm. He was essentially a sentimentalist with great regard for the past. Some of his works are *Salmagundi*, *The Sketch Book* and *Rip Van Winkle*. The popularity of his *The Sketch Book*, his fame in England and Europe, the descriptions of lands across the seas, the romance, the vagueness and wonder of it all captured the imagination of a group of young writers who were to rule the mid-century. Out of all these writers Nathaniel Hawthorne stands out. He added depth, poignancy, and soul to short fiction by centering his attention and focus on one single situation while creating the impression of a unified whole. Following Hawthorne, **Edgar Allan Poe** was to become the next great short fiction writer. Times had changed and new scientific inventions and awareness created the demand for realism and logical order. This was Poe's contribution to short fiction. He wanted short fiction to be brief but scientific and as yet able to yield a totality of effect at one sitting and within one setting. His stories are all marvelous examples of one swift stroke of the brush type of creativity combined with precise use of diction. Though Poe was a critic and keen observer of the conventions of the age, and sensitive to

literary value, he was never really able to write from the heart and his works show a lack of this depth of human understanding. He was more of an artist than anything else who wanted to formulate the best short fiction/ story technique of his age. Poe is located ideally in the history of the development of short fiction in America. He was like the prophet peering into the next age, but he was adept at applying his new perfected art to the old sensational material of the thirties. By the early 1850s a great change had come over short fiction writing in America. The decline of the old type of story had set in and a new atmosphere was born. Writers no longer wrote the old Hawthornesque type of stories. This period stood for the dawning of definiteness, of localised reality, of a feeling left in the reader of actuality and truth towards human life and values. **Rose Terry Cooke** (1827-92) was the most significant writer of this period. She being a teacher in a school and experienced with the country districts, wrote with a deep knowledge an understanding and conviction of an area of life she knew best. In her long series of short fiction beginning in the forties with unlocalised stories and extending throughout the transition period into the 1870s and 1880s, and ending with her final collection as late as 1891, one may trace every phase of American short fiction in half a century. **Fitz-James O' Brien** (1828-62) added the new element of actuality with his short story *What Was It?* The short fiction of **Henry James** however, saw the end of the period of transition. With James the short story became an art form, a study of the surface of society, manners, and of human life. Beyond the brilliant art of Henry James, and the impressionistic study of situations from a scientific perspective, the American short fiction has never advanced.

Francis Bret Harte was another force to contend with. By the time Harte began writing, America was ready for local colour – and the emphasis was now on the nation rather than on the state. Following the war was an era of self- discovery. America was full of new and interesting life and the writers were to exploit this newness for the next two decades or more. What Harte added to short fiction apart from local colour was the dramatic element. In the 1870s however, two distinct schools of short fiction emerged: one, the school of unlocalised art, timeless and placeless, as Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne had written, and two, the new “local colour” school of Harte, which was moving more and more towards extremes. The nineteenth century was also a formative period in African- American literary and cultural history. Prior to the Civil War, the majority of black Americans living in the United States were held in bondage. Their, literary contribution include numerous poems, short stories, histories, narratives, among other things. Their short fiction as their novels and much of the other writing they produced addressed concerns of women about family, religion and slavery. Enough has been said about the American short fiction let us now try and see if we can find any such parallels or echoes as we go through the stories, the themes and the units in this block.

In England it was the period of **Dickens, Thackeray, Reade and George Eliot** or what may also be called the golden age of the later Victorian novel, yet, surprisingly the demand for short fiction did not decline. We shall not go into too many details on English short fiction here, as most of us will be well read in this and also aware of British literary trends. However, since American Literature and Australian Literature are new literatures, we have dealt with the former (American Literature) in some detail as for the latter, we will be making references to it throughout this block.

Australian short fiction developed through the centuries. What began as records, diaries, annals, journals of the early settlers later transformed and flourished as various genres of writing like short fiction, novels, biographies, autobiographies and annals. At the time of the first historic landing on Botany Bay in 1788, the men and women of letters were concerned with the immediate landscape. The environment- its differences/similarities to the home country, the seasons, the flora and fauna and the

local inhabitants formed their main themes. Even within this vast body of writing some were promoting emigrations to Australia while others were decrying what they believed to be the harsh, hostile environment. When more people from the home country came to inhabit the land, other issues became more serious. As most of the transported men and women were convicts, several tales on the convict system were written. Amongst the free settlers were often poor people/ lower class people who would earn their keep as servants. These people particularly the women needed to be taught the values of a good Christian, hence, several didactic stories came to be written. Then the original inhabitants of Australia- the Aborigines were another theme that prompted writing. They were often looked upon as "noble savages" or as sub human beings. As we shall see later on several stories about the capture of white women and children by the Aborigines and vice versa came to be written as well.

