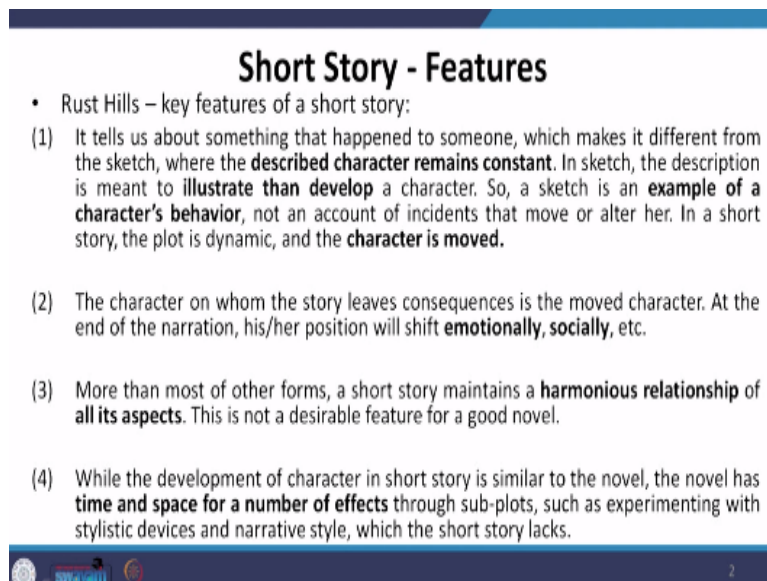


Narrative Mode and Fiction
Prof. Sarbani Banerjee
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology - Roorkee

Lecture: 45
Short Story and Novel - II

Good morning and welcome to the series on narrative mode and fiction we are discussing the short story and novel a comparative understanding of these 2 genres.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:41)



Short Story - Features

- Rust Hills – key features of a short story:
 - (1) It tells us about something that happened to someone, which makes it different from the sketch, where the **described character remains constant**. In sketch, the description is meant to **illustrate than develop** a character. So, a sketch is an **example of a character's behavior**, not an account of incidents that move or alter her. In a short story, the plot is dynamic, and the **character is moved**.
 - (2) The character on whom the story leaves consequences is the moved character. At the end of the narration, his/her position will shift **emotionally, socially**, etc.
 - (3) More than most of other forms, a short story maintains a **harmonious relationship of all its aspects**. This is not a desirable feature for a good novel.
 - (4) While the development of character in short story is similar to the novel, the novel has **time and space for a number of effects** through sub-plots, such as experimenting with stylistic devices and narrative style, which the short story lacks.

So we will begin with rust hills and his understanding of the key features of a short story according to show according to rust hills the short story tells us about something that happened to someone which makes it different from the sketch so we have to understand that, we also have a very similar form to short story which is the sketch. However short story and the sketch unlike what many readers fathom are not quite the same.

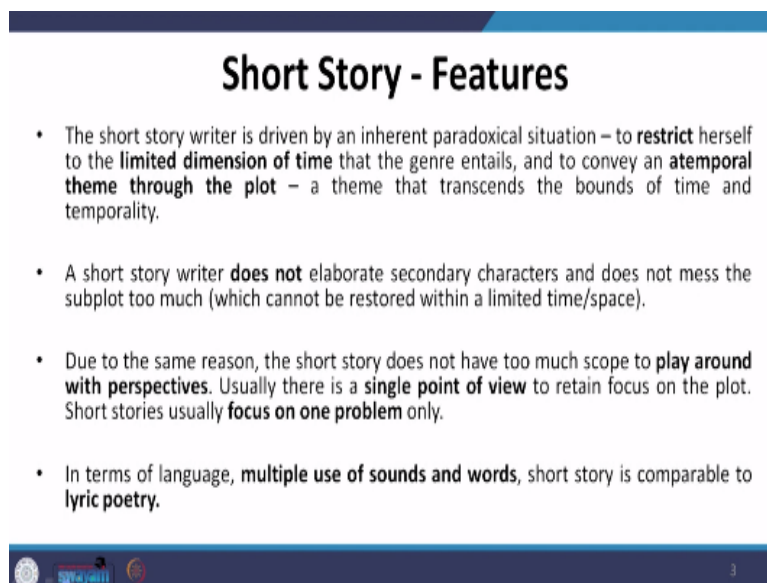
So the sketch comprises the description of a character the described character remains constant throughout this sketch so the description is meant to illustrate rather than develop a character in a sketch. So a sketch in other words is an, example of a character's behavior and not an account of incidents that move or alter the character's position. In a short story the plot is moving it is not static it is a dynamic plot and the characters are moved from their original position.

