

The background of the cover is an aerial photograph of a coastline. The top half shows the dark, choppy sea meeting a sandy beach. The bottom half shows the white foam of waves crashing onto the shore, creating a textured, white and yellowish pattern against the darker sand and water.

R.V. Cassill
**THE NORTON
ANTHOLOGY
OF SHORT
FICTION**

Third Edition

THE
NORTON
ANTHOLOGY
OF
SHORT
FICTION

THIRD EDITION

R. V. Cassill

Brown University



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PREFACE

THE first principle for composing the ideal fiction anthology is self-evident: Fill it with stories that discriminating readers have liked most. "Nothing, of course, will ever take the place of the good old fashion of 'liking' a work of art or not liking it," said Henry James. He called this the "primitive" and the "ultimate" test—stressing at the same time the necessity of other critical tactics and measures to be employed along the way. As usual, James was right.

It can be taken for granted that the anthologist likes the stories he has included, but that is not quite enough. Teaching is a collective enterprise. So, in assembling the contents of this book I leaned very heavily on the advice, opinion, and preferences that my publishers had assembled from correspondence with teachers of fiction at colleges and universities across the country. In a real sense, then, the table of contents represents a collaborative effort. This is a collection that has met James's fundamental test of being liked by many experienced and devoted readers.

An anthology designed as a teaching instrument must also, however, entice and guide those who are just learning to like what has long been delighting others. It must provide the calculated variety which permits the teacher to lead the way with the least encumbrance and the largest resources to draw on. While this text makes no pretense of displaying "the history of the short story" in a systematic way, the selections were made with a view to supporting those historical interpretations which classroom teachers might elect to develop from it. The chronological table of contents provides the groundwork for such an approach.

Discreet footnoting was designed to make each piece accessible to the contemporary student reader. Questions appended to the stories will help students reflect on stylistic and topical features and may also outline the shape of class discussions or themes. Many questions are phrased to increase students' awareness of the technical options available to the storyteller, since in assembling the collection I chose works that will demonstrate the spectrum of contemporary techniques and show, in the work of earlier times, that technical variations are in themselves part of the meaning of fiction.

The amplitude of the text has permitted the inclusion of more than one story by several important writers. Where this is the case, care was taken to suggest the range as well as the particular voice and manner of the author. Partial lists of each author's books point the way to wider reading.

The Glossary is a handy compilation of those critical terms most

useful in a disciplined classroom discussion of fiction. And, since talking constructively about stories is so crucial a part of the experience that begins with reading them, I have shaped an introductory part of the book as an initiation to that rewarding practice. The short selections in "Talking about Fiction" are the gleanings of a lifetime in which I sought—and tested in the classroom—examples that would show with maximum brevity, clarity, and force the truly fundamental characteristics of the storyteller's art.

A glance at the table of contents will show you that many things in this book have been frequently anthologized. Some have never appeared before in anthologies. In the old as in the new, the freshness and vitality of the collection as a whole was the governing consideration. The goal was to put together a very large group of stories that would, in detail and overall design, express both the living tradition of short fiction and the culture of which it is a part.

For their generous and invaluable help in the movement toward that goal I want to thank M. H. Abrams, Cornell University; Donald K. Adams, Occidental College; Martha Y. Battle, University of Tennessee at Martin; Steven D. Blume, Marietta College; E. C. Bufkin, University of Georgia; Pat M. Carr, University of Texas at El Paso; Thomas Cooley, Ohio State University; Richard C. Day, Humboldt State University; James E. Evans, University of North Carolina at Greensboro; Suzanne Ferguson, Ohio State University; H. Ramsey Fowler, Memphis State University; John R. Griffin, Southern Colorado State College; Cyril Gulassa, De Anza College; Carolyn Heilbrun, Columbia University; Mary Hesky, Goucher College; Michael Hoffman, University of California at Davis; Irene Honeycutt, Central Piedmont Community College; William L. Howarth, Princeton University; Michael Joyce, Jackson (Michigan) Community College; Sylvan M. Karchmer, University of Houston; Anne Thompson Lee, Bates College; Frank Lentricchia, University of California at Irvine; Michael McKeon, Boston University; Rose Moss, Wellesley College; Raymond M. Olderman, University of Wisconsin; Guy Owen, North Carolina State University at Raleigh; James K. Robinson, University of Cincinnati; Robert Storey, University of Pennsylvania; Walter Waring, Kalamazoo College; Shirley Yarnall, The American University; James L. Yoch, University of Oklahoma. My assistant Wayne Eason deserves special thanks for his help in preparing the manuscript.