The early settlers also had to face a lot of hardships and a harsh, alien, natural habitat. Professor Bruce Bennett in his introduction to **Encounters, Selected Indian and Australian Short Stories** (1986), too traces, the development of the genre through four phases. The first phase he calls the colonial phase that lasted until the early years of the 1890s. These stories owed their origin largely to European and mainstream British models. The second phase occurred when national awareness was generated in the minds of the people of Australia. Earlier on tales of murder, revenge, mystery, supernaturalism, women's romance dominated the literary scenario. However, in this second phase "nationalism" and what was also called "*bush realism*" (as being truly Australian) dominated the genre. This was the time when Lawson and the *bush* became inextricably linked together and the *bush* the symbol of all the hardships that Australia and the Australians endured. Barbara Baynton too wrote during this phase and her stories are told from the point of view of the women in the *bush*, the hardships they endured and the dominance and cruelty they faced at the hands of the men in the *bush* particularly in stories like *The Squeaker's Mate*. The Lawson type of "*bush realism*" however continued to fire the imagination of several writers through the 1940s and 50s as well. The third phase he marks is from about 1940 to 1970 when Australia was a party to World War II and various political activities dragged Australia away from its safe, isolated position into the very heart of international politics and affairs. Certain political activities that occurred then made the Australians realise that they were not isolated and that they too had good friends and neighbours in the far - east. But the aftermaths of World War II made some of the writers nostalgic about the past and made them long for the early pioneering days. Most of them went back to writing about those times. However, cities were springing up along the Australian coast - line and a new urban culture was being created continuously. Many writers dealt with this rising urban culture, their problems and concerns in their short fiction.

In the final and fourth post 1970s phase, we may note a lot of experimentation with both form and content of the short story. The Australian multicultural policy too lent to the spurge of multi ethnic and migrant writing. This period also saw the mergence of Aboriginal writers though not writers of short fiction. Since the 1970s and with changing Australian foreign policies, the people and the writers of Australia have come to realise that they are not that close to Europe and the home country and that there are people to the east of them as well. Hence, we find a lot of migrant writing emerging during this time and addressing the issues, concerns and problems faced by or likely to be faced by the new people who have now come to inhabit this new melting pot of cultures. At this stage it may be prudent to remember that though Australia promoted the migration of people of Anglo Saxon descent earlier on, from the early 1970s they opened their doors to multi ethnic and multi cultural migration on a large scale and Australia became a new melting pot of cultures, the title America held earlier on. Frank Moorhouse and Michael Wilding are the representatives of the

changes taking place in Australian society since then. They have experimented with both form and content and their stories are sometimes surrealistic and sometimes discontinuous. Women writers too contributed to the development of the genre. Notable among them are Elizabeth Jolley, Fay Zwicky and Thea Astley.

Let us now take a look at the origin and development of the Australian short fiction/story.

1.3 ORIGIN And DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIAN SHORT FICTION / STORY

Australia provided the writers with ample material. For instance the fact that the island continent was meant for transporting convicts from the mother country/ (in other words) the convict system, the bushrangers, the Aborigines, the country itself, with its forbidding bizarre and extremely fascinating nature. For convenience sake Cecil Hadgraft has used chronological divisions for the development of short fiction before Lawson, which we shall adopt as well. The time period shall be 1830-1860, 1860-1880 and 1880-1893.

