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STRUCTURAL EVALUATION OF MAUGHAM'S: BEFORE THE PARTY, THE POOL AND MACKINTOSH

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ABSTRACT

The present study is carried out to analyse the basic elements of short stories that are fundamental to make up an effective piece of short fiction unique to the genre. The examination subsequently proceeds to expose the key elements that are employed by in his three selected stories: Before the Party, The Pool, and Mackintosh (Maugham, 1951). This study finds most of the elements exist in the selected stories. The elements include: A beginning, middle, and end, unity of effect, conflict, character changes and realistic style. Thus, the study concludes that Maugham's short fictions are well written within the frame of what makes an effective piece of short stories and are recommendable to be a structural model for short fiction writing. The exploration, hopefully, would disclose what key elements are employed by Maugham in order to make his short fictions well-liked by his reader.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The short story is a form that is immensely popular with reader, yet, at the same time, it has been neglected in academic and non - academic critical circle. It has been largely excluded from the arena of contemporary critical debate for a number of complex reasons. One of the probable reasons may lie in the fact that the short story is not quite respected as an art form because it is popular and achieves much phenomenal success in weekly magazines. It is therefore, regarded as 'not serious' and inferior in the minds of literary critics. Because of the economic difficulties involved in short story publishing, the short story form especially in the late 20th Century is still tied to the magazine outlet.

Raid (1977) describes the short story as a "distinctive genre whose uniqueness lies in three related qualities :it makes a single impression on the reader it does so by concentrating on a crisis and it makes the crisis pivotal in a controlled plot ." Thus, the writing and its readership must be determined by the presence or absence of these qualities. Different writers may employ different techniques of writing and therefore, some people enjoy some stories more than others. There is indeed a diversity of writing practices encompassing the genres. However, it is within the interest of this study to consider the determining characteristics and qualities that form an effective piece of story that is distinct from other genre, an understanding of which can undoubtedly broaden and deepen one's appreciation of this art form and help the budding writers of short stories.

This study analyzes the short fiction of Maugham who is a preeminent writer of his time and has received great recognition for his short fiction. Besides, many of his stories are based on his personal experiences and real people, which make it all more interesting to investigate. The investigation, hopefully, would reveal what key elements are employed by W.S. Maugham to make his short stories popular and greatly appreciated by his readers.

This research attempts to look into the parameters of the genre of short story and see how this genre operates to create awareness and appreciation of short stories. A genre is conceived as a set of constitute conventions and codes, altering from age to age, but shared by a hint of implicit contract between writer and reader. However, the writer may play against as well as with the prevailing generic convention; for the reader, such a convention functions as a set of expectations which may be controverted rather than satisfied. The research will further investigate the key elements or tasks involved in writing a piece of short story and the basic qualities that the writer essentially takes into consideration to produce an affective short story.

Traditionally and perhaps rather tautologically, a short story is a story which is short. Smith (1991) states;

... it is a short piece of fiction concerned with the vitally-important problem or goal of one character only. After overcoming various obstacle or complications, the resolution will be brought about by that character's own efforts, by which time he will also have undergone an emotional or spiritual change (Smith, 1991).

Brander Mathews, a writer of short story and a professor of English at Columbia University in New York is said to be the man who was mainly responsible for popularizing the modern concept of short story. He established the 'short-story' as not a story that is merely short. Matthews in Keating (1981) states that it is different 'in kind' from the novel and all other forms of fictions because:

A true Short-story is something other and something more than a mere story which is short. A true short-story differs from the novel chiefly in its essential unity of impression. In a far more exact and precise use of the word, a short-story deals with a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation...The short-story is the single effect, a complete and self-contained, while the Novel is of necessity broken into a series of episodes ... thus, the short-story has, what the

Novels cannot have, the effect of 'totality', as Poe called it, the unity of impression (Keating, 1981).

Actually, Poe's review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* written in 1842 has much influence on Matthew's ideas. For Poe, the short story generates special excitement which emanates from the working out of 'a certain unique or single effect' so that the very 'soul of the reader' is captivated and held; not 'distracted by length or interruption as when reading a long novel, but moved by the artistic unity of the work'. The writer's skill of short story must, therefore, be directed constantly to achieving one particular effect of impression from the first word of the story, and creating a lapse in the reader's attention.