R. V. CASSILL

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

IN the decade since work began on this anthology there have been no flamboyant shifts in literary fashion nor meteoric flashes of celebrity requiring the map of literature to be redrawn. There have been no dramatic eclipses of established reputations, though some have dimmed. Nevertheless editors and teachers must be aware of some shifts of sensibility over these last ten years, making certain stories more attractive to users of the text, diminishing the desirability of others. Among the very many young writers of short fiction, talents have matured and clamor, justly, for recognition by the contemporary generation of students.

It is not the business of this anthology to give space to a very wide sampling of the excellent new stories that appear in print each year. But it is very much my intent to offer a mix of titles that will stress a vital continuity between the old and the new. In each of the previous editions I included stories by writers at the forefront of current fiction, without respect to the familiarity of their names, concerned only with the excellence of their contributions and their potential for kindling the imagination of student readers. You will see that practice has been continued in this third edition with the inclusion of an even larger contingent of writers who have very recently claimed a place in contemporary literature. In selecting these new titles—as in dropping some that appeared in previous editions—I have been immeasurably assisted by the opinions of teachers across the country who have generously drawn from their classroom experience to advise me.

Throughout the decade American colleges have marked a growth in the number of students enrolled in classes in fiction writing, while there has been simultaneously a stronger emphasis on writing skills in general. With this in mind I have prepared two brief new sections—**WRITING FICTION** and **WRITING ABOUT FICTION**—designed to suggest ways in which the anthology can serve as a principal or adjunct text in writing classes. The material in these sections was developed chiefly from my own teaching experience, but here again I responded to suggestions from a number of quarters.

If space permitted I would like to acknowledge here all those who, in one fashion or another, collaborated in shaping this latest modification of my veteran text. Since it does not, I will confine myself to a special expression of thanks to editors John Benedict and Barry Wade at Norton—who have steadfastly lent enthusiasm, diligence, and expertise since the project was first conceived ten years ago.

TALKING ABOUT FICTION

DISCUSSION and analysis follow naturally from the imaginative responses we make while we are reading. There need be no deliberate decision to "take the story apart." The illusionistic aspect of fiction begins to come apart almost at the instant it is experienced, fading passage by passage behind us as our reading moves from the beginning toward the end. When the spell cast by the whole is dissolving in our memory into its component parts, we are in a favorable position to sort them out and ask what each part did to direct our imagination along lines imagined by the person who wrote the story for us.

Readers with some degree of critical experience have the habit of noting aspects of plot, character, tone, theme, imagery, point of view, and numerous other variations of literary form as they sum up and discuss their reading experience. But before we begin to examine any of these aspects in isolation, we can here consider some truly basic features characteristic of fiction in general. We can do that conveniently with the pieces in this section because they are all brief enough to permit an easy reference from text to commentary. They include a poem, a couple of excerpts from stories printed in full farther along in the book, and four selections that are essentially complete short stories. For all their brevity these four display the unity and completeness you will find in the rest of the stories included in this anthology.