1.3.1 Short Fiction in the 1830s -1860s

John Howison's *Tales of the Colonies* was the earliest to appear in 1830. Most of his stories are set in Ireland and the West Indies. But one story *One False Step* is set in Australia. This story bears visible resemblance to English tales of adventure and crime and is exciting and rather fast moving with a lesson to be taught at the end of it all. However, David Burn of the *Our First Lieutenant and Fugitive Pieces in Prose* (1842) fame is better known than Howison. Burn's was a playwright and his longest piece *The Three Sisters of Devon* is much like the eighteenth century picaresque novel but he had a flamboyant style and he wrote by circumlocution and evasiveness. His style was very euphemistic. For the next fifty odd years most writers of short fiction followed Burn's style of writing. Between Burn's *Our First Lieutenant and Fugitive Pieces in Prose* and John Lang's *Botany Bay* in 1859, about fifteen volumes of tales set in Australia or with Australian themes was published. Popular writers of those days were Mrs Vidal (*Tales for the Bush*, 1845), Mrs Charles Clancy (*Lights and Shadows of Australian Bush Life*, 1854), and Henry Giles Turner (*The Confessions of a Loafer and the Captive of Gippsland, Tales of the Colony*, 1857). Mrs Vidal wrote for the lower classes or the servants and being the wife of a parson, was prone to didactic preaching in her stories. *The Black Troopers* (1850?) by an anonymous writer is worth mentioning as it deals with the pursuit of an Aboriginal criminal by troopers of his own race led by a white Lieutenant, and has been compared to Thomas Kenelly's 1972 novel, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. It is memorable for such an account of the pursuit of an individual is not to be found anywhere else prior to this work. Mrs Clancy's stories on the other hand are about people who are either moving from England or have just arrived in Australia. She appears to be promoting emigration to the colonies. The tales told by Turner appear to be a catalogue of disasters and could have been written as a response to the propaganda of the guidebook novels of the 1840s and 1850s. John Lang is one of the first Australian writers before Lawson who dealt with events in the history of the colonies. It is possible to gain some insight into the life of the period through his stories. Lang gives glimpses of customs and regulations of the convict period, but while he does not provide an elaborate social history of the times, he does convey a sense of the atmosphere of Sydney and other parts of New South Wales during those early years of the settlement of the colony. His descriptions of the landscape, flora and fauna are essential to the story and not mere descriptions. Moreover he does not

moralise as women writers were prone to doing. His stories were published in one volume entitled *Botany Bay* in 1859. Though Australian short fiction writers did not have any good models of short stories to emulate from, the age-old habit of preaching through stories trickled down through to the antipodes as well. Apart from these moral tales, stories about Aborigines – the relationship between white settlers and black Aborigines, the massacre of whole Aborigine tribes etc were also written. Other themes dealt with were inter related to the Aborigine theme- those of the kidnapping and capture of white women/ children by Aborigines, or of the Aborigine child in the custody of the whites. A third genre that had begun to emerge by the 1860s was the story based on historical facts. Amongst this category of writers mention must be made of John Lang, **Marcus Clarke**, **W H Sutton** and **Thomas Walker**. The most popular works of this period were Lang's *Botany Bay*, and Clarke's *Old Tales of a Young Country*. **Prince Warung (William Astley)** was the furthest away in time from the convict system than the other writers but he produced the most vivid and readable stories of them all.

1.3.2 Short Fiction in the 1860s-1880s

Between 1859 and 1880 eighteen volumes of short stories was published in Australia. Three writers were prominent during this period - **Horace Earle**, **James Skipp Borlase** and **J R Houlding**. Earl was prone to writing the guidebook novel (that we talked about earlier) and dealt with the flora and fauna of Australia. His short fiction was collected in *Ups and Downs* (1861), most of his short stories are set in the bush. James Borlase' collection *Darling Deeds* (1868) are stories of adventure but are also sadly lacking in characterisation. J R Houlding (*Old Boomerang*) was one of the moralist writers. The stories in his *Australian Tales and Sketches from Real Life* (1868) are relatively more indirect in their preaching than that of other writers. The most important writer of the period was however, Marcus Clarke. Clarke was a pivotal literary figure then. Though there were some good stories written before him, and even after him these stories rise only occasionally to his level. During this time several detective stories as well as tales of mystery were also being written. From 1887 onwards, tales of mystery, intrigue and detection became very popular. At the same time fictional accounts of children lost in the bush were also written. This theme provided the writer with a vast canvas. S/he could write about the virtues of obedience and the dangers of disobedience. They could also explore the wild, untamed Australian bush, the presence of Aborigines in the bush or delve into human relationships particularly those marital relationship and the effects of such a loss on husbands and wives. **Lawson's** *The Babies in the Bush* is a good example of such a story.