From the way they are the way they think from the beginning to the end a journey I mean be a short one has taken place so the character on whom the story leaves consequences is the moved character at the end of the narration his or her position will shift emotionally socially or in any other way. So more than most of other forms a short story maintains a harmonious relationship of all its aspects.

And this however is not a characteristic of a good novel a good novel is expected to function based on minimal description and leave a lot of open ends to be filled up to be imagined and recreated through the reader's creativity creative reading. And then while the development of character in short story is similar to the novel we see that the novel has time and space for a number of effects artistic effects let us say through subplots.

So the novel can experiment with stylistic devices and narrative style this entire scope of, becoming of developing is not available in the case of the short story.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:45)



Short Story - Features

- The short story writer is driven by an inherent paradoxical situation – to **restrict** herself to the **limited dimension of time** that the genre entails, and to convey an **atemporal theme through the plot** – a theme that transcends the bounds of time and temporality.
- A short story writer **does not** elaborate secondary characters and does not mess the subplot too much (which cannot be restored within a limited time/space).
- Due to the same reason, the short story does not have too much scope to **play around with perspectives**. Usually there is a **single point of view** to retain focus on the plot. Short stories usually **focus on one problem** only.
- In terms of language, **multiple use of sounds and words**, short story is comparable to **lyric poetry**.

So the short story is driven by an inherent paradoxical situation to restrict itself to limited dimensions of time that the genre entails and yet to convey and atemporal theme through the plot a theme that transcends the bounds of time and temporality. I would quickly before proceeding go through the basic premises that rust hills proposes as key features of the short story one is that unlike the sketch the short story also looks at the development of a character.

The characters are moving through the plot it is not only the description a static description that the sketch is all about and then the harmonious relationship of all aspects where the whole

emerges even before the parts then Hill also talks about the, greatest scope of playing with the statistic devices that the novel has which the short story lacks. The short story writer does not elaborate or rather cannot elaborate the secondary characters and does not mess too much with the subplots.

Because messing too much would mean he or she cannot restore these subplots or the secondary characters within the limited time and space. Due to the same reason, the short story does not have too much scope to play around with perspectives usually there is a single point of view to retain focus on the plot. Short story is usually focus on

one problem only that is the maximum one can resolve within the bounds of the short story you know getting into the hurt of one problem and trying to deal with that. In terms of language multiple use of, sounds and words make the short story comparable with lyric poetry.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:10)

Short Story – Character and Plot

- Like in T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound's poetry, there are intricate systems of **poetic metaphor** and imageries from **fable, myth** and **fairy tales** that inform a short story. To the extent that some of them can be read as a poem.
- **Language of a short story**, apart from fulfilling the **need of narration**, also promptly connects with **theme, mood** and **action**. Language is vital in setting up the author's **tone** and **style**, in turn contributing to the **characterization** and **point of view**.
- In a successful short story, all these aspects should work in **tandem** – each feature enhancing and interrelating with every other feature.
- Short story should reflect an **inseparable and synchronized, composed economy**.

So like in T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pounds poetry there are intricate systems of poetic metaphor and imageries and you know from drawn from fable, myth and fairy tales which inform the short story. And these poetic metaphors and influences from folk tales from ballads myths to the extent that some of the short stories can actually be read as an extended poem. A language of a short story apart from fulfilling the need of narration also promptly connects with the theme mood and actions.

So all of these aspects need to be bound together the theme of the short story is mood its actions and language becomes vital in setting up the author's tone and style which in turn

contributes to the characterization and the point of view of the short story. In a typical successful short story all the different aspects you know the tonality the actions the theme the characters all of them should work in tandem and each feature each aspect should enhance and interrelate with the other feature.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:56)

Short Story – Character and Plot

- Clare Hanson: Short story as a form mediates between the lyric and the novel, yet through experimentation with short stories new genres are created, when interacting with essay, letter, cinema, photography, painting and visual arts.
- Critics note that short story has split allegiance to the **narrative** and the **lyric**.
- For short story to progress, there has to be a **disruption from the regular, familiar everyday** encounters, a breakaway from “fixed action/s.”
- While the fixed action enhances **characterization**, an incident that leads to a breakaway from it introduces the **potential plot** of the short story.