2. SUMMARY OF THE SELECTED SHORT STORIES

2.1. Before the Party

Ever since Harold's husband died, Millicent had been acting strangely indifferent and cold as her mother observed. His photographs were kept instead of being affectionally displayed. Harold was the Resident of a district in Borneo for eight years and was thought to have died of fever until Kathleen, Millicent's sister, was told something else by a family friend. The Skinner family was preparing to attend one of Cannon Heywood's garden parties when Kathleen decided to ask her sister to find out the truth. According to Gladys Heywood, it was reported by the visiting Bishop from Hong Kong that Harold committed suicide. The family was shocked and took great offence to the fact that Millicent had hidden such a thing from them. It was heard that Harold was drunk too.

Cornered, Millicent was forced to vomit out the truth of her sad tale. Millicent was not in love with Harold when she married him. She was 27 and he was 44. She was unattractive and he seemed a good catch. It was only a year and a half after they got married that Millicent discovered in Kuala Sohor the true reason that made Harold take her as a wife. He had, in truth, been a hopeless drunkard and often neglected his duties. The chief secretary warned him that unless he stopped drinking he would have to resign. He was given another chance to take a long leave and go back to England to find himself a wife so that he may be kept in check.

After a year of marriage, Harold began to drink again. Millicent was most disgusted and she decided to confront him. He admitted that before he married her, he had occasionally drunk more than was good for him. He agreed that he would never touch liquor a gain. However, Millicent could not help bearing a dull resentment for the fact that Harold had been told that the only condition upon which he would be allowed to keep his post was that he should bring back a wife. Later, Joan was born. For two years, Millicent fought with him against his addiction. She threatened to take their child away if he did not stop his drinking habit. It was this threat that had kept him sober. Harold had not touched a drop since then. Then Joan fell sick. Millicent decided to take a rest at the river's mouth for a week. It was the first time she had been separated from Harold since she went away to deliver Joan. His absence promoted a lot of thought about their relationship and she felt for the first time that she really loved him. She couldn't wait to go back to him.

Upon her return, however, she was surprised that Harold was not on the landing-stage to meet her. She got into the bungalow and discovered, to her horror, he was lying on the bed totally drunk with a bottle of whisky beside him. Millicent grew so furious that she shouted hysterically and tried to drag him out of bed but Harold was in a state of stupor. Then, catching sight of a *parang* on the wall by the side of the bed, Millicent hacked him to death. Being a lawyer of respectable reputation, Mr. Skinner was faced by a dilemma he has to choose between covering up his daughter's crime and become subsequently an accomplice to murder and exercising justice. The family felt a trapped in lie and angry with Millicent.

2.2. The Pool

It is concerned with a man called Lawson whom the writer came to know in Apia. Lawson was a hopeless drunkard with a half-caste wife whom he married when she was sixteen. He came out from England to manage the local branch of an English bank and enjoyed taking long idle walks in the forest. He discovered Ethel one evening swimming in the pool which he often went to for baths. Her ravishing beauty made him propose to her shortly after getting to know the girl and her family. Ethel was just as pleased because it was a great thing for a half-caste to marry a white man.

One year later, Ethel bore Lawson a son. The latter saw that his son had dark skin and was not really pleased because half-cast men had no chance of making it big on the island and were treated as second class citizens. Not wanting to subject his son to the humiliation of such a life, he decided to take his little family back to England. Ethel was all excited about going to the new place initially, but later she realized that she was unable to adapt herself to the cold weather of England and the lifestyle that is different from what she got used to. She became more miserable and withdrawn each day and begged Lawson to take her home to Apia. Lawson tried everything he could to keep her happy there but did not succeed. Lastly, Ethel bolted with her baby back to her motherland. Lawson was wretched. He sent a cable to her but received no reply. It was then that he decided to drop everything in England and go after her. Back in Apia, he found that Ethel was ever again, Lawson was given no choice but to stay on in Apia. However, he could not hope for a better job than he used to have in England. Even his previous position in the local bank had been filled. While he was jobless, his relationship with his wife's family got strained. Slowly, Ethel began to draw away from him more and more each day. He became even unhappy and began to take to drinking at the hotel after work every evening. Life began to crumble as he grew more and more drunk each day and quarreled with his wife and his employer. Soon he was fired, leaving him with no choice but to take employment under a half –caste .The English community scornfully regarded him as one of the natives. His degeneration was rapid; his wife and family began to bear great resentment towards him. He had neither money nor superiority so he no longer enjoyed the prestige of a white man especially that he lived entirely with the natives and half-cast.