1.3.3 Short Fiction in the 1880s-1890s

While the nineteenth century saw industrial, and material growth and the loss of pastoral lands, (as is lamented by Christina Stead in *The Old School*), even saw the after effects of **Darwin's** *Origin of the Species*, supernaturalism too found a place in the fiction of the times. **Tasma (Jessie Couvreur)** wrote ghost stories like *The Rubria Ghost*, other writers used ghosts in a serious manner like **P J Holdsworth** in *A Tale of New Year's Eve* or *Brushwood Grange*. Good short stories continued to be written after 1880 but Marcus Clarke was one of the best writers and none were there before Lawson to counter Clarke's position. The manner in which language was used then and the way it is used now are quite different. Even the use of certain words like 'mate' had acquired a different connotation, as you will observe when you read the stories in this block. As Cecil Hadgraft rightly points out that "the term 'mate' as address was less frequent: it occur in the third person, not so much in the second," (Hadgraft, p.33). Though the author made a definite move towards modern

prose and less stereotypical themes, the past still influenced them, even as late as the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Love, however, was one theme that influenced writers and they used it throughout the century and all across the globe.

The short story writers we have discussed here dealt with most of the themes that writers after Lawson's were to deal with in the 1890s. While the novelists concentrated on a few themes like pastoral life, the convict system, and the bush, they did not really deal with urban life. This theme was utilised by **Rosa Praed**, **Tasma**, and **Ada Cambridge**. But the writer of short fiction were able to produce different genres like tales of murder and mystery, detective tales, historical, didactic, encounters with Aborigines, to name a few. As Hadgraft points out however even within this diversity no development in the history of short fiction really occurred. For instances if we look at the vast body of literature surrounding the convict system, we will discover that though there is so much material on this one topic, it does not develop into a genre by itself. Having said all this by way of introduction let us try and discern for ourselves whether this is true or not as we deal with Marcus Clarke (*Seizure of the Cyprus*), Henry Lawson (*The Drover's Wife*, and *The Union Buries Its Dead*), Barbara Baynton (*The Chosen Vessel*), Steel Rudd (*Cranky Jack*) and Christina Stead (*The Old School*). These stories and the authors belong to different ages and have used different themes. Moreover the manner in which they have handled these themes, and their writing styles will bear testimony to the development of the short story as a genre. However, this does not mean that the short story as a genre did not develop, what Cecil Hadgraft indicates, is the fact that unlike the (picaresque, regional, stream-of-consciousness, to name a few) novels, these independent Australian short stories (on the convict system, on the harsh hostile natural habitat, etc.) did not develop into independent genres. This detailed introduction makes clear the wide variety of writers and writing involved. In arguments that later followed – Keryn Goldsworthy amongst others, it is generally considered that some of the best pre-Lawson writers were those who better known novelists like Marcus Clarke and Rosa Praed. Having paved the way for the study of Australian short fiction, let us now take a quick look at the development of Australian short fiction/ story during the **Bulletin** years.

1.4 THE BULLETIN YEARS

The short story gained popularity because it was published regularly in the Sydney Bulletin of the 1890s. The writers who were normally associated with the **Bulletin** were **Henry Lawson** and **Barbara Baynton** along with **Edward Dyson**, **Ernest Fawcett**, and **Prince Warung**. Lawson as mentioned in the introduction to the period wrote poignant stories about male bonding, virtues like endurance, courage and honesty against a harsh environment, an unfriendly even hostile outback, (for instance his stories *The Drover's Wife*, and *The Union Buries Its Dead*). Barbara Baynton's vision of human nature ranges from the stern to the hopeless. Those of her characters who were not weak, dishonest, cowardly, cruel, or downright evil were always dominated by those who were, and the manner in which she draws on the Australian outback is remarkable. She frequently presents it as not only bleak and harsh but as in her terrifying story *The Dreamer* – as actively malign, the stuff of nightmares.

Henry Handel Richardson wrote numerous short stories that were collected and published as *The End of Childhood* in 1934. Her most notable stories are – **And Women Must Weep**, **Two hanged Women**, and **The Bathe: A Grotesque**. The latter involves female characters "with a fear of sexual maturity". She is however much better known for her novels, particularly *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. Individual stories published from the 1920s through the 50s had a large number of

titles to do with nature: landscape, weather and animals. The best-known short story writers of the period are – Katherine Susannah Pinchard, Vance Palmer, 'Brian James' (John Tierney), Frank Dalby, Gawin Casey, Dal Stevens and Peter Cowan. Keryn Goldsworthy has compiled a list of the names of animal tales that reads like this: *The Dog, The Cow, The Bull Calf, The Jackass*. But these stories are not mere animal fables instead metaphors of birds and animals are used to denote the goings on inside the minds and hearts of their human characters. From the prior mentioned group of writers Dal Stevens and Margaret Trist were exceptions. The former was more of a fabulist than a realist writer as was the tendency of the age, while the latter did not entitle any of her fifty-two stories with any animal references at all. These stories and their titles are indicative of the preoccupations typical of the age, with the external, physical and the rural world. The use of exterior landscape of the natural world as, simple and straightforward parallel to the internal landscape of human dilemma was also a common practice. They are characterised by a small parcel of often-related qualities: a realist mode; a rural or suburban setting; an implicit moral stance which demonstrates or upholds or mourns the lack of various human virtues, more often like those of honesty, egalitarianism, kindness and courage. Let us take a look at Australian short fiction/ story in the twentieth century.