Short story should reflect an inseparable and synchronized composed economy thereby so Clare Hanson notes such short story as a form mediates between, the lyric and the novel it has in part its qualities you know features of the lyric and then that of the novel too. And yet through experimentation one also sees that short story is coming up with a new genres new possibilities new avatars if we may that is when short stories are created through interacting with essay with letter cinema photography painting and visual arts.

Critics know that short, story has split religions to the narrative and the lyric the short story to progress there has to be a disruption from regular familiar every day encounters and so there has to be a breakaway from the routine from the pre-meditated kind of pre-programmed actions fixed actions. That the extraordinary the oddity the paranormal all these traits constitute the plot the torque for the short story, the shock the joy make up the profiling force for the short story.

While the fixed action enhances characterization an incident that leads to a breakaway from fixed action introduces the potential plot for this short story.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:43)

Short Story – Character and Plot

- The disruption elicits action/s from the character/s that are **non-repetitive, not regular and unfamiliar**, which drive the plot forward. So, the "fixed action/s" are a preliminary part even before the story begins. If it is a story, it has to cut off from the mundane.
- Structuralist Algirdas Julien Greimas notes that the perception of oppositions underlies the structure of signification. Meaning in a narrative takes shape through the reader's perception of differences. The structure of the enunciation-spectacle, which is the fundamental structure of language, remains the same; its manifestations change depending on the actants or themes embodying and performing it. Similar to langue's relation with parole, all stories spring from the same grammar.
- Similarly, Tzvetan Todorov points out that any narrative comprises a series of propositions or events related to each other temporally, spatially or logically, and each proposition is a combination of a noun (character) with either an adjective (attribute) or a verb (action).

The disruption from the normal the routine the everyday elicits actions from the characters something that is one of that is spontaneous and non-repetitive non-regular an, action that is unfamiliar thereby which drives the plot forward. So fixed actions are a preliminary part it sets the stage for the short story the background of the short story even before the short story has begun if it is a story once it enters within the promises of the story it has to cut off from the mundane.

If we can understand how a narrative happens through the lens of different, structuralist thinkers so for example I will read this Julien Greimas notes that the perception of oppositions of any form of conflict followed by resolution or sometimes not followed by resolution underlies structure of any signification any meaning that a narrative tries to posit tries to hold meaning in a narrative takes shape through the reader's perception of these conflicts these differences.

And so the structure primers is talking about something that he terms as the enunciation spectacle the structure of the enunciation spectacle which is the fundamental structure of language or grammar and this remains the same for all the stories for any form of narration the manifestation the performance of this enunciation spectacle changes depending on the actins or the different, themes embodying and performing it.

This is very similar to lungs relation with parole where all stories are you know springing from the same grammar just like paroles are individual dialects individual performance of the self same lung here we see that enunciation spectacle is like the common repository and the

different actants and themes the stock characters it could be a motive that keeps, coming back a motive that manifests through different characters and it is the individual performance of the enunciation spectacle which still remains the same.

For all types of narrations across time and space this is what Greimas has to say. Similarly it is Tzvetan Todorov points out that any narrative comprises a series of propositions or events that holds true regardless of whether we are, talking about the epic the novel the short story this holds true both of what you know what both Greimas and Todorov of say hold true for all the channels. So, total of talks about propositions or events that could be related to each other in terms of time.

So temporally specially or logically and then how is one proposition made each proposition is a combination of a noun meaning a character, with either a either an adjective or a verb so the character has a certain attribute or the character does something an action of the character this is what constitutes an event and a series of such events centering time space or causality makes up any narration. This is what Tzvetan Todorov has to say.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:06)

Short Story – The Theory

- According to John Gerlach, there can be a number of narrative closure categories for short stories:
 - (a) **Solution of the central problem** – unique to short story that does not always happen in novels. Either a goal is achieved, or if unachievable, a certain completion, coherence or stability is attained towards the end.
 - (b) **Natural termination** – completion of an action with a predictable end.
 - (c) **Completion of antitheses** – ends with an **opposition** often characterized by **irony**, which may indicate **polarized extremities on a given subject**, or **circularity** by returning to an aspect mentioned at the beginning through verbal or situational echo,
 - (d) **Manifestation of a moral** – this draws on the **genre of the parable**, where an example is set at the end. A theme emerges towards the end, whose effect is similar to the **moral** in the **exemplum tradition**.