One day, he realized something was amiss as his wife had been going out in her best dresses almost every evening. He suspected her of having an affair with another white man and had a violent confrontation with her. He beat her up but begged for forgiveness later. Ethel considered

that most un-heroic and unmanly. From that point, she despised him thoroughly. Lawson was helpless and drowned his sorrow in alcohol each day. He became obsessed with finding out Ethel's secret lover and held every white man in suspicion. Finally, the culprit turned to be an American businessman called Miller whom Lawson could not size up to during a violent brawl. Like a wretched soul reaching the end of the road, Lawson ended his misery and his life in the pool where he first met his wife.

2.3. Mackintosh

Mackintosh had been on the Island of *Talua*, one of the largest islands in the Samoan group (Pacific), for two years now. He worked as an assistant to Walker who had been the administrator of the island for almost 25 years. Mackintosh hated Walker's guts. Walker had often ridiculed Mackintosh for his interest in a certain type of literature and his unattractive physique. The latter found his superior's way of running the island most disagreeable. Mackintosh thought that Walker's language was vulgar, his ways cunning and domineering and his intellect dull. Besides, the old man had fancied that he was popular and admired by everyone. Nevertheless, Mackintosh could not deny that Walker was most competent in administering the island despite being unscrupulous. Walker had a passion for building roads. He had wanted to make it easy for the produce of the land such as copra to be transported down to the coast. He took great pride in what he had achieved so far but his ambition was to have a road system that ran round the island. To do this, he hired the natives with wages that were almost nominal even though the British authorities had assigned to him a generous grant for that purpose. However, he was faced with a little difficulty lately in getting the natives to work for the 20 pounds he offered. They had demanded 100 pounds ever since the village's chief's son came back from Apia and told them that people there were paid handsomely for public work. As the villagers' hearts were inflamed with the desire for gain, Walker failed in his negotiation with them. That night, somebody threw a knife at him but struck the tree instead. Walker was certain that it was Manuma, the chief's son, who had led the unsuccessful negotiation. But Walker was not angry. On the contrary, he was exhilarated and planned to make them pay for their deeds.

The next day, Walker hired massive group of people from another village to work for 20 pounds and assigned them to stay with the villagers. The Polynesians have this rule of hospitality which is etiquette of absolute rigidity which made it necessary for the people of the village not only to give lodgings to strangers but also to provide them with food and drink for as long as they wished to stay. The inhabitants were outwitted, ridiculed and ruined. Their guests were working very slowly and they had enormous appetites. Soon the hosts found themselves running out of food in the village. They were furious with Manuma and gave him a good beating in one heated argument. Walker went over taunt them gleefully – rubbing salt into the wound.

It was a complete, arrogant victory for Walker. Mackintosh was seized with an angry disgust for the taunting old man and wished he could kill him. That night, Mackintosh could not sleep and decided to go through his drawers to distract his mind from the unpleasant thought. As he caught

sight of his revolver, Manuma appeared at the doorway asking for some medicine. Suddenly, Mackintosh realized that the boy had caught sight of the gun and quickly covered it with heaps of paper. Mackintosh knew what was going on in the boy's mind and he quickly went into the dispensary, allowing the boy the golden opportunity to seek his revenge. After Manuma left, Mackintosh was plagued with unrest. He dared not look into the drawer. The next night, Walker was shot at the beach. A great number of men women and children gathered at the compound of Walker's house crying grievously. Mackintosh suddenly felt a ghastly pang of guilt in his heart. Walker had loved the villagers and saw them as his children and wanted to protect them. He would not allow Mackintosh to make a fuss about the shooting to the authorities. He knew that the villagers would be punished severely for it and he had no heart to allow that to happen. Walker forgave them all for it. His death was mourned by all. Up on returning to his room, Mackintosh found the gun returned in his drawer. He took out the revolver and went down the beach to end the wrongs he had done.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE THREE STORIES

3.1. Before the Party

The story begins with the Skinner family preparing to go to a party given by Canon Heywood. It introduces the reader to Mrs. Skinner who was reminiscing about her son-in-law's death and her daughter's strange behavior after the incident while she was dressing up. The situation presented here concerns the family's feeling of discomfort and perplexity about Millicent's cold attitude towards the mention of her attitude. Here, the reader's curiosity is aroused to continue reading to find out why Millicent is not behaving like a widow. Again the writer set his bait to hook his reader. However, the first hint of complication only took place when Kathleen confronted Millicent about the discrepancy in the stories she heard regarding the cause of Harold's death.

