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The drama and the short-story: a comparison

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Thesis

THE DRAMA AND THE SHORT-STORY: A COMPARISON

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THE DRAMA AND THE SHORT-STORY: A COMPARISON

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Definitions of abstract ideas are elusive things, almost always unsatisfactory; either too general or too exclusive. Aristotle gave a fairly good definition of tragedy, at least it has not been bettered to date, but no one has yet given us a good, short definition of comedy. And as for the drama as a whole, it is nearly impossible to evolve a definition that will cover the "movies", the pantomime, the Punch and Judy shows, as well as ordinary stage performances. Ferdinand Brunetière claimed that the essential thing in drama was conflict of the human will and immediately other critics named examples of plays without such an element of conflict. In Playmaking, chapter III, William Archer says 'the essence of drama is crisis', yet in a footnote to the same chapter he mentions plays with so little of story that there is scarcely a chance for a crisis. His definition of the "dramatic" -- 'Any representation of imaginary personages which is capable of interesting an average audience assembled in a theater' -- is somewhat better, but this is open to question, for in many plays some or all of the characters are at least historical, and to that extent not imaginary. It is useless to carry the discussion further. For the purposes of this paper; I shall consider the drama to be a form of entertainment which tells a story by means of action.

If the drama is hard to define, the short-story (to follow the example of Brander Matthews in using the hyphen) is no easier, nor are critics any more agreed on the limitations of this branch of literature. Poe is usually accused of having discovered the modern type -- he called it the tale -- and practically everyone since his time has agreed with him in recognizing as a distinct type the stories with a single unified effect. There are not lacking, however, men who say that any story coming within the limits of a certain number of words is a short story, considering the story of effect to be but one branch, a highly magnified branch in the present day, of the short story. Clayton Hamilton says: 'The aim of a short-story is to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy consistent
with the utmost emphasis." That statement of the aim of the short-story is as good as any.

Thus, to begin with, the short-story and the drama both strive to tell a story; a plot is essential to either. No matter what the author of a drama is trying to do, he does it through the medium of the story he tells. Philosophical disquisitions, moral teachings, beautiful tableaux, admirable characters, whatever may have been the ultimate aim of the dramatist, they are all set forth by means of the story told.

There are dramas in which the plot is the factor of paramount interest; where characters, settings, speeches and actions are made to wait upon the ingenuity of plot complication. That is the kind of play which keeps you on the edge of your seat, "wondering how it is coming out". It seems to be very popular at the present time, yet it is not new. Terence and Plautus wrote plays of this sort. Most of Shakespeare's comedies can be placed in this category. Good comedies seem to require a better constructed plots than equally good tragedies. This may be due to the fact that the type of theater-goer that attends comedy by preference is more interested in the story than in any representation of character or any of the other purposes of drama. And it works both ways -- anyone who is interested in the story itself is very apt to insist on a "happy ending", which is the distinguishing mark of comedy.

A good stage manager sees the play not only as a story to be told, but also as an opportunity to please the eyes and ears of his patrons. The care with which the various electricians, property men, costumers and scene painters are named on the program is ample evidence of the importance of making a play appeal to the eye. Even if the scene depicted is to be sordid and mean, it must be true to life, for to the realistically minded, even a blank, white-washed wall is beautiful, if only there be fly specks enough on it. Then, like enough, there is some character in the
play whose beauty and purity of soul shine forth the more by contrast with the squalid surroundings.

But the drama is not for the eye alone; else why pay so much attention to the acoustics of the theaters? The actor or actress with a harsh, or even mildly unpleasant voice is invariably cast in low comedy or so-called "heavy" roles. The audience demands, and rightly, that it shall not be subjected for a whole evening to rasping voices of unpleasant timbre. The Greeks understood this appeal to the ear; there is something moving about the speaking of even the feeble English translations of speeches from Aeschylus or Euripides. I say speaking, because although when not read aloud some of them seem unhumanly long and polished, the voice of a good elocutionist can make of them things of rare beauty. And the Greeks had their choral odes for the aural delight of the hearers, as well as the choral dances and processions for their visual delectation. The Elizabethan playwrights put long, oratorical speeches into the mouths of their characters for the same reason. If you do not think that the appeal to the ear is of importance, I would suggest that you attend a distributor's showing of a moving picture without music. Or better still, a moving picture theater where all music is furnished by a player-piano. The same fault can seldom be noticed on the spoken stage, except in the cheapest of stock companies, for the producers take very good care that the voices of the actors shall be pleasant and harmonious. These elements of eye and ear entertainment are seen at their height in the Opera or in the highest class of musical comedies, but they are necessary even in the grimmest tragedy.