Character and Setting

Nothing is more fundamental to creating a story than establishing a spatial, temporal environment and peopling it with actors. Here is an example by a modern master.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

*story from In Our Time*¹

Nick sat against the wall of the church where they had dragged him to be clear of machine-gun fire in the street. Both legs stuck out awkwardly. He had been hit in the spine. His face was sweaty and dirty. The sun shone on his face. The day was very hot. Rinaldi, big

1. Chapter VI of the pamphlet *in our time*, published in a limited edition in January, 1924; each of its chapters was virtually a miniature short story in the mode Hemingway was then perfecting. In the following year these nonconsecutive chapters were printed in alternation with longer stories in an expanded volume called *In Our Time*.

backed, his equipment sprawling, lay face downward against the wall. Nick looked straight ahead brilliantly. The pink wall of the house opposite had fallen out from the roof, and an iron bedstead hung twisted toward the street. Two Austrian dead lay in the rubble in the shade of the house. Up the street were other dead. Things were getting forward in the town. It was going well. Stretcher bearers would be along any time now. Nick turned his head carefully and looked at Rinaldi. "Senta Rinaldi. Senta.² You and me we've made a separate peace." Rinaldi lay still in the sun breathing with difficulty. "Not patriots." Nick turned his head carefully away smiling sweatily. Rinaldi was a disappointing audience.

The first sentence specifies a battle setting (by mention of the machine-gun fire in the street) and the particular spot, the foot of a church wall, where Nick is seated. His name, the bare beginning of characterization, is given, and we quickly learn that he has been wounded.

The ruined house across the street is a consistent and specially meaningful part of the setting. Nick is looking at it "brilliantly"—seeing it, that is, with the sharpened, almost desperate awareness that accompanies his injury. The dead bodies of Austrian soldiers mean (to Nick, who is obliged by his role to see them as enemies) that the battle is "going well." The split between his personal concern and his merely military recognition of things is signaled by his next thought: Since the battle is going well for his side, stretcher bearers will soon come to pick him up. This consoling thought leads directly to one more consoling yet: For him the war is over. With an effort at cheerfulness, Nick puts his realization into words, saying, ". . . we've made a separate peace."

His wounded comrade Rinaldi does not answer. Perhaps he can't. His silence suggests that Nick's joy at the prospect of getting out of the war is a limited and probably temporary response to the bad thing that has happened to him. Such a suggestion gives a bleak coloration to the inferences we can make about Nick's future, though the story stops short of any explicit prediction.

Action, Plot, and Complication

Much of what we understand and feel about people comes from watching them act in relation to others and to the entanglements they create as the action proceeds. The following story by a medieval writer depends almost exclusively on elements of action in developing the complications which give meaning to its plot.

2. "Listen."

GIRALDIS CAMBRENSIS

Revenge

. . . The lord of Chateau-roux in France maintained in the castle a man whose eyes he had formerly put out, but who, by long habit, recollected the ways of the castle, and the steps leading to the towers. Seizing an opportunity of revenge, and meditating the destruction of the youth, he fastened the inward doors of the castle, and took the only son and heir of the governor of the castle to the summit of a high tower, from whence he was seen with the utmost concern by the people beneath. The father of the boy hastened thither, and, struck with terror, attempted by every possible means to procure the ransom of his son, but received for answer, that this could not be effected, but by the same mutilation of those lower parts, which he had likewise inflicted on him. The father, having in vain entreated mercy, at length assented, and caused a violent blow to be struck on his body; and the people around him cried out lamentably, as if he had suffered mutilation. The blind man asked him where he felt the greatest pain? When he replied in his reins,³ he declared it was false and prepared to precipitate the boy. A second blow was given, and the lord of the castle asserting that the greatest pain was at his heart, the blind man expressing his disbelief, again carried the boy to the summit of the tower. The third time, however, the father, to save his son, really mutilated himself; and when he exclaimed that the greatest pain was in his teeth; "It is true," said he, "as a man who has had experience should be believed, and thou hast in part revenged my injuries. I shall meet death with more satisfaction, and thou shalt neither beget any other son, nor receive comfort from this." Then, precipitating himself and the boy from the summit of the tower, their limbs were broken, and both instantly expired. The knight ordered a monastery built on the spot for the soul of the boy, which is still extant, and called De Doloribus. . . .⁴

The revenger's wish to pay back the man who has blinded and castrated him provides the initial motivation from which the fictional plot spins forward. The sequence of following events, complicating the plot, represents an accelerating contest of will and cunning between the chief antagonists. The three blows to which the father submits are graduated tests of his affection for his son and of his confidence in his ability to outwit his opponent. Since affection, confidence, and cleverness are attributes of character, we see thus how progress in the action reveals character.