Maugham employed the technique of flash-back in the middle section. Here Millicent became the voice of the narrator who rendered the truth regarding Harold. Her narration also took an orderly flow of events which carries, a beginning and an end. She began with how Harold courted her and why he married her. Her marriage life was a bottle with Harold's addiction to alcohol. He almost reformed as the couple succeeded in controlling the problem for two years. This success owed much to the birth of his daughter, Joan and Millicent's constant reminder to him that she did not want her daughter to grow up knowing that her father was an alcoholic. Then the complication took a surge when she discovered Harold reverting to his ways. His relapse was due to Millicent's absence. Like a little boy who is out of his mother's watching eyes, he took the opportunity to indulge in mischief. It climaxed with Millicent hacking him to death while he was still drunk in bed.

The falling action took place after the flash- back ended, leaving the family in shock and helpless feeling. A crime was committed by a family member and, the rest were held accountable to the law. Like *Rain*, the irony of the situation lies in the fact that a man of highly respectable reputation was now literally a partner-in-crime. This situation is significant for the fact that Mr.

Skinner was a solicitor who has always been scrupulous in his practice. The frustration was beyond words as they were forced into choosing between favouring blood ties or justice. This end, however, did not have a real resolution in the sense that the reader cannot be really sure whether the family will choose to keep quiet about the murder or exercise justice against their own flesh and blood in the near future. Thus, Maugham has again created an open-ended story to allow the reader to make necessary interpretations.

This is an 'accomplishment story' whereby the plot is dominant over the character, giving more focus to the external conflict. The unfurling of the tragedy managed to be developed logically and its outcome was kept suspenseful. The conflict itself was a significant matter which created an internal conflict for each of the family members i.e. justice versus blood ties. Although such an incident may not be a common experience like the three fat women of Antibes, its plausibility lies in the reason for murder to be a logical human defect.

In term of character 'change', it must be recognized that it is another degeneration of a person in Maugham's story. This is a characteristic of Maugham's expectation and outlook in life where many things are viewed pessimistically. Here, Millicent changed into a bitter and vengeful person after discovering that Harold had married her only to keep his job secure. However, she had managed to develop a fondness for him when his drinking days appeared to be over. But, the suppressed monster of bitterness emerged at the sight of him drunk again. Her character continued to grow into an embittered person as she became an unrepentant recluse. She also appeared to be very much in control of herself and strong in her stand. The sense of realization fails to occur in Millicent and she leaves the reader with an unsettled feeling for her behavior. The reader could feel that the character is a dangerous person with a psychological problem. The event had also initiated the change in other characters. There was anger in the blaming voices of the family towards Millicent for putting them in such awkward position.

Before the party is a juxtaposition of the third-person and the first-person narrations. The first narrative voice is the voice of the author-narrator while the second narrative voice is the voice of Millicent who recounted the story using the pronoun "I". The use of the first-person narrative technique creates a close involvement of the reader in the story and provokes a more dramatic and emotional response. Maugham is said to have admired the dramatic quality which he perceived in the work of Maupassant.

The story is a degenerative tragedy which traces the moral decay of a single individual over a period of time. However, it is compressed through the narrative technique of flashback and voice of a first and third-person narrator to create an effect of unity to suit the genre form.