From time immemorial, the drama has been used as a means of teaching. The great Greek tragic writers used a story that moved surely to its inevitable conclusion and hammered home its moral lesson. These moral teachings were seldom
unpleasantly obtrusive, but they were always there. Aristophanes used comedy to ridicule his enemies and the practices of the state. Horace considered the purpose of the dramatic poet to be "delightful teaching." To this very day most dramatists have that ideal, although there is many a playwright who attempts only to please. The irony of things is such, however, that these latter often instruct unwittingly; sometimes the instruction would have been better unlearned.

When a play is not one of pure plot or of problem -- which type is the commonest vehicle of teaching -- it is usually one of character. These three types, shading into each other, cover almost all of drama. There must always be characters in a play, but a play of character is one in which the principal interest is in the delineation of one or more highly individual characters. The great dramatist, however, so blends plot and problem and character that it is hard to tell which is the most prominent, vide Shakespeare, Molière and Calderon. The Greeks were handicapped by having the skeleton personality of their leading characters and the outlines of their plots already formed for them by legend. They could show originality only in details.

In my tentative definition of the drama, I said the story should be told by action. In other words, a drama, to be such, should be acted. I will not be such a purist as to maintain that a piece of dramatic writing does not become a drama until it has been acted, but I will agree with Goethe that: 'A piece that is not originally, by the intent and skill of the poet, written for the boards, will not succeed; but whatever is done to it, will always remain something unmanageable.' Any good drama must be written with the needs of the audience and the exigencies of the stage in mind. And then if it does not contain the undefinable quality which makes it a good acting play, it will not be of any value. I have seen successful presentations of various plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides given
in the open air, yet I doubt not that they would have been miserable failures, financially at least, in the average modern theater, simply because they were written for an entirely different stage. They were also written for a vastly different audience, so the fact of their success at all only proves their actability.

In contradistinction to a play, which is to be acted, the short-story is written to be read. Some, I verily believe, were written solely for the author’s amusement, but even then the writer must have had himself in mind as a possible reader.

The short-story, then, must please by a somewhat different method than a play. Its very name suggests that it must tell a story, must have a plot. A short-story without a plot automatically becomes a sketch or an essay. But a short-story may be one of many types. It may depend wholly on the plot for its interest; it may emphasize character; it may portray some mood or setting, or it may depend on its theme for its appeal, and it may be a combination of any or all of these elements. Equally with the play, it may be didactic, or it may be written simply to entertain, but all short-stories are written to be read.

The play must be constructed to hold the attention of the audience through the acting of the cast. A short-story holds the reader’s attention through printed words alone. Therein lies the author’s opportunity and his greatest pit-fall. He must be able to catch the interest of the reader by means of one word at a time. While an actor is speaking, the audience also sees his motions, his facial expressions, the movements and reactions of the other actors, the scenery and lighting effects. But while the reader sees in cold black and white on a printed page that so-and-so said something or other, the impression received is dependent in large measure upon the imagination of the reader and the details previously given. As Melville Davisson Post says in one of his detective stories, ‘It is a law of the story-teller’s art that he does not tell a story. It is the listener who tells it.'
The story-teller does but provide him with the stimuli.' The short-story writer merely suggests detail and atmosphere. He cannot, by the limitations of space, be photographic, but if he is clever and knows well his materials, he can, even by the use of but one word at a time, present to his public a series of pictures and scenes. And the best thing about this is that each reader makes his visualization of the story to confirm his own experience, to suit himself. Scenery can seldom be transmuted by the imagination of the beholder into something different than the man beside him sees. A character once seen as a certain actor plays the part, remains linked in the memory of the audience with the actor. But with the alchemy of the spirit, a man can make of the hero of a story whatever he likes, or a woman can put herself in the place of the heroine. And perhaps the scenes painted in the imagination of the reader are even better than the actuality the author had in mind.

In addition to telling a story and entertaining the reader, many stories try to instruct as well. Sarah Orne Jewett began to write her stories of New England life in order to show that the usual idea of country life was wrong. Jack London wrote some of his animal stories as a protest against the use of trained animals in circuses and vaudeville. Hawthorne's stories all have a moral purpose behind them, a lesson to teach. The short-story is even better than the novel for teaching a lesson, since it is short and none of the effect is lost. It can be more didactic than the drama. But a story of pure theme is likely to be boresome, so the practice today is to sugar-coat the purpose, but that is an old trick in the drama. The Greeks used it at the beginning of drama.

It would be hard to decide which came first, the story or the drama. (It will be noted that in this connection I do not say short-story, although the early stories were undeniably short.) Probably the earliest stories combined pantomime
and narration. It is natural for the narrator to use gestures. Pantomime may have come first, for monkeys and babies before they are able to talk are able to imitate actions, but probably both forms of expression were nearly simultaneous. It is the custom of Indians when "counting their coups", telling of their victories, before the rest of the tribe, to go through the entire action in pantomime. The ceremonial dances of many aboriginal tribes have a stereotyped story embedded in their measures.

