

Chapter 2

MANSFIELD'S SELECTED WORKS: THEMES AND LITERARY TECHNIQUES

Even though Katherine Mansfield's literary career began almost a century ago, her works seem to find no end in the literary world. Each of her stories presents experiences, feelings, and thoughts with which people of all ages can share. However, influences of her time can be found: new ways in presenting arts, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, the revolt against class distinction and her contemporary feeling of uncertainty in modern world (McRae and Carter, 2000 : vii, xi). These contribute to her themes and sophisticated techniques, especially her unconventional plotlines, as well as her language style which evokes senses, probes human psyche, creates realism, and encourages readers to fill in the unsaid parts. To give a background on the nine selected works by Mansfield, their themes and literary techniques will be investigated.

Themes

Mansfield's literary life developed during her living in London. After moving to London in 1908, she participated in discussions with prominent literary figures such as D.H. Laurence and Virginia Woolf on "socialism, feminism, woman suffrage and Freudian psychology," and produced her own works (Phillimore, 1989 : 21). Like those writers, she critically observed the ideas of post-Victorian Era (Phillimore, 1989 : 8) and paid special attention to human interactions and psychological exploration. The major themes of her works include initiation, isolation and loneliness, class distinction, hardship of the poor, and human instincts. All of them related to both the contemporary Zeitgeist as well as her own experience.

The most important movement during her literary career was Modernism, which was characterized by a negative reaction against optimism, positivism, and

certainty in Victorian and Edwardian Eras. The nightmarish World War I reinforced the rejection, changing people's attitudes towards themselves and the world ("Modernism," 2006 ; McRae and Carter, 2000 : xi). In her post-World War I's works, readers were urged to realize the deceptiveness of appearance and impermanence of life, especially fugitive joy and happiness.

The theme initiation, one of Mansfield's favorites, is an age-old literary theme found in many cultures. It involves one's learning process of how to survive in the often hostile world. Her short stories on this theme focus on young characters' unexpected experiences which affect their worldview: Laura's confrontation with death and the poor's living condition in "The Garden Party," Leila's perceiving her less joyous prospect of adults' life in "Her First Ball," and the young and inexperienced governess's learning the discrepancy between one's guise and reality in "The Little Governess." Implied in these stories is the inevitable loss of innocence. Those vicarious experiences urge the readers to be prepared for unexpected and undesirable situations they may face.

Relating to this theme is the depiction of a secluded young artist's first infatuation and his awkward and embarrassing attempt to approach the girl who catches his fancy in "Feuille d' Album." The French title of this story, which means "a page in a picture album," suggests that this is just a phase in one's life. Set in spring and ending with the protagonist offering an egg to his girlfriend, the story implies one's coming out of one's shell into the adult's real world. Appropriately, this short story is selected by Rosalie Kerr as the opening narrative of the retold version for young or inexperienced readers.

Some of the selected stories reflect individuals' detachment, lack of compassion, and despair in the modern world through the theme isolation and loneliness. The contact with the world produces a relief from loneliness, it seems, whereas prolonged separation from other people damages one's life. In "The Woman at the Store," we can find a life without love and care of a woman in isolation. The deprivation leads her to frustration and murder. In "Millie," a childless wife living in a remote farm finds a short-lived kindness within her heart when she encounters a young fugitive murderer. This temporarily lessens her spiritual aridity. "Feuille'd Album" reveals a young artist's solitary and lonely life when he places himself under

a rigid self-imposed discipline; his stepping out of his isolation to approach a girl marks the beginning of his growth.

The theme class distinction is the author's reaction against people of her class, the well-off and rigid middle-class New Zealanders ("Katherine_Mansfield," 2005; Phillimore, 1989 : 11). Two of the selected short stories, "The Doll's House" and "The Garden Party," illustrate social injustice and the maltreatment of the middle-class people towards the lower-class people. In "The Doll's House," the theme is highlighted in the rejection of the poor Kelvey girls by the Burnells, their teachers and their friends. In "The Garden Party," a similar point is made through their condescending view and lack of sensitivity towards the poor Scotts. It is clear that the writer criticizes the social construction, which classifies people by their wealth, as well as the rich's uncharitable treatment of their poor neighbours, and calls for humanity for people of the lower class. The message of the stories becomes particularly poignant as they are seen through the eyes of the young and innocent protagonists, Kezia and Laura, who are not yet tainted by social prejudice.

Relating to the theme class distinction, is that of the poor's miserable life. In "The Lady's Maid," an orphan girl is cruelly abused by her grandfather and later exploited by her mistress. In "Pictures," an unemployed actress struggling to find a job is forced by hostile circumstances to become a prostitute.