3.2. The Pool

This is a story that has a microscopic focus on one main character, portraying his degeneration as a person and disjunction in the normative society of Apia. Lawson who is the protagonist of the story is indeed what(O'Connor, 1967) O'Connor categorized as 'the submerged population group' that short stories often like to deal with rather than heroes. Lawson is depicted as a victim of a

romantic tragedy rather than anything else. He is a victim of his wife's unfaithfulness, of society and of his own folly. Similar to the style of presentation from *Rain*, *The Pool* employed a narrator to provide the details of Lawson's life story. Nevertheless, Maugham did not sway from his stand in providing an organized frame of storytelling with a beginning, middle and end. The unnamed narrator began by providing a short account of how he came into contact with the main character – Lawson. Like *Rain*, the introduction bears a rather thorough description; Lawson is drawn as wearing a mask of jollity to conceal an inner darker nature. From the narrator's subsequent contact with him, the reader is able to make out a clearer picture of Lawson's personality. The narrator as well as the reader learned of the protagonist's well-educated background, his addiction to alcohol, his hidden depth of anguish and depression, and of his wife, Ethel. However, the reader is not given the reason or cause to Lawson's condition and this serves as bait for the reader to read on.

The impact he made on the narrator led the latter to take a further interest in him and thus, uncover the unfortunate story of Lawson's life in Apia. This revelation of Lawson's life story also took a sequential form of a beginning, middle and end. The writer set the scene in Lawson's first meeting with his wife, Ethel. Then it proceeded to the development of their romance, their marriage and the complication that slowly caused the relationship to break under pressure.

The middle of the story consisted of the progression of the complication in their marriage and as Lawson moved to try to resolve the situation, it got worse. Ethel got more disgusted with him each day and stayed away from him as much as she could while Lawson sank deeper into despair and liquor. The tension mounted when Lawson suspected Ethel of having an affair and beat her up. Ethel had also reached her height of hatred and rebellion towards him. This is the point at which the reader would be most emotional and tense. There is a sense of suspense as to what Lawson would do to his wife or how Ethel would retaliate to Lawson's brutality. After he failed to regain the respect Ethel used to have for him, the rest of the story was simply a deterioration of Lawson's life and character. Then the story took a sudden surge to the climax when Lawson discovered the other man in Ethel's life. The situation ended with the main character's decision to take his own life. Even though the action did not fall into an anticlimax, its ending is somehow predictable in the researcher's opinion. The character's spirit was so broken that there seemed to be no other way out of the problem than for him to die. For this reason, it has its dramatic effect. The element of a surprising end did not occur here to give the story a gradual decline. Nonetheless, this does not make the story (*the pool*) any less realistic. Marital woes of such nature are common if not rampant and they are manifested in many forms. Its setting is also true to life as Apia is one of the islands that belong to the Pacific group. Maugham is well known as a writer who traveled extensively all over the world for writing inspiration and it is not possible for this to be of his record of a real event. The story is built around a passive character to which circumstances seemed to be introduced to disturb the emotional balance of the central character and thus facilitate a certain kind of change in him. He had moved from ignorance to knowledge about his wife and native community. Initially, he had no goal, except some vague desire to possess Ethel and be happy and secure in his marriage. He obviously neither determined what was to happen next nor did anything other than

reacting to the situation as it arise. Ironically, it was the traits of the antagonist that made the change possible. For instance, when Ethel could not adapt herself to the weather and lifestyle of England, her attitude towards her husband correspondingly changed from adoring to coldness. However, Lawson's received him passively and considered him as a fatalistic character who doesn't see how he went wrong' and blames it on 'rotten luck'. He could have left the place and started a new life, as the narrator pointed out to him but he failed to see that he '...haven't the strength' and that he is '...done for.' The end is not truly inevitable but is a degeneration of a person who did not positively work on his sense of realization. There are of two types of conflict here. Both are equal in strength but the internal conflict reigns over the character at the end of the story as it is manifested in suicide. Again, the external conflict which took the forms of Lawson and his wife's clashing, Lawson and his in-laws' friction, Lawson and his employer's quarrel, and the rest of the 'white' world served to add to the internal storm. The internal conflict was not obviously stated but implied through the character's actions and decisions. One instance was when Lawson's wife ran home to Apia. Lawson wanted to settle down permanently in England but he also loved Ethel and their baby. Thus, he was forced to decide immediately which to forsake. Back in Apia, Lawson was thrown into a hostile situation where everybody boycotted him because of his drunkenness and Ethel's manifested in his forgiveness-begging after beating her up. His final conflict was the battle for his own life. Unfortunately, he chose death. The conflicts stand significant because it is the very cause for the tragedy of the protagonist. Even though the end was no suspenseful, the story nevertheless, is developed in a logical order, thus, making it plausible and convincing. Looking at the events leading up to the breaking down of the character's spirit due to his spouse's betrayal is only too close to life. Compressed to about 34 pages Maugham managed to keep his story within the conventional frame of the genre. It is neither too long nor too short to hold the reader's attention by the effect of 'totality'. In other words, the story manages to generate a certain excitement dealing with a single character and event that is unbroken and complete in one reading. The style of narration in this story is similar to rain in terms of its colloquialism and slang employed by the first-person narrative voice to offer a "more direct and dramatically charged relationship between reader and writer" (Hanson, 1985). The Pool is a piece of direct narrative which does not bear the complication of symbolism.