The drama as we know it today developed from the religious services of ancient Greece. Tragedy sprung from the choral odes to Dionysus; comedy was a development of the Phallic songs. The Dionysiac odes were at first narrative songs, something similar to the oratorio. Arion, the leader of a chorus, is credited with the first innovation in the form of these odes. Living in the seventh century before Christ, he introduced spoken passages between the leader and various members of the chorus into the songs. Thespis, an Athenian of the first of the sixth century, B.C., carried this still further, using an actor who could carry on a conversation with the leader of the chorus, really making a dialogue. The actor, by changing his costume, could represent several different persons. Here in the dialogue between leader and actor is the germ of drama.

This was the status of Greek Drama at the time of AEschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in the fifth century. AEschylus increased the number of actors to two, and before the end of his life he was using three, although the general belief is that Sophocles was the first to employ three actors. AEschylus also made the dialogue the most important part of tragedy by greatly diminishing the function of the chorus. This was the drama of the great age of Greek tragedy, two or three actors taking seven or eight parts, with the aid of masks, and a chorus to explain and elaborate the action. The plays were still part of a religious observance and the
drama was a state-supported project. It had a tremendous popularity in Athens, many Athenians being able to quote whole plays of their favorite dramatist, Euripides.

Attic tragedy dealt exclusively with the doings of by-gone heroes of Greek legend. It used a ready-made theme; the dramatist could show his originality in working out the details. As produced by the Greeks, only one action, and generally the culmination of that, was depicted. In the matter of dramatic effect, it is doubtful if these first surviving plays have ever been excelled.

After the giants of tragedy, came one of the best writers of comedy in all time, Aristophanes, but he contributed little or nothing to the development of drama except some excellent comedies. When all the great dramatists had passed on, Aristotle wrote his Poetics, one of the finest critical treatises in existence. Whenever the Greeks of that period did anything, they seemed to have the faculty of doing it well.

The drama was never popular in Rome. The Romans preferred the more brutal spectacles of the arena. The first important Roman playwright was Plautus (c. 200 B.C.) who wrote comedies translated or adapted from Greek originals. He was followed a few years later by Terence, whose work was more polished, but likewise copied from the Greeks. The only important Roman tragic writer was Seneca, of the time of the Empire. His plays, while original, followed the forms and methods of Euripides. The only innovations in the drama at Rome were the introduction of the five act structure. Seneca is of some little importance for his influence on the early Elizabethan drama of England.

In the meantime, the theaters were becoming so corrupt and obscene at Rome that they were finally abolished through the influence of the Christians in the third or fourth century. Yet, odd as it may seem, it was the Church which kept
the drama alive during the Middle Ages. The fathers of the early Church, seeing
that if the people could not get clean entertainment, they would take what they
could find, first tried to make the church services more inviting. And, since the
great body of the people could not read, they presented various portions of the
Bible to them in dramatic form. Gradually the lives of the saints were dramatized
and the allegorical plays, such as "Everyman", were developed.

Sometime before the Renaissance, the production of these mystery and morality
plays was turned over by the Church to the Guilds of various towns. There coarse
elements crept in and the methods of presentation changed. Formerly the plays
had been given in churches and in church-yards. Now the practice was to give them
from a moveable platform, known as the Pageant, which could be moved from one part
of a town to another.

At about the time the Guilds took over the Moralities, a new form of enter-
tainment came into being, especially at the feasts of the nobility, known in England
as the "Herrie Interludes." These were short, one act playlets of the type often
found on the vaudeville stage today, purely humorous. From these grew modern Eng-
lish comedy, and presumably, French as well. From the old miracle and morality
plays, evolved our serious drama.

The period from 1575 to 1675 was probably the most prolific in the whole his-
tory of drama, not even excepting today, if the quality of the output be taken
into consideration. The period was prepared for in France and England by a renewed
interest in the plays of the ancients and by imitations and translations from them.
In the first half of the hundred years fell the greater part of the Elizabethan
period and the work of Lope de Vega in Spain. During the latter half, Calderon
was hard at work in Spain and in France, Corneille and Racine were writing their
tragedies and Moliere was starting the modern theater by putting on his comedies
in a covered building. Previously it had been the custom to present plays in the open air, or at least in unroofed structures.

Since those days there have been playwrights innumerable and dramatists not a few. Plays have ranged the gamut from the strict classicism of Voltaire to the wild Romanticism of Victor Hugo, and from that Romanticism to the grim realism of Ibsen and now Eugene O'Neill is responsible for something that is rather hazily called "Expressionism".