The blind man's response to the blows is motivated by his interpretation (correct in each case) of what has really happened. Note that in the case of the first two blows a part of what has happened

3. Kidneys. 4. Place of Sorrow.

is a further attempt to victimize him, by deceit. At each test the father's confidence diminishes, and he is motivated by this progressive diminishing of confidence, as well as by growing anxiety for his son, to submit to castration. Probably it is his mushrooming panic that prevents his considering what may happen after he has yielded to the demand.

The straightforward movement of the plot toward the anticipated end shifts when the revenger declares himself only partially satisfied by the father's castration. The suicide and murder of the boy held hostage carry the action to the point of fully measuring the degree of fury that began it.

We should note that in this story the characterization—aside from that accomplished by the action itself—is kept to a stark minimum. Nevertheless it may stimulate our imagination to speculate on the variables of sensation and emotion that are usually included in fictional characterization. The momentum of excitement generated by the force of the action carries us into wondering what the boy may have seen as he looked down from the tower where he was held captive. What did he remember as he heard his father bargain for his life? What did he want his father to do? Perhaps we are even impelled to imagine answers for such questions; a good story incites the reader's imagination to go a bit beyond what is actually and literally told.

Point of View

Just as we are interested in learning about the make-up of character as this is demonstrated by action, we are interested in the attitude, the personal vision, and interpretation which major characters make of the situations in which their destiny unfolds. In the majority of stories, everything the reader sees is filtered through someone's point of view.

JOSEPH CONRAD

*from Heart of Darkness*⁵

“Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side. The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you

5. The full story begins on p. 240.

lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once—somewhere—far away—in another existence perhaps. There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare to yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect. . . ."

Every sentence of this first-person narration lets us know that we are watching the jungle through the eyes of a special and specially conditioned observer. We may very well respond to the surprising imagery with an emotional stir like that brought on by looking at a painting or a cinematic shot of looming trees above a river. But such a response is accompanied by a simultaneous recognition that it is the mind of our narrator that has emphasized the riotousness of the vegetation and the kingly authority of trees which, to a different observer, might look like so much lumber. It is the narrator who testifies that there is "no joy" in the sunshine.

This is not at all to say that from lack of objectivity he is falsifying or distorting what he sees. It is rather to remind us that at the heart of all experience coming through our senses there is a regulating and evaluating self. The senses alone could not recognize "the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention." The character who is telling what his environment was like is testifying with his whole, perturbed being to what he saw in it.

It is not only in stories told in the first person that we look at the objective world through the eyes of a character. Here is a glimpse of the Paris of the 1920's seen by a man who loved it and lost it and has now returned.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

from *Babylon Revisited*⁶

Outside, the fire-red, gas-blue, ghost-green signs shone smokily through the tranquil rain. It was late afternoon and the streets were in movement; the *bistros*⁷ gleamed. At the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines he took a taxi. The Place de la Concorde moved by in pink majesty; they crossed the logical Seine, and Charlie felt the sudden provincial quality of the Left Bank.⁸

6. The full story begins on p. 543. 7. Small cafés. 8. South side of the Seine River; site of the student quarter and in recent tradition the Bohemian part of Paris.

Charlie directed his taxi to the Avenue de l'Opera, which was out of his way. But he wanted to see the blue hour spread over the magnificent façade, and imagine that the cab horns, playing endlessly the first few bars of *La Plus que Lente*,⁹ were the trumpets of the Second Empire.¹ They were closing the iron grill in front of Brentano's Book-store, and people were already at dinner behind the trim little bourgeois hedge of Duval's. He had never eaten at a really cheap restaurant in Paris. Five-course dinner, four francs fifty, eighteen cents, wine included. For some odd reason he wished that he had.