3.3. Mackintosh

In about thirty pages, Maugham achieved yet another story that is concerned with a vitally important problem and the change that occurred in one character. However, Mackintosh consisted of an order of elements different from the usual neat arrangement found in the previous stories. But it is still could be considered with the beginning, middle and end, the situation is revealed as part of the complication-with the beginning introducing the tensions and struggles that the protagonist faced. For example; the story begins by introducing the protagonist as showing dissatisfaction and resentment towards his boss. His boss was his problem. The introduction of the antagonist in this manner has created a conflict that should strike at capturing the reader's interest to know why the

protagonist bears so much contempt towards the former. The subsequent section or the middle part went on to reveal the antagonist's action in his daily administration of the island. Here, there is a complication within complication. The first complication did not involve the protagonist and thus, he did not have to do anything. This involved Walker's dispute with the villagers' demands for higher wages. Mackintosh's role was an observer of the situation, who harboured silent disgust for the intimidating boss he was working for. Besides, Mackintosh found Walker's way to be cunning, cruel and bullying. The second complication stood more as the *crisis* of the story in which Mackintosh was faced with an internal conflict which required a decision that determines the life of another person. The decisive moment happened when Manuma who was victimized by Walker's passion for building roads, came to see Mackintosh for some medicine and eyed the revolver that was sitting on Mackintosh's drawer. Knowing the boy's thoughts and having had a similar idea of killing the old man before, Mackintosh gave the boy the opportunity to 'borrow' the gun by purposely leaving him alone in the room with the open drawer, knowing that the boy had seen the gun. Nonetheless, his conflict did not stop here. As he did not dare to look into the drawer after that, Mac was suddenly guilt-stricken and tried to prevent Walker from going out for his evening walk alone. However, Walker did not listen. Mackintosh, thus reason with himself that it would not be his fault if Walker got killed because he already did all he could to prevent it. Nevertheless, his conscience betrayed him, creating a conflict between logical reasoning and conscience within him. The tension mounted while Mackintosh waited in uncertainty. He was not sure if he had really wanted death. The suspense mounted when Walker did not return and finally reached its peak when he was reported shot. Then it began to decline with the falling action taking place. Nevertheless, the element of surprise was present in contributing to an emotionally disturbing end. Like Rain, it shed on a new understanding to the entire progression of the story. The protagonist had undergone certain character changes in the process of the event. After the shooting, Mackintosh learned of Walker's love for the natives of the island despite his unethical ways. This new revelation was a proof of his misconception of the old man and thus caused him to undergo a strong change of conscience. However, this new enlightenment made a bewildering impact rather than making amends to redeem his guilt. Having discussed the conflict thus, the story has definitely been developed in a logical sense and also definitely significant to the characters involved. However, it differs from the other stories in terms of the formal structure of the conflicts whereby it is more appropriately classified as accomplishment story because the protagonist was an active, though tragic, hero who primarily determined or controlled the situation to achieve his purpose. It is also classified as such because the presentation of plot is dominant over characters. In terms of realism, the consequences in the story may be an isolated case but the situation and conflict are not totally unfamiliar to our world. Its plausibility lies in the fact that many people do not get along well with their bosses and often get put down. People may or may not react the way Walker and Mac did but there are familiar principle of human behavior and emotions they experienced in a particular situation. For instance, it is only human to feel guilty after doing something wrong. Centered on a single event dealing with two main characters, the story has thus created a single effect focused on

the theme of misjudgement and guilty-conscience. The effect could be generated by a certain emotion or impression created towards a particular character. For example, the sense of gloom shrouding the end of the story could be prompted by the reader's sympathy towards Walker's wrongful death and perhaps Mackintosh's self-induced death. As a product of compression, the story could be read in one sitting.