At various times the custom has been to have first five acts, then three, and now the idea is to have scenes, not acts. The Emperor Jones had eight scenes, yet the man who wrote that play is a master of the one act play. Diff'rent, by the same author, had but two acts. And now comes the European play, Johannes Kreisler, with twenty-three—or is it forty-seven?—scenes. The number of scenes does not matter. As long as a play will entertain, it will not lack an audience, whether it be in one act or a dozen, whether the scenery be realistic, impressionistic, expressionistic, or whether there is no scenery at all.

Unlike the drama, we have no documentary evidence of where and how the art of story-telling originated. It probably had its inception in the same instinct that led to dramatic expression. The first stories must have been true accounts of the life and adventures of prehistoric times. They were necessarily short, a primitive vocabulary would not permit great verbosity, and since they were oral, they must have been compact and fairly effective, for no one cares to listen to a long, disjointed recital.

Then the best of these tales were retold and embellished by other spokesmen until they took on permanent form as legends. As man ceased to be a nomad and settled down in villages, or, continuing his wandering existence, joined himself to other men to form a tribe, these legends increased in number. As ever, certain
persons had a greater facility of expression than others. Without doubt, these men came to be noted around the campfire or the village well as tellers of tales. In later times at least, some of them made a profession of their story-telling, but their first unconscious work was to put their stories into permanent form, usually verse of some sort, that it might be remembered the more easily.

The great early poets, the epic writers, chose a larger medium than the type meant by the term short-story. The epic's nearest counterpart today is the novel. Yet the Iliad and the Odyssey were made up of hundreds of stories of the Trojan War and the Greek heroes which the blind poet collected and coalesced into his masterpieces. Or the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf may be said to be composed of three shorter stories; roughly speaking, each of the three fights makes a complete story.

The oral short narrative had its hey-day during the Middle Ages, when the drama was weak and insignificant. Europe was full of bards and gleemen and troubadours. In a time when few men outside the church could read and there were few books to be read, when bridge or whist had not yet been thought of, when musical instruments were almost painfully tuneless, when dramatic entertainments were scarce and infrequent, the chief indoor amusements of the hard-fisted, hard-headed Teutonic interlopers, who overran the greater part of Europe in the years between 400 and 1000, A. D., were feasts. Barbecued bullocks and beer and mead are very satisfying to the appetite of man, but to delight his mind was the duty of the bards. We have a variation of the custom today -- we have after-dinner speakers at banquets.

Of course, it was only a question of time until some of these narratives should be preserved in writing. Some of the older stories are preserved in the collection known as the Gesta Romanorum. Boccaccio departed from the verse form of the bards to write the Decameron in prose. Out of the Near East came the Tales of the Arabian Nights. Chaucer wrote his charming stories for the most part in verse of
the highest order. Out of the north of England came the ballads, many of them not written out until comparatively recent times. Most of these, of course, are not, strictly speaking, short-stories at all. They merely happen to be short. Some of them are simple incidents, others might be used for synopses for far longer tales. A few, apparently by accident, fulfil the modern definition of the short-story. Such a one is Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale; some of the folk tales have the true short-story structure. All these narratives have a place in the history of the form we are discussing for much the same reason that the history of the United States may be considered to have begun with the Anglo-Saxon invasions of Britain; the short-story grew out of them.

From the time of Chaucer in the fourteenth century on to the eighteenth, gradual changes were taking place in literature. It would take too much time to chronicle them fully, but in England the novel was gradually evolved through the Elizabethan drama, the epic poetry of John Milton and the equally epic prose narratives of John Bunyan, the poems of Dryden and Pope, the adventure chronicles of Defoe, and the essays of the Spectator series, finally culminating in Samuel Richardson's Clarissa Harlow, generally conceded to be the first novel, but which, surprisingly enough, started out to be a book of model letters. It must not be thought, however, that the novel is purely English in its origin; the influence of such writers as Cervantes of Spain and Rabelais of France must not be forgotten.

For a time the long story, the novel, reigned alone. It remained for Americans to establish a new type, a shorter narrative form. The writers of England and the Continent seemed to prefer a longer, more prolix kind of plot structure.

It is usually said that Washington Irving did not write short-stories. True enough, in the literal sense of the term he did not. He lacked the critical ability and also the wish to cut out of his tales all digressions that did not further the main effect of his stories, so they are sometimes incoherent in effect. But he
cannot be left out of any history of the short-story, because he first developed
the taste of America for short bits of fiction.

It seems to be the delight of every American critic to claim that Poe was the
first man to see clearly the aims and possibilities of the short-story, even while
admitting that there always have been accidental short-stories. In point of strict
chronology, certain of Prosper Mérimée's contes preceded Poe's first short-story,
Berenice, by several years. Considering that the latter's example has influenced
practically every writer of short tales to this day, and that the principles laid
down by him in his criticism of Hawthorne's Tales have subsequently been agreed to
by almost all critics, perhaps it is not unjust to claim that he was the greatest
developer of the type.