1.5 AUSTRALIAN SHORT FICTION IN THE 20th CENTURY

The 1960s appear to be the most important period of transition in the history of Australian literature. This period marks the beginning of a reaction away from what had until then been firmly constructed and re-constructed, in a self-perpetuating process whereby critics and editors went on demanding a certain kind of writing which writers went on supplying as 'the Australian Tradition', or the 'Lawson Tradition'.

1.5.1 Short Fiction in the Latter Half of the 20th Century

The 1950s was notable for the writings of Frank Hardy *The Man From Clinkapella and other Prize – Winning Stories* (1951), Judah Waten's *The Alien Son* (1952). Judah Waten anticipated 'migrant writing' by some thirty years. These two writers are closely linked by their overtly political motivation and their concentration on characters from disadvantaged social groups, another contemporary John Morrison was also in the same league. In 1972 the censorship ban was lifted, the first issue of the short story magazine *Tabloid Story* was published and the government supported the arts in a new and fresh manner for the first time. Frank Moorhouse and Michael Wilding gained prominence during this period with the quality and innovativeness in their fiction and in relation to the *Tabloid Story*. The new fiction of the 1970s was characterised by a schism from the hitherto realist and nationalistic stories, though Patrick White and Hal Porter in the 60s had already broken off from this tradition to a great extent as had Dal Stevens who wrote in the fabulist mode. The fabulist mode was swiftly becoming the dominant trend, and had started as far back as the 1930s.

Peter Cowan with *The Tins and Other Stories* (1973) and *Mobiles* (1975) experimented continuously with the short story form in which he exposed the frustrations, betterness and futility in contemporary living. Christina Stead was yet another force to contend with at that time. Elizabeth Webley comments on Christina Stead's *The Salzburg Tales*: "The vitality and stylistics and formal variety of Stead's stories would, I think, be quite a revelation to younger Australian writers who would be staggered to discover her anticipation of the current fabulist mode". The 'new'

fiction was largely influenced by contemporary European and American writing, and incorporated such elements as fantasy, surrealism, experiments with narrative chronology and narrative voice, a new awareness of the role and status of the author in the story and a generally enlarged consciousness of fiction as fiction, of a story as an artefact rather than a simple reflection of 'life'. Common to all the Australian writers of this period of Australian short fiction is an acute and articulated awareness of there being no simple, uncomplicated relationship between language and the experience.

Brian Kiernan's *The Most Beautiful Lies* (1977) is an anthology of stories by five writers – **Murray Bail, Peter Carey, Morris Lurie, Frank Moorhouse** and **Michael Wilding**. All five of them shared the same preoccupation. Of these five writers Peter Carey was the most concerned with fantasy and surrealism. Bail was preoccupied with the nature of language and writing. Moorhouse with narrative experimentation and ways of writing frankly about sex, while Wilding shared all the above preoccupations.

Keryn Goldsworthy observes that they tended 'to present' their stories "self consciously as 'fiction, to be less mimetic, less concerned with characters and social situations and more with style and form as part of the stories' content, they also tried to employ less usage of realistic forms and science fiction tales. Women were writing in the 70s as well. Elizabeth Jolley sent stories repeatedly to magazines but they were continuously rejected. **Thea Astley's** *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* (1979) was however well received and taken very seriously by both literary critics and commentators. But Thea Astley had already been established as a successful novelist. Numerous anthologies since then have appeared through out the 80s and 1990s. Three important ones that were published during this decade have the collected works of 84 writers. These anthologies were "The State of the Art: The Mood of Contemporary Australia in Short Stories" (ed) Frank Moorhouse, 1983; "Transgressions: Australian Writing Now" (ed) Don Anderson, 1986; "Coast of Coast: Recent Australian Prose Writing" (ed) Keryn Goldsworthy, 1986.