According to John Gerlach there can be a number of narrative closure categories, for short stories one of the ways of closing a short story could be through solution of the central problem which is the most common way of concluding. And this trait of you know tying the loose end is a typical and unique to short story that does not always happen in novels in novels like I have already said there can be certain open ends certain problems that are not resolved till the end.

So going back to Gerlach different cultural categories the first one solution of the central problem either a goal is achieved or if unachievable a certain completion coherence or stability is attained towards the end. Next Gerlach talks about the second possibility of closure which is natural termination of the story meaning that completion of an action takes place with a predictable end. Next is, completion of antithesis so the story ends with an opposition often characterized by irony which may indicate polarized extremities on a given subject.

Or circularity by returning to an aspect mentioned at the beginning through verbal or situational echo. So the entire story tries to posit a thesis tries to shape a thesis and the end is an opposition it is a subversion of that entire thesis. So, the story is formed through polarized extremities on a given subject where the subject was being dealt with from a certain angle till a different angle was adopted in the end.

Or there could be a circularity where the narrator or the author returns to the self-same aspect that was mentioned at the very beginning or through verbal or situational echo. Then we have manifestation of a moral this is another possibility closing the short story through manifestation of a moral it draws on the genre of parable where an example is set at the end a lesson is taught it is it has didactic purpose a theme emerges towards the end whose effect is similar to the moral in the exemplum tradition.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:08)

Short Story – The Theory

(e) **Encapsulation** – it has a concluding passage that **distances the reader**, either by altering the point of view or **summarizing** a passing of time, i.e. some time has elapsed since the core problem of the plot occurred.

- These can also be closural signals of poetry, the novel and drama.
- As a shorter fiction, closure of a short story is structurally very important to it.
- In **approaching a character** from the position of a short story writer, one can **treat the character as an individual and a subject**.
- Such an approach looks at a story in the context of its **similarity with the real world**. This is a **realistic approach**.

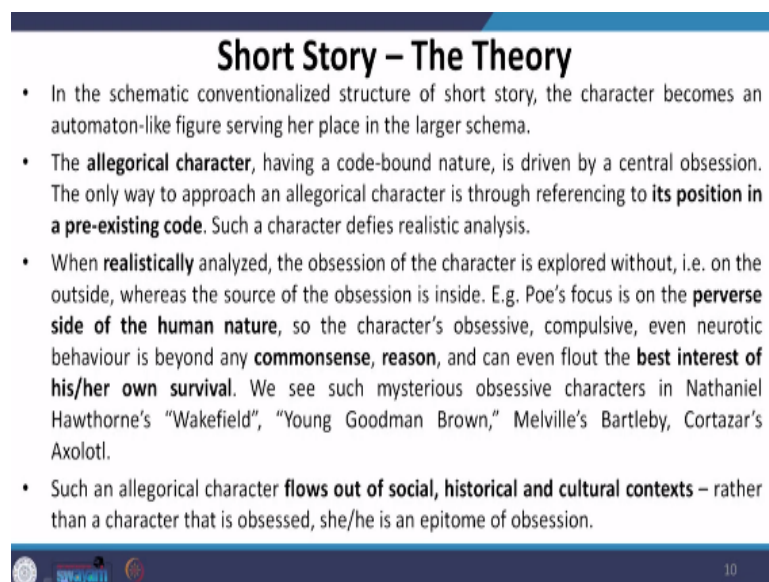
And Gerlach is talking about one more possibility for ending the short story which is true, encapsulation. Encapsulation meaning that the story has a concluding passage that distances

the reader either by altering the point of view or through summarizing a passage of time so some time has elapsed since the core problem of the plot occurred. And this through this summarizing or through telling us in the end that sometime has elapsed there is a kind of relief which enables the reader to distance herself, from the core plot.

These closural strategies can also be applied these closure signals or strategies can also be applied they can also occur in poems, in novels and in drama. So as a shorter fiction closure of a short story is structurally very important to it. In approaching a character from the position of a short story writer one can treat the character either as an individual or as a subject so, there can be 2 ways of looking at the characters of a given short story.