Here the name "Charlie" and the pronouns "he" and "his" replace the first-person-singular pronouns which identify the witness in first-person narration. Thus we are directly aware that the author is telling us about someone who registers the details and meaning of the scene in its passage into the imagination of the reader. Though we get the witness's testimony at second hand, the principle is the same. It is the character who wants "to see the blue hour spread over the magnificent façade" of the Paris Opera, and this wish is an important index to his emotions, as you will see when you read the story from which this passage is extracted. But conversely it may be said that the emotions and wishes of Charlie Wales on his return to Paris are the path by which the reader finds access to the essential experience of an American's encounter with that city.

It is entirely appropriate to say that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is about nineteenth-century Belgian colonialism in the Congo Free State or that *Babylon Revisited* is about the anguish of expatriate life in Paris in the Twenties. We may say correctly of other stories that they are about space travel, shipwreck, drug addiction, baseball, the status of women, or the life of the clergy. But it is the nature of fiction to tell us about these things through the perspectives of someone who has special reasons for being interested in them—and we understand them more fully when they are passed on in this way.

Yet a strict and mechanical adherence to the point of view of a character in every segment or paragraph of a story told in the third person would often deny the author the flexibility of representation which is among the chief advantages fiction has over the narrative means available to the film or the stage. In many stories some parts, at least, will clearly reveal the knowledge and feelings of the author extending beyond those of any one of the characters.

9. "Slower than Slow:" refers to "La Plus que Lente," parodistic piano composition by Claude Debussy (1862-1918). 1. The Empire of Louis Napoleon of France, 1852-70. A period of bourgeois ostentation that seemed, in retrospect, glamorous.

WILLIAM FAULKNER

*from Barn Burning*²

That night they camped, in a grove of oaks and beeches where a spring ran. The nights were still cool and they had a fire against it, of a rail lifted from a nearby fence and cut into lengths—a small fire, neat, niggard almost, a shrewd fire; such fires were his father's habit and custom always, even in freezing weather. Older, the boy might have remarked this and wondered why not a big one; why should not a man who had not only seen the waste and extravagance of war, but who had in his blood an inherent voracious prodigality with material not his own, have burned everything in sight? Then he might have gone a step farther and thought that that was the reason: that niggard blaze was the living fruit of nights passed during those four years in the woods hiding from all men, blue or gray, with his strings of horses (captured horses, he called them). And older still, he might have divined the true reason: that the element of fire spoke to some deep mainspring of his father's being, as the element of steel or of powder spoke to other men, as the one weapon for the preservation of integrity, else breath were not worth the breathing, and hence to be regarded with respect and used with discretion.

In the third sentence of this paragraph Faulkner disengages himself from the point of view of the boy through which almost all the rest of the scene and events of the story are rendered. Availing himself of this detachment, the author has set up a broader frame of reference within which we can measure not only the present limits to the boy's understanding and judgment but also the essential "mainspring of his father's being"—an aspect of the design of the story which seems to require a more emphatic definition than the boy could provide. Faulkner has clearly stepped in to articulate that definition in his own language. When an author intrudes this openly into his story the tactic is called "omniscience" and is sometimes criticized for weakening the illusion of something taking place before the reader's eyes. In less extreme examples than this one we often are aware of the author's presence in at least some passages of the story and may conclude that points of view have been intentionally blended to produce some desired effect.

Truth and Fiction

We are usually unworried about the relation between fiction and truth—until we start thinking about it. The best way to think about

2. The full story begins on p. 439.

such a theoretical problem is to begin with actual examples, and since allegories and fables nearly always contain statements that are not literally, factually true, it is natural to start with one of them in the search for guiding principles.

