



PENGUIN ACADEMICS

FICTION

A Pocket Anthology

FOURTH EDITION

R. S. GWYNN



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Preface

When the *Pocket Anthology Series* first appeared a decade ago, our chief aim was to offer a clear alternative to the anthologies of fiction, poetry, and drama that were available at the time. *Fiction: A Pocket Anthology* now in the Penguin Academic Series is in its fourth edition. *Fiction* is designed to be used in a wide range of courses, and this brief anthology can be bundled with one or more of the rich selection of the most popular Penguin titles, which Longman offers at significantly reduced prices. Also, *Fiction* has been published concurrently with its two companion volumes, *Poetry* and *Drama*, and in a combined edition, *Literature*. Your Longman representative can supply full details about these books and available Penguin titles.

Fiction addresses the four wishes and concerns most commonly expressed by both instructors and students. First, of course, is the variety of selections it contains. Admittedly, a pocket anthology has to be very selective in its contents, so we are especially proud that the forty stories in this book include the works of both established canonical writers like Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner, and Flannery O'Connor, and also newer voices that reflect the diversity of gender, ethnic background, and national origin that is essential to any study of contemporary literature. Approximately fifty percent of the stories in *Fiction* are by women; international writers make up roughly one quarter of the contents, and a similar representation of minority writers appears among the American selections. More important, the contents of *Fiction* have been shaped by the advice of experienced instructors who have cited authors and stories which are most often taught and which possess proven appeal to students. In this new edition, a strong effort has been made to include a number of stories that reflect contemporary social questions and thus will easily stimulate classroom discussion; to cite only one example, Maupassant's "The Necklace," which appeared in the first two editions, has been replaced with "Mother Savage," a story that deals with an act of political terrorism committed by a

woman in an occupied country—a story from the nineteenth century that might be set in one of the trouble spots of today's world. We strongly believe that the stories in *Fiction* will provide a reading experience that is not only educational but thought-provoking and enjoyable as well.

Our second aim was flexibility. We wanted a book that could be used as both a primary and supplemental text in a wide range of courses, ranging from introduction to fiction to advanced courses in the short-story genre to creative writing. When combined with one of its companion volumes, *Poetry* or *Drama*, or with novels, collections of short stories by individual authors, or any of the plays available from Penguin listed in the back of this book, *Fiction* may also be used in introductory literature courses. *Fiction* contains, in addition to its generous selection of stories, concise biographical headnotes for authors, an introduction that covers the techniques and terminology of the genre, and a concise section on writing about fiction and research procedures.

Third, we wanted an affordable book. Full-sized introductory literature books now cost upwards of sixty dollars, and many of the comprehensive anthologies of short fiction are in the same price range. Longman is committed to keeping the price of the *Pocket Anthologies* reasonable, without compromising on design or typeface. We believe that readers will find the attractive layout of *Fiction* preferable to the cramped margins and minuscule fonts found in many literature textbooks. Because of its low cost, *Fiction* may be easily supplemented in individual courses with handbooks of grammar and usage or with manuals of style. The price of *Fiction* remains low, and we believe that earlier editions' claims that the book represents "a new standard of value" remain accurate.

Finally, we stressed portability. Many instructors expressed concern for students who must carry large literature books, many of which now approach 2000 pages, across large campuses in backpacks already laden with books and materials for other courses. A semester is a short time, and few courses can cover more than a fraction of the material that many full-sized collections contain. Because most instructors focus on a single genre at a time, *Fiction* and its companion volumes, *Poetry* and *Drama*, remain compact yet self-contained editions that, if a snug fit in most pockets, are still easy to handle and carry. We trust that sympathetic instructors and their students will be grateful for a book that

does not add a physical burden to the already heavy intellectual one required by college courses.

In closing, we would like to express our gratitude to the instructors who reviewed the fourth edition and offered invaluable recommendations for improvements. They are: Michael Griffith, University of Cincinnati; Barbara M. Jolley, University of South Florida; Catherine E. Lewis, Louisiana State University; Lisa Roney, University of Central Florida; and Karen Skinazi, New York University.

Reviewers for the third edition were: Edward Bodie, University of South Carolina, Columbia; Michael de Benedictis, Miami-Dade Community College; Daniel Kline, University of Alaska, Anchorage; Susan Morehouse, Alfred University; R. Clay Reynolds, University of Texas, Dallas; and Barry Spacks, Bellevue Community College.

Reviewers of the second edition were: Shireen Carroll, Davidson College; Tracy Case, Yakima Valley Community College; Bill Clemente, Peru State College; Michael de Benedictis, Miami-Dade Community College; Allen Kupser, Nassau Community College; Dwight McCawley, West Chester University of Pennsylvania; Robert L. McDonald, Virginia Military Institute; Jim Papworth, Ricks College; Frank Rooney, Wentworth Institute of Technology; John Ruszkiewicz, University of Texas; Charles Schuster, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Deborah Sutton, Jefferson College; John Walsh, Saint Peter's College; and David Williams, San Francisco State University.