One could look at them as an individual in their individual capacity through their ordinary acts or as a symbol what they stand for there is a large meaning associated with them and where they are/have ordinary acts become less important. And overriding meaning is something that means to that informs a short story. So the, realistic approach the individual approach looks at a short story in the context of its similarity with the real world this is like I said the realistic approach.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:26)



Short Story – The Theory

- In the schematic conventionalized structure of short story, the character becomes an automaton-like figure serving her place in the larger schema.
- The **allegorical character**, having a code-bound nature, is driven by a central obsession. The only way to approach an allegorical character is through referencing to **its position in a pre-existing code**. Such a character defies realistic analysis.
- When **realistically** analyzed, the obsession of the character is explored without, i.e. on the outside, whereas the source of the obsession is inside. E.g. Poe's focus is on the **perverse side of the human nature**, so the character's obsessive, compulsive, even neurotic behaviour is beyond any **commonsense, reason**, and can even flout the **best interest of his/her own survival**. We see such mysterious obsessive characters in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Wakefield", "Young Goodman Brown," Melville's Bartleby, Cortazar's Axolotl.
- Such an allegorical character **flows out of social, historical and cultural contexts** – rather than a character that is obsessed, she/he is an epitome of obsession.

And then the other approach which is also something I have mentioned just now it is to treat the structure of the story plot as a scheme or a code story as a code that needs to be decoded that needs to be deciphered and here the, characters are not in their individual capacities but as archetypes and they are there by virtue of the position that they hold in the larger schema this reading is called the allegorical or metaphorical approach.

Peter Brooks however says that the metaphor that lies in eventual totalization and which is understood only in retrospect draws meaning from as well as lends meaning to the realistic sequence of events so in other words the metaphoric and the realistic aspects reflect on one another we begin our readings generally through the realistic approach where characters are individuals. Still we have journeyed to a certain point in the story and we realize that the characters represent and stand for some large concepts.

And that goes also the realistic reading goes on to become a metaphorical reading when once we start deciphering this code this scheme through our journey with the narrator. And this second style of reading this second mode of reading or analysis generally comes in hindsight in retrospect. Owing to its shortness of form short also relaxes a social framework and it draws greatly on its provenance in myth and focuses on a basic sense of mystery.

Mystery, a paranormal desire odd and extraordinary according to Robert Langbaum the author's endless introspection of who am I this is also an introspection an existential question that prods the novelist. And this question the short story writer's question of who am I is answered through the author donning a mask and stepping into the story within the frame of the story where at the level of experience events eventually fall into a pattern.

And the author's will in the due course is unraveled and objectified so in other words through the making of the story the author is answering to this existential question of who I am maybe god as one of the characters the author's will is eventually revealed. So the question of epiphany the revelation the realization the realization of the characters, within the bounds within the frame of the story is not only a fictional realization.

It could also be the author's realization in her real life through the necessity of the story the author discovers his or her identity and what he or she aspires for something that has remained besides the conscious state of mind the practice of writing it is therapeutic and it is a way of disinterring the unconscious the unconscious desire and aspirations of the right. So in this schematic conventionalized structure of short story the character becomes an automated like figure who serves his or her place in the large schema.

This is the conventional structure of short story the allegorical character having a code-bound nature is driven by a given central obsession. The only way to approach an, allegorical character is through referencing to its position in and as a pre-existing code so unless we read the character some of the stories entail this reading where individual reading does not you know does not make too much of meaning it does not make a lot of sense unless we read the characters as symbols as standing for something else a larger concept.

For example so characters as code, the story as a scheme and such characters such plots defy realist realistic analysis. When realistically analyze the obsession of the character is explode without so when we are doing the realistic analysis we are studying the characters form or on the outside whereas allegorical characters analysis entail you know looking at their inner journey their inner universe when these allegorical narratives are written the source of obsession is positioned inside of the character's psyche.

So the possibility of this obsession lies within and cannot be identified through the external behavior example is edgar allan poe's writing suppose focus is on the perverse neurotic side of the human nature his characters are mostly obsessive compulsive they have their own psychosis their own quirks and this behavior that they posit that the battery is beyond any common sense any reason rationality and can even flout their own best interests the best interest of their own survival.