Men have not been lacking to continue the type and carry it further than Poe.
In his own day, Hawthorne was writing his Twice Told Tales. The French improved
on Poe by making their stories more life-like and still more dramatic in effect.
De Maupassant, Daudet, Coppée and Balzac described bits of life with tremendous
effectiveness that equals that of the stage. The master novelists of the Russians,
almost always long-winded, produced a few tales that were true, and great, short-
stories.

The English were slow to adopt the form; the English writers preferred to use
the larger medium of the novel. It was not until the last quarter of the nine-
teenth century that Englishmen of genius turned to the short narrative as their
major medium. Stevenson was the first to achieve fame with it, but perhaps his
youth and frail health made him prefer something short that he could be certain of
finishing. Youth, as well as natural inclination, is possibly the reason why all
of Kipling's great stories were short. He did not seem to be able to concentrate
long enough for a novel.

To catalogue the American writers of short-stories would be to name almost
Richard Harding Davis used to say if you should ask any man you might bump into in the New York subway how his play was coming along, the chances were that he would say that the first act was written and the next two were blocked out. In 1923 if you were to ask any number of people if they had ever thought of writing short-stories, a surprising number would answer in the affirmative. I venture to state that at least every other person of average education in America has at least "had an idea that would make a good story." If the impulse goes any farther than the mind, within the last ten years the story has probably been written as a scenario for a photoplay, which is popularly supposed to be sure of a ready sale and which requires merely a bald statement of action, not needing the highly specialized technique of the true short-story. However, there are literally thousands of short narratives published in the United States every year. This country is the greatest field for short-story publication in the world today. This does not mean that work of a high order is not produced elsewhere, and in other languages beside English, but American magazines pay better, so many of the better foreign stories are published here.

The existence of a public for these tales is probably the great reason for their present importance. Men of literary genius have always adopted, or adapted, the popular methods of the time. Present day civilization seems to make a special demand for a form of entertainment that shall not take up too much of a man's time. Even novels are being shortened, being stripped to their running gear, to borrow a term from the garage. There is a fear, or at least a theory, that the man of today, with his multifarious interests, could not keep in mind the thread of a story started at one time and finished at a later date. Yet the editors of the very magazines which supply the need for short fiction refute the theory that the public
does not want stories that cannot be read at a sitting, by furnishing, side by side with short-stories, serials that may run for months.

There are certain definite types of the modern short-story. Some are humorous, deliberately funny, farcical. These vary from the easy good humor for which O. Henry was famous and the delightful wit that Irvin S. Cobb and W. W. Jacobs sometimes display to the cheaper yarns told in up-to-the-minute slang. All of these have their counterpart in comedy.

A few stories of fantasy and the supernatural are to be found. What was once a staple form of the short-story, a form used with good effect by Poe and Hawthorne, is now little used. Some stories of the fantastic do appear, but in them the element of the supernatural must be explainable by natural causes. Even frankly Spiritualistic stories in an age of growing belief in psychic forces are largely taboo.

The modern reader wants something real, if not probable, at least possible. Poe's Mask of the Red Death today would have to hunt quite a while to find a magazine which would print it, simply because the story is not true to life. The tendency today is not toward absolute realism, but toward what the French call vraisemblance. We do not exactly want the awful facts of life, no better or no worse than they are, we like our stories to have a happy ending. The photoplay producers have long known this; it is an exceptional photoplay that has an unhappy ending. Perhaps this is only a manifestation of the optimistic spirit of a young people; perhaps it is a hopeful sign that the great majority of Americans demand that "the story should come out right". Be that as it may, it is a fact that, outside of a few high class magazines, the truly realistic story has a small chance of publication. Yet there are some good realistic stories being written in America today.

Most of the stories are romantic, in idea at least, but they must be true to life. It might be a good generalization of nine tenths of the stories of the present
day to say that they are realistic in treatment and romantic in thought. That is, the details are realistic, but the underlying idea and the denouement are different, usually better than in real life. This is the romantic-realistic story of everyday life. We still have pure romance.

Romance deals with strange lands, new peoples, uncanny adventures, outlandish customs or anything far removed from the humdrum round of ordinary living. This kind of writing is becoming rare. Few lands or peoples are unknown to us, so we try to find the unusual at home. The popularity of romance is attested by the numbers of magazines dealing exclusively with action and adventure, but the number of authors who are able to write pure romance of the first water seems to be small. Most authors write of the things they know at first hand and give the romantic twist by a happy ending.