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R. S. GWYNN
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Introduction

The Telling of the Tale

The memory begins with a scene like this: the circle contains about thirty boys and girls, all in their preteen years and dressed identically in khaki shorts and t-shirts, who sit on upended sections of logs around a leaping fire. The sun has just dropped beneath the rim of a nearby mountain, and a hint of damp chill steals into the August woods. It is the last night of camp, and they have gathered to sing songs and receive awards. Now one of the counselors, a college student who could pass for an older brother of any of the campers, puts away his guitar and nods to his colleague, a young woman who steps into the ring of firelight and begins to speak. "Many, many years ago," she begins, her solemn voice describing three characters—a brave warrior, a maiden with a beautiful laugh, a wolf cub raised as a pet—"on a night not too different from this. . . ." The surrounding woods seem to grow darker as the campers lean forward toward the rise and fall of her voice and the blaze of the flames. Caught in the spell of her words, they have momentarily left television, video games, and MP3 players behind, enacting one of the human race's oldest rituals as they respond to the simple magic of the storyteller's art.

Before we can begin to examine the elements of literary fiction we must bear in mind that literature in its written form is historically a recent innovation; indeed, its two most common modern forms, the short story and the novel, have been in existence for little more than two centuries. Yet long before the invention of writing, for thousands of years ancient peoples developed complex **oral traditions** of literature; these primitive stories, dealing with the creation of the cosmos and the origins of gods and goddesses, formed a body of **myths**, supernatural narratives widely believed to be true by the people of a given culture, and

legends, popular stories about characters and events that may contain trace elements of historical truth. Even in modern societies, elements of this primitive folklore survive in regional or ethnic tales passed on through the generations, most often taking the written form of **folk tales** collected by literary scholars; **fairy tales**, like Charles Perrault's "Beauty and the Beast" or Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid"; **beast fables**, stories with animal characters such as those of Aesop (c. 550 BC) or Joel Chandler Harris (1848–1908); or **parables**, short realistic tales like those found in the Gospels. Many of these, especially the last two types, are to some degree **didactic**, with the narrative events illustrating a **moral** that is either stated or implied.

Even in modern societies other ancient forms of oral literature still enjoy a good state of health. These include **anecdotes**, accounts of single incidents usually involving a well-known person, and **riddles** and **jokes** of all types, which often seem to spring into circulation overnight and often unwittingly mirror the basic situations and coarse humor of venerable **fabliaux**—short, realistic tales from the Middle Ages which often turn on a bawdy situation. Recently, much attention has been given to **urban legends**, so named by folklorist Jan Brunvand, which are short narratives involving grotesque incidents that are widely accepted as true. The title of one of Dr. Brunvand's collections, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, refers to a ghost tale that virtually every American has heard in one of its many versions.

When myths and legends are assembled around the exploits of a great hero, the result is the **folk epic**, a long narrative in elevated style that is generally considered a starting point for any culture's literary history. Like most types of oral folk literature, epics were originally composed in verse for the sake of memorization, but they otherwise contain the same elements as modern literary forms like the short story and novel. For example, the individual **episodes** of Homer's *Odyssey*—Odysseus's outwitting the Cyclops or his adventures with the sorceress Circe—can stand alone as exciting tales and also can fit into the larger structure of the epic, like chapters in a novel. Later authors, living in societies which had invented writing, consciously imitated the style of folk epics in composing **literary epics**. The *Aeneid* by Virgil (70–19 BC) and *The Divine Comedy* by Dante (1265–1321) are two famous examples. In the Middle Ages, **romances**, written in both verse and prose, gained great popularity among all classes. These tales of chivalry involving a knightly hero and a series of exciting, if improbable, adventures were ridiculed by Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616) in *Don Quixote*, a realistic account of an impoverished Spanish gentleman driven mad by

reading too many romances. The eventual form that Cervantes gave Don Quixote's adventures was perhaps influenced by **picaresque novels** like the anonymous *Lazarillo of Tormes* (c. 1450), which involved a young orphan (or *pícaro*, Spanish for “rascal”) in a series of loosely connected adventures. These picaresque tales are rightly considered the ancestors of modern realistic fiction. Many novels, from Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* to Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, borrow their structure from picaresque novels and the modern short story is indebted to their often stark level of realism.

The Short Story Genre

There is no agreement on the precise origins of the modern short story. One important influence in its development was the Italian **novella** of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. The most famous collection of these realistic prose narratives is *The Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375). *The Decameron*, in which the individual stories are narrated by young men and women who have taken to the country to escape the Black Death, is an example of a **frame tale**, in which the stories are “framed” by a larger narrative. The famous Arabian collection *A Thousand and One Nights* is one of the earliest examples of this genre (brilliantly resurrected here by Tim Gautreaux in “Died and Gone to Vegas” and likewise the structure of films like *Pulp Fiction* and *Magnolia*). In translation, these tales were popular in other countries and widely imitated. In writing his plays, Shakespeare borrowed from Italian writers frequently; his tragedy *Othello* takes its plot from a sensational novella by Giraldi Cinthio. We still use the term novella for short stories that are long enough (usually over 15,000 words) to be published separately in book form. Count Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is a classic Russian example, and Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* is one of the best known novellas in English.

The first half of the nineteenth century is the great period of the growth of the short story as a distinct **literary genre**, or type, and its rise takes place in many countries at roughly the same time. Many reasons for this rapid development could be put forth, but perhaps the most important was the literary market established by newspapers and magazines aimed at middle-class audiences. The United States, with its increasingly high rate of literacy and expanding middle class, led the way in this period; Washington Irving's tales like “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” were among the first American