Such mysterious obsessive characters and that can be best read through the allegorical lens of reading are found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Wakefield young good man brown and then Melville's Bartleby of course, axolotl and so forth such an allegorical character as I mentioned flows out of social historical and cultural contexts they cannot be contained within the parameters of real coordinates cannot hold them amply sufficiently they constantly flow out of the social historical and cultural contexts.

Rather than a character that is obsessed in these cases they are themselves an epitome of obsession they are not a character obsessed but an epitome of obsession.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:37)

Short Story

- In a short story the different components are tied to each other through “**an inseparable web**”, in which one component has no reality independent of the entirety.
- The reader can grasp comprehensively only when understanding this entirety.
- **Unity of effect**, techniques of **plot compression**, **lyricism** are some of the defining features of short stories.
- According to Thomas Gullason, the unity of effect that Poe emphasizes comes from “**distillation**” and “**telescoping**.” Distillation refers to the reader’s skill of reading the metaphorical and archetypal meanings outside of individual characters and events, whereas telescoping means focusing on the necessary details.
- The story has ‘**slots**’ where various elements may be inserted. These slots and elements maintain a perceivable coherence in their inter-relationships.

In a short story the different components are tied to each other through an inseparable web in which one component has no reality when decoupled from the entirety the entire organization. The reader can grasp comprehensively only when understanding this organized whole this entirety so unity of effect techniques of plot compression, lyricism, are some of the defining features of short stories. So according to Thomas Gullason the unity of effects that poor emphasizes comes from 2 things.

According to Gullason these 2 things are distillation and telescoping so what are these things that you know render unity to the short story distillation refers to the readers skill of reading the metaphorical and archetypal meanings but distillation, also means steering clear of unnecessary you know unnecessary details steering clear of unnecessary details too many subplots that cannot be justified within the frame of a short story.

So a distilled short story shows the design shows the pattern in a clearer in a more distinct fashion. And then telescoping referring to focusing on where focus needs to be the necessary details. So these 2, features actually speak to each other only when we are distilling we are getting read of the extraneous unnecessary information that can remain undiscussed that can be avoided one arrives at telescoping at focusing at the right sport of the story.

The story has slots where various elements may be inserted these slots and elements maintain a perceivable coherence in their interrelationships. So a, successful story to conclude this entire discussion we can summarize.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:13)

Short Story

- A successful short story is **complete**, such that any addition or omission would **destroy its aesthetic wholeness** and **narrative harmony**.
- Due to fewer narrative elements and structural slots, in the modern short story the impressionist components are more visible → Knudera's apodictic message
- **Impressionist Movement** is a tradition whose forerunner was Flaubert – which defined fiction in the late 19th century and early 20th century.
- Ernst Cassirer describes the short story's singleness of effect as "...the **isolated occurrence of an impression**, its **separation from the totality of ordinary, commonplace experience** produc[ing] not only a **tremendous intensification**, but also the **highest degree of condensation**."

A successful story is complete such that any addition or a mission would destroy its aesthetic wholeness its inner organization and thereby its narrative harmony due to fewer narrative elements and structural plots in the modern short story the impressionist components are more visible. So, this is also something that harkens back, Knudera's notion of the apodictic message. The messages you know are our glimpse at the soul of the heart of the short story at once.

So that is the impression that is formed at once not by and by not through and through eventually but it is there and there throughout. So the apodictic message where and this happens through brevity a practice of restraining oneself as an author in the position, of author from giving too much description from you know bringing in too many characters and subplots. So that tends to blur our vision take us away from the approjective message the pit the core of the narrative.

So in order for that to be there at once the narrative has to be paired of there has to be a minimal treatment impressionist movement we as we know is a tradition whose foreign fiction in, the late 19th century and early 20th century we are talking about the way we see an impression as a complete form in itself and there at once. This is also something that is understood as desirable in the modern short story.

Ernst cassirer describes the short stories a singleness of effect as I quote cassirer the isolated occurrence of an impression is separation from the totality of ordinary commonplace, experience producing not only a tremendous intensification but also the highest degree of

condensation here also we are getting 2 words one is intensification and the other is condensation they speak to each other and so how strongly we can drive home the central message.

That is possible only when we get rid of the extraneous something that can be gotten rid of so the short story does not take, up any extra burden that it cannot justify that it cannot do justice with this I am going to conclude today's lecture and let us meet again with another round of discussions in our following lectures thank you.