The plays of today have to have their happy ending also. Even Eugene O'Neill had to have the forced, untruthful fourth act in Anna Christie in order that Anna and Burke might be reconciled. There are comparatively few tragedies,—at the time I write, there is not a single tragedy being presented on a Boston stage— but those few have to be of great merit to succeed. The drama in general has changed greatly within the last two hundred years. In England it was always more democratic than in France, but it was largely in France that the old idea that only the kings and nobility were worthy of serious treatment was finally overthrown. Diderot and Beaumarchais were the first to attempt to popularize it in France. They called it the drame. Before that time the common folk, if portrayed on the stage, were either comic characters, as in Moliere's comedies, or supernumeraries in plays with kings or nobles for heroes.

Since that time, there has been a great change in the attitude of playwrights regarding the kind of characters deserving serious treatment. Ibsen has shown us more than anyone else the latent tragedy in every life. Now the playwright can
make his king a buffoon and no one can cry "lese majeste", or he can show the nobility in a gutter-snipe and all the critic will say is, "This is life", if the author has done his work well. The Americans, having no great respect for titles, never used them in plays, but there still is a great tendency to depict only the rich, the so-called upper classes.

Beside the serious plays, comedies and tragedies alike, there are lighter productions, designed simply to amuse, to create laughter. Sometimes this is obtained by weaving in a little pathos, but that occurs only in the higher class of light comedy. Then there are farces whose sole reason for existence is the laughter they create, and some go to almost any length to create it. And where shall we put the operas, Grand and comic, the musical comedies, the burlesques and satires, the vaudeville skits, and what shall we say about the photoplay? -- for by definition all of these fall within the scope of drama. But obviously I have not time to treat of them all.

For the moment, let us consider merely plays. A few modern tendencies of the stage are worthy of notice. First, the mechanics of production, lighting and stage effects, are being vastly improved, which might be thought to make for more realism, but seems to have a contrary effect. The modern idea is not to create reality, but an impression of reality. David Belasco still tries to have every detail of his settings entirely true to life. The disciples of Gordon Craig and Robert Edmond Jones, on the other hand, would not try to reproduce a scene, but to give the effect of it. E.H.Sothern in commenting on this tendency sarcastically remarked: "One tree with the limelight on, and solitary on a dark stage, will perhaps suggest a forest; one plate, a banquet; one swallow a summer." This sarcasm seems to me to be unwarranted; if an effect can be achieved with a minimum of detail, why not do it? This is in line with the similar procedure in the short-story of weeding out all unessential details.
I have already mentioned that recently a few plays have been in scenes, rather than acts. I rather doubt if this structure will be used except in a few cases, unless some form of revolving or sliding stage comes into general use, since any scenery requiring a long time to move would slow up the performance intolerably. "Expressionism", having the scenery reflect the psychological state of the chief character, will never be general, either, since very few plays are deep psychological studies. Then, of course, it is not true to life as the majority know it, and the modern trend is toward truth to experience. Some playwrights today are attempting something that would not have been thought of a hundred years ago; they are presenting a cross-section of life, with just enough plot to make it interesting. More than that, they seem to be able to entertain the audience. They assert, with some truth, that it is a higher art to hold an audience with the slightest of material than it is to raise them to emotional heights with gripping tragedy. Some plays, as always, are written for the sole purpose of exploiting the histrionic ability of some actor or actress.

But to me, these are only side issues anyhow. I go to the theater to see, not beautiful scenery, or lights, or even great actors and actresses, although I admit I enjoy all of these things, I go to see a story unfold itself before my eyes. As for actual stories, dramatically presented, the modern playwrights of course have new themes, new characters to talk about, their stagecraft is better, they have learned to psycho-analyze, to dig into motives scientifically, but I do not see that they do a great deal better than the ancient Greeks, who had only their common sense and their observation to guide them. And Shakespeare is still popular in New York.

So far, I have not directly compared the short-story and the drama, except by saying that they came from the same instinct. At first thought, the differences
between them would seem to outweigh their similarity, but the few points of likeness are basic. To begin with, both can treat of the same subjects. This cannot be said of the drama and the epic, or the drama and the novel or novelette. There have been dramatized novels and novelized dramas, I grant you, but have you seen a drama that contained all of a novel? That is obviously impossible. The novel is permitted to digress, to loiter, to explain fully. The drama can do none of these things. It must present nothing that is not absolutely essential to further the plot. There can be but one story in a play, or if there is a sub-plot, it must either supplement or contrast with the main plot. The same principle holds good in a short-story. The plot must be unified.

Like the short-story, the drama can only treat of subjects which can be successfully put into a short time. It is out of the question to try to show all the steps of a long action. Suppose the theme of the play to be revenge. It can be pictured only in short vignettes, perhaps showing the reason for the revenge and the last stages of the action. In the short-story as well, motives can only be sketched and only the high points of the action can be shown.

