

A brief study of the short story from Poe and Gogol to the present day. Briskly and fluently written. Not a work either of scholarship or profound literary criticism; and not meant to be. Rather impromptu lectures by a writer devoted to the short-story form and believing profoundly not only in its present place in literature but also in its future. It will be enjoyed by a wide public, and worthy of study by young practitioners of the short story, but does not supersede Tchekhov's letters to his brother.

Bates does not correlate short story development sufficiently with other artistic, social, and philosophical developments: tries, but fails to amputate it from the body of literature without severing vital arteries. From O'Brien he, without criticism, takes the thesis that the short story writer is the *poet manqué*. Truth is O'Brien was a *poet manqué* and became a great short story editor *faute de mieux*. Many short story writers of the period between the two wars were novelists *manqués*. They did not, and could not, write the novels they wanted to because the period of transition was not completed. When it is we are more likely to see the revival of the three-decker novel than an efflorescence of the short story. Short stories flourish when whole lives are meaningless, but moments of time, fleeting emotions, and isolated incidents hold significance.