JAMES THURBER

The Owl Who Was God

Once upon a starless midnight there was an owl who sat on the branch of an oak tree. Two ground moles tried to slip quietly by, unnoticed. "You!" said the owl. "Who?" they quavered, in fear and astonishment, for they could not believe it was possible for anyone to see them in that thick darkness. "You two!" said the owl. The moles hurried away and told the other creatures of the field and forest that the owl was the greatest and wisest of all animals because he could see in the dark and because he could answer any questions. "I'll see about that," said a secretary bird, and he called on the owl one night when it was again very dark. "How many claws am I holding up?" said the secretary bird. "Two," said the owl, and that was right. "Can you give me another expression for 'that is to say' or 'namely'?" asked the secretary bird. "To wit," said the owl. "Why does a lover call on his love?" asked the secretary bird. "To woo," said the owl.

The secretary bird hastened back to the other creatures and reported that the owl was indeed the greatest and wisest animal in the world because he could see in the dark and because he could answer any question. "Can he see in the daytime, too?" asked a red fox. "Yes," echoed a dormouse and a French poodle. "Can he see in the daytime, too?" All the other creatures laughed loudly at this silly question, and they set upon the red fox and his friends and drove them out of the region. Then they sent a messenger to the owl and asked him to be their leader.

When the owl appeared among the animals it was high noon and the sun was shining brightly. He walked very slowly, which gave him an appearance of great dignity, and he peered about him with large, staring eyes, which gave him an air of tremendous importance. "He's God!" screamed a Plymouth Rock hen. And the others took up the cry "He's God!" So they followed him wherever he went and when he began to bump into things they began to bump into things, too. Finally he came to a concrete highway and he started up the middle of it and all the other creatures followed him. Presently a hawk, who was acting as outrider, observed a truck coming toward them at fifty miles an hour, and he reported to the secretary bird and the secretary bird reported to the owl. "There's danger ahead," said the secretary bird. "To wit?" said the owl. The secretary bird told him. "Aren't you afraid?" he asked. "Who?" said the owl calmly, for he

could not see the truck. “He’s God!” cried all the creatures again, and they were still crying “He’s God!” when the truck hit them and ran them down. Some of the animals were merely injured, but most of them, including the owl, were killed.

Moral: You can fool too many of the people too much of the time.

Many of the statements in Thurber’s fable neatly match our observations of common reality. Nights are dark. Animals often live in forests. And trucks run on highways. At least some parts of the dialogue are like what might be overheard in a classroom or among a group of people walking on a highway. But we know that animals do not speak English or any other human language, nor do they form social groups which select leaders from outside their own species. So there is no getting around the fact that Thurber has made some statements that are contrary to our experience of the real world.

Yet we accept the truth of what he has to say much as we accept the idea conveyed by a newspaper cartoon in which human features are drastically distorted in size or shape or replaced by some meaningful detail we would never find in nature. Almost without reflection we understand that the poodles, moles, dormice, and other forest creatures represent human types arguing about what they can believe—and that the types they represent are determined to believe what they want to believe.

The owl’s “replies” to the questions of the others can be taken for extraordinary wisdom. The desire to consider him wise overcomes common sense, even in the presence of possible danger. The result of such willful delusion is misfortune. If we can believe that this pattern of folly and consequence is discernible in human society, we accept the fable as being true to life without worrying about the substitution of animals for men and women. We look for truth in general outlines when we don’t find it in details.

In the kind of stories we call realistic, every statement is to be tested for its correspondence to what we consider possible in the world as we experience it. No cows will jump over the moon; no soldier lost in the desert will have a love affair with a beautiful female panther. Even dreams and hallucinations incorporated into realistic fiction must be like those that people actually experience or we will discount the story for its departures from the truth.

But in romantic fiction, fantasy, and allegory we expect to come on statements that ignore our notions of what is possible. Cows are said to jump over the moon; indeed, moons can be said to jump over cows. Anything that can be put in sentence form can be said—and not necessarily at the expense of truth.

There is no simple, fixed line that divides realistic fiction from other kinds. Allegorical patterns which truly represent reality—like those in Thurber’s tale—may figure in complex realistic fiction as in