4. CONCLUSION

Having delineated Maugham's selected short stories according to basic elements of the genre, it is clearly showed that Maugham does indeed hold on to his principle of giving his texts a beginning, middle and an end. The beginning is often an introduction to the main character and setting of the story even though in *The Pool* and *Before The Party*, the central characters took a latter entrance. The introduction of Lawson in *The Pool* was delayed to allow the narrator to set himself as one of the characters of the story first before he made Lawson and his problem observable to the reader. Millicent in *Before The Party* is also given a slightly later introduction so that Mrs. Skinner may establish herself as the mouthpiece for her daughter's weird behavior. Under these circumstances, it is thus appropriate to begin the story with the introduction of the narrators. All the stories gave focus to the protagonists' problems and also all the other middle sections are given the highlight of the mounting of complication as protagonists moved to resolve the situation. *Mackintosh*, however, is the only one that presented the conflict right from the beginning. The researcher also finds that the reader's sense of curiosity is often aroused to read further after each situation is presented. This is regarded as a successful technique employed by the writer in his style of writing. The end of each story is brought to a similar fate but in different manner. Generally, they have a tragic end. Three of the protagonists took their own lives to end their misery or guilt. *Before the party* seems to be the only one which ends with the protagonist not feeling regretful or showing any sign of having undergone any moral changes at all and had no real resolution. In the other two stories, protagonists resolved their problems by committing suicide. The end of Maugham's stories follows a gradual flow of events which is more or less predictable. Its predictability, however, does not imply that the story is not good but rather marks Maugham's style of writing. It needs to be mentioned that none of his stories proceeded into an anticlimax that caused the story to lose its dramatic effect. This is why the researcher finds Maugham's writing style to be a success. Maugham's preference for a narrator-character which carries an almost similar role to a first-person narrator is obvious in all of the three stories. He explains that:

A first-person narrator ensures credibility 'when someone tells you what he states happened to himself you are more likely to believe that he is telling the truth than when he tells you what happened to somebody else.' A first-person narrator guarantees the truth of the action, creating an illusion which is particularly important to establish quickly in the short story form (Hanson, 1985).

The reader must be careful not to identify the narrator with the author, for the narrator is a character like any other and he may also be the hero. Hanson also points out that 'Maugham writes that the use of the first-person narrator has "the merit from the story-teller's point of view that he need to tell you only what he knows for a fact and can leave to your imagination what he doesn't or couldn't know" (Maugham, 1967). This account for the open endedness in the resolution part '*Before The Party*'. The central characters are generally round

characters. They are constructed to reflect human weakness that surfaces in the face of circumstances. Even though some of the characters may not have triumphed over their struggle, they are nevertheless not portrayed to be stereotypes, but rather, people like the rest of us who are capable of being affected by circumstances surrounding us. It seems to be that the writer has attempted to penetrate the psychology of human being in adversity. Changes are observable in each story as the characters developed with events. However, all the characters seemed to have suffered a moral decline as observed in Lawson who drowned himself out of sorrow and as he was unable to cope with the situation any longer; and Mackintosh who shot himself out of guilt and self-condemnation and finally, Millicent who doesn't repent of the crime she committed against her husband. This is a proof of the writer as a pessimistic person who does not expect life to be all honour, virtue and a bed of roses and thus he translates his feeling into his writing. Thus, each of the stories reflects the conventional belief initiated by Poe that there should be a unity of effect in every composition of a story. The pattern of Maugham's work is such that all events are relevant to the gist of the stories and thus giving a feeling of completeness. However, this study concludes that Maugham's stories are indeed well-written within the frame of what makes an effective piece of short story. Even though the elements in each story may not be given the same order of arrangement and each story may not contain all of the elements, they nonetheless always carry a beginning, middle, and end, and have a unity of effect, conflict and change in character. Some writers of modern short story writers like to adopt a style of surprising their reader at the end of the story. The surprising-ending story is hidden until the end; the reader follows a conflict in the form of a progression of scenes and incidents, and the surprising ending merely contributes a new understanding to the progression and resolution of the conflict. Therefore, Maugham indeed makes a good example of this story to examine the basic elements of short stories and thus is recommendable as structural models of short story writing, particularly for beginner writers who have yet to develop a style of their own.

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