Brunetière has said that to be successful, there must be a conflict of wills in a play. This is not strictly true, for there have been plays in which there has been no such conflict, but in those plays there was a conflict, even if it was unconscious on the part of the characters. A short-story, to be such, must also have this element of conflict, some difficulty to be overcome, consciously or otherwise. If there is no complication to be resolved, there will be no reason for the outcome and the narrative will be either a chronicle of events or a sketch. The novel may be made up of a series of rather disconnected conflicts, or it may have but one from beginning to end, or one major and several minor struggles.

In the short-story and the play, however, there is a singleness of effect, not
to be found in any other form of complex narrative. The short story, by its very definition can have but one effect. Neither can the drama which hopes to be successful give but one impression to the audience. The Greeks and Romans avoided combining comic and tragic elements because they believed it would endanger the unity of impression to do so. These two elements are now used to accentuate each other by contrast. The moralizing buffoonery of the grave-digger and the pompous long-windedness of Polonius in Hamlet render the tragedy all the deeper by this principle of contrast. Now playwrights use many diverse elements in a play to produce a single effect, just as a skillful painter blends many colors to get the one he desires. Stated simply, the short-story writer and the playwright must strive for but one effect, and bend every energy toward that end.

The beginning of a drama must have some bearing on the end, as in the short-story. Each speech, every action of the characters must contribute toward the preconceived end. I am speaking of the present day drama. We can leave out whole scenes of Shakespeare's plays and still have an intelligible whole, but the great dramatist never put in a speech or a scene which was not germane to the effect he had in mind, so we can say that he preserved a unity of effect. Sometimes in a short-story we find examples of the same thing, parts which have little or no direct bearing on the plot, but add to the emphasis of the effect.

The last likeness seems almost trivial. Both the drama and the short-story for the most part depend on the crowd. Only the greatest geniuses write because they cannot help it, and no one would accuse the vast majority of modern playwrights and short-story writers of being people of great genius. The genius very often does just as he pleases, regardless of what anyone else may say. He works for his own satisfaction; he prefers his own self-respect to the plaudits of the world. As I should have said before, such men of genius are rather rare. The stage of today and the magazine of the hour are not run for the satisfaction of doing things
well. The stage is very sensitive to the box-office; for its existence, the magazine depends upon its sale. In plain English, both the drama and the short-story are being written largely for the money in them. To get the highest price for a story, it must be of the sort to appeal to the greatest number of people. To be accorded a second reading by a producer, a play must give promise of being a money-maker. The same cannot be said of any other form of creative literature. While it is true that novels and poems and essays are often written for the money they will bring, it is not entirely necessary. Novels have been published which had a very small sale at first and many poems have been brought out at the author's expense. Publishers state that they prefer the book whose sale is small but steady to the best seller of one year which is forgotten the next, but the success of both the play and the short-story are largely dependent upon the whim of the moment.

There the likeness ceases. Each is written for an audience, but the audiences are vastly different, even though they may be composed of the same individuals. About the only similarity between them is that in general a man is sitting down when he sees a play or reads a story; he is ready to be entertained. But the man in a theater is exposed to all the emotional intensity of a crowd, the man reading in his arm-chair at home theoretically has nothing but the story to occupy his attention. If a man does not like the first paragraphs of a story, he is not obliged to finish it; if he does not like the first act of a play, he probably remains through the rest of the performance in hope of getting some slight return for his expenditure. It costs more to see a drama than it does to read a short-story, both in time and money. There is a public library in most towns, but there are few free passes to the theater. In general, the short-story is available to far more people than the drama. "Lightnin'", according to the advertisements, has been seen by more than three million people. There are several periodicals featuring fiction
which have a circulation well above the million mark and whose readers, at conser-
vative estimates, must number more than three million. Frank Bacon can rest happy
in the knowledge that he has given pleasure to an audience of three million, with the
possibility of reaching as many more, but the humblest writer whose story has ap-
peared in the Saturday Evening Post can say the same. In America at the present
time it would seem that in point of popularity the short-story had the advantage,
but this may be true only because it is possible to get the stories more easily.

As to literary value, there can be little question. There are less than one
hundred new plays produced every year in New York, where the greater portion of
America's new plays are produced, while yearly, thousands of short-stories and stories
that are short are printed in this country. The percentage of plays of high lit-
erary quality is, of course, infinitely greater than the percentage of short-stories
of corresponding grade, but this is purely incidental on the part of the plays.
Literary quality implies reading. A play is not usually written primarily to be
read, but acted; its literary value is purely a by-product of a means used to fur-
ther an entirely different end. The short-story, which is written to be read, is
open to far more serious criticism if it is not of high literary value.

This leads us to the difference in treatment. The play is all speech and action.
The short-story is, in part or in its entirety, narrated. The dialogue of each,
while it can be slightly idealized, must be very like that of real life. The great
difference is in time. The action of a play takes place before the eyes of the
audience in the present time. The play may be about Caesar, but for the moment
he lives before us. The conventional tense of the story is the past. Even when
some ungrammatical friend describes an event to us as if it were taking place before
us, we know very well that it is all over and done with. The play, then, is in
the present tense, the short-story, in the past. The play is always of today, every
other form of narration is of yesterday.