Out of the 84 writers in these three writers – **Frank Moorhouse, Helen Garner** and **Gerard Windson** – appear in all three. **Kate Greenille, Olga Masters, Elizabeth Jolley, Tim Winston, David Malouf, Maria Eldridge, Angelo Loukakis, Michael Wilding, Ania Walzic** and **David Brooks** appear in two anthologies out of three. Of these thirteen only Frank Moorhouse, Michael Wilding and David Malouf have been well known for more than a decade. Short fiction in the 1980s dealt with growing taste in women's and in migrant writing. Not much is available as far as the Aboriginal writers of short fiction go. **Kath Walker, Jack Davis** and **Colin Johnson** the three well known Aboriginal writers had made names for themselves as novelists, poets and dramatists. Aboriginal short fiction writers then had not managed to carve a niche for themselves and instead concentrated on drama, novel writing and the writing of autobiographies like Sally Morgan for example.

1.6 EMERGENCE of MIGRANT and ABORIGINAL SHORT FICTION

Archie Weller's collection of stories *Going Home* (1986) is the first by an Aboriginal. This could probably be due to the fact that the shape and language of Aboriginal story telling did not easily fit within the short story mode. **Stephen Murecke, Krim Benterrack** and **Paddy Roe's** *Reading the Country* (1984) demonstrates the difference quite accurately. During this period experimental writing increased steadily. Ania Walzic's work demonstrates how the fact of being a woman

and a migrant might, in its effects on one's use and perceptions of language liberate the writer into an experimental mode of fiction. **Beverly Farmers** *Milk* (1983) and *Home Time* (1985) are examples of Greek stories that invert the migrant experience and reflect the cultural and social vortigo of Australians in Greece. Gerard Windson's *The Harlots Enter First* (1982), *Memories of the Assassination Attempt* (1985) gained critical notice. Helen Garner's *Postcards From Surfers* (1985) has her famous piece on "The Life of Art". Frank Moorhouse moves away from charting the moods and movements of a counter culture and towards a closer attention to individual experiences, travel and transgressions; with the publication of his three later works: *The Everlasting Secret Family* (1980); *Room Service* (1985) and *Forty Seventeen* (1988). In these works his concerns with narrative structure, narrative voice and the relationship between experience and language is maintained and balanced.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

There was a marked shift over the last fifteen – twenty years in the literary community's focus of interest. Hitherto the focus was on 'Australianity' and towards a more locally based 'vision of place'. Thereafter the focus shifts drastically. An examination of the works of David Malouf amongst others will make clear the manner in which this shift takes place. By writing his fictional, autobiographical works in the manner he does and through his native Brisbane, David Malouf, has arrived at an -aesthetics of locale. His *12 Edmondstone Street* (1985), a collection of autobiographical essays, presents insight on of the relationship between places and the self and the ways in which that relationship can not only be expressed but constructed and re-created throughout writing. Malouf's Brisbane, Garner's Melbourne, Astley's North Queensland, Jolley West Australian wheat fields and Winston's South West Coast not only highlights the relationship between characters and places but also suggests new 'regional ways' of reading fiction of earlier writer. Regional Anthologies since then have been abundant: Queensland's "Latitudes" (eds.) Susan Johnson and Mary Roberts and South Australia's "Unsettled Areas" (ed) Andrew Taylor (1985). Regionalism can be seen as yet another experimental mode that is continuously moving away from an over-simple pre-occupation with 'nation'. It is another way of classifying, thinking about, and most importantly writing stories.

Writers of that Age

Their Works

Elizabeth Jolley

Five Acre Virgin (1976)
The Travelling Entertainer (1979)
Woman in a Lampshade (1980)

David Malouf

Antipodes (1985)

Olga Masters

The Home Girls (1982)
A Long Time (1985)

Kate Greenville

Bearded Ladies (1984)

Tim Winston

Scission (1985)
Minimum of Two (1987)

Barry Hill

A Rim of Blue (1978)
Headlocks (1983)
(His themes are politics and family relations or as Keryn Goldsworthy puts it 'the politics of family relations').

Joan London

Sister Ships (1986)
(This book won the **Age Book Award** the same year).

Short Fiction/Story

These are just a list of some of the writers of that age and should not be regarded as a comprehensive list.

1.8 QUESTIONS

- (1) Who would you credit you credit for the establishment of short fiction as a genre?
- (2) What were some of the types of short fiction produced in Australia? Which of these types appeal to you? Give reasons to support your answers.
- (3) What were the prominent themes that captured the imagination of writers of short fiction in Australia? Discuss.

1.9 SUGGESTED READING

- (1) *The Australian Short Story Before Lawson*, (1986): Cecil Hadgraft (ed), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Australia.