The style used is far different than that used in a story of any sort. The dramatist has to write in several different styles at once, one for each character. The writer of short-stories uses but one, discounting the speeches of the persons in the story, who cannot be allowed to talk as much as they would have to on the stage. Dialect on the stage is the work of the actor, plus the expert coaching of stage-manager and sometimes playwright; dialect on the printed page is a matter of phonetic spelling of words. The older writers did not seem to care for realism in dialogue, some speeches were hopelessly unhuman. The dramatist has always been confronted by the task of making his characters different from one another. He had only two methods of doing this, through action and through differences in speech, so from early times the good dramatist has made his characters seem individual by letting them say things in different ways.

The author's personality often shows in a short-story, but should never be apparent in a drama. His personality is there, but it can never be shown directly; he can make no direct comments about his characters as the story teller can do. He can make a character say something, but he, as author, cannot say one word, unless, by chance, the audience calls him before the curtain to make a speech.

In the short-story the writer has every chance in the world to be didactic. By the limitations of space he be very brief about minor motives, he has to let his minor characters either be mere names, or else to individualize them in as few words as possible. Even the main characters are hastily sketched.

On the stage, the actors try to reproduce the feelings and emotions of the persons they represent. In a short-story, the characters are not obliged to do that. The author, whenever he feels like it, may use up a paragraph or a page in performing that office for them. Strange as it may seem, the stage has all the
advantage. Suppose a man is told that his only son has been killed in an accident. No one can put on paper just how that man feels, but there are actors who could play the scene with such power that for a moment each spectator could grasp the inmost emotions of the bereaved father. That is the great difference between the drama and the story, any story. They may be alike, as is the case with the short-story and the drama, in theme and in unity of effect, but in emotional, in lyric power, the drama has had, and always will have greater effectiveness than anything save the best lyrics.

It is hard to tell the precise value of each type. Without a doubt a good drama is of greater value than an equally good short-story, even if it does not reach as many people, because its appeal to the emotions is stronger. On the other hand, an experienced writer can turn out several short-stories in the time it would take to complete one play. But does it really matter which is of the greater relative value?

Both the short-story and the drama entertain, and for that reason will probably never die out. The short story is for the odds and ends of a man's time when he desires relaxation. If he gets instruction and a slight moral uplift at the same time, well and good. The drama requires a whole evening, but it takes a man out of himself into a new world. Aristotle said that tragedy purges the emotions. That is what any good drama, even if it is apparently nothing but insignificant foolishness, ought to do. Some short-stories can do the same.
The drama and the short-story had their origin in the imitative and kindred instincts of man, and although they have evolved by widely different methods, they still have points in common. The drama has changed little in essentials since the days of the greatest glory of Athens. The short-story is a comparatively new development, although there have been examples of the true short-story type at least as far back as the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is the latest form of narrative fiction, following the epic, the ballads and chansons, the novel and more loosely constructed short tales.

The modern drama and the short story are much alike in general type. In both there is a prevalence of realistic treatment of romantic ideas. Light comedy and farce correspond to humorous short-stories; there are plays as well as stories which are fantastic, dealing with the supernatural. There are a few realistic stories and equally few truly realistic plays. That is not the true test of similarity; the same can be said of novels. The two real points of unique likeness between the drama are in plot and effect. The plot of either must be so constructed as to create but a single effect. Because of this singleness of effect, in neither are digressions allowable and sub-plots are permitted only when adding to the effect desired. In addition, each, more than any other branch of creative literature, is dependent on catching the popular favor.

The audiences are different: the audience of the short-story consists of individuals, that of the drama, of crowds. The short-story reaches more people, but is far less effective than the drama, because the drama works on the people en masse, where the emotions are always intensified by the influence of the crowd.

The accidental literary value of the average drama is greater than the carefully planned literary effectiveness of the average short-story, because only a
few dramas are produced each year, and those only after the most careful selection and revision, while thousands of short-stories are printed annually. The best short-stories are probably nearly, if not quite, equal to the best dramas in literary value.

Fine diction and the author's personality have small place in the modern drama, which must be impersonal. The short-story can reflect the writer's opinion directly, but in the drama it can be brought out through the speeches of the characters alone. The language of the drama is the language of the characters. The diction of all except the dialogue of a short-story ought to be of the best.

The drama has the greater lyric effectiveness, because actors can portray emotions it is impossible to describe.

Both entertain, but they have different missions to fill. The short-story is for brief snatches of informal amusement; the drama requires more time for its enjoyment and is more formal.
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