The theme human instincts is presented through a psychological exploration. Like some other modern writers of her time, Mansfield was influenced by Sigmund Freud who probed human psyche and declared that human behaviors are mainly controlled by id, the unconscious part of human mind, while ego and superego are the parts which help individuals adjust themselves to social requirements. In Freud's theory, human nature and desires rule supreme even though they are opposed to social rules (Guerin et al, 1999 : 127-131). Following Freud's concept, she rebels against Victorian and Edwardian cultures which suppress human instinctive desires especially sexuality. She revolts against her contemporary code of behaviors, presenting brutal exercises of raw instincts such as rages, murder or compelling sexual desires.

An example of short stories under the theme human instincts is "The Woman at the Store," which presents a woman's hidden sexual and murderous instincts. Her frustration is reflected in her morbid life condition and her mentally sick

child who reveals her mother's crime. The story suggests psychological deprivation can distort one's life.

Although the themes as discussed above may not seem particularly outstanding, they are vividly narrated with the following literary techniques.

Literary Techniques

To convey her messages, Mansfield optimizes the literary techniques: plot, characterization, point of view, setting, symbolism, irony as well as language style which work together for certain impacts. Below is a discussion on these components and their functions.

1. Plot

The author attempts to present life in an objective way. She rejects the conventional plot which presents the connection of events under the neat arrangement of exposition, complication, suspense, climax and resolution because she believes life exists as a series of disassociated incidents and unresolved conflicts. Also, life brings surprises through the revelation of truth or unexpected events. Therefore, she adopts the "slices of life" technique which presents only "the middle." Sometimes, her story begins "in medias res," that is, in the middle of event (Pickering and Hooper, 1994 : 36), and stops with open-endedness, without a conclusive ending or poetic justice. What the readers see is unconnected life events while the author zooms in what happens in each event, observing human interactions in certain significant short moments: a few days, one day, one night, or only a part of a night such as in "Her First Ball."

Her stories of initiation run slowly with little complication or suspense to epiphany, the point of characters' realization or surprise of the stories. In "The Garden Party," Mansfield takes the readers from Laura's admiration of the fantastic preparation for a garden party to her first glimpse of death and the lower-class's miserable existence, examples of the dark side of life, often shielded from a middle-class child's experience. In "Her First Ball," we witness Leila's excitement about her

first ball and finally her understanding of the transience of youth and beauty. “The Little Governess” starts with the warning the little governess received about traveling alone to Germany and ends with her discovery that one cannot trust a stranger, an age-old advice we all have heard but may not learn.

The other short stories in focus display the characters’ responses to unexpected events and end with surprise. In “The Doll’s House,” readers are allowed to see the interplay of the characters after the doll’s house was introduced: how children of different classes interact. The author mildly surprises the readers with the two Kelvey girls’ delight in the glimpse of the lamp instead of being angry with the Burnells. This calls for the readers’ sympathy for them as well as highlighting the rich’s narrow-mindedness. “Millie” portrays the protagonist’s spontaneous action to help the criminal boy and puzzles the readers by her sudden change of mind, cheering her husband in chasing the boy at the end of the story. In “Feuille d’ Album,” Mansfield shows Ian French’s naive behaviors and amuses the readers with his awkward reaction towards the girl with whom he was falling in love.

Unlike the stories above which proceed chronologically, “The Woman at the Store” and “The Lady’s Maid” start in the middle of events and gradually shed some light on the characters’ past events and certain points about the characters. “The Woman at the Store” begins in the middle of a journey of three characters to a remote store owned by a woman whose character and whose past hint at her criminal secret. In “The Lady’s Maid,” the one-sided dialogue is used to lead the readers to the protagonist’s past. The deletion of her interlocutor’s words helps to focus on her interpretation of life. The readers have to piece together information she gives to achieve insight she herself does not realize.

With her “slice of life” technique, Mansfield ends her stories without a conclusion, leaving readers to find the meaning of the stories by themselves, based on their consideration of all related literary techniques. In this process, the readers have to actively interact with the text to come up with their own interpretation.

2. Characterization

Characters' backgrounds, thoughts, feelings, and interactions under certain circumstances inform the readers the author's key messages. To enhance her characterization, the author uses several techniques such as their language, free indirect speech or interior monologue, and setting.

The protagonists in this collection of short stories are young people and a few adults. The young protagonists include Laura in "The Garden Party," Leila in "Her First Ball," Kezia in "The Doll's House," Ian French in "Feuille d' Album" and the little governess in "The Little Governess." Adult protagonists are Miss Moss in "Pictures," the woman at the store in "The Woman at the Store," Millie in "Millie" and Ellen Evans in "The Lady's Maid." Except Ian French, all of them are female. Most of the characters belong to her middle class. Only a few, such as Ellen in "The Lady's Maid," and the Scotts and the Kelveys are from the lower class.

All of the characters are the English native speakers living in New Zealand and Europe. To create realistic characters, the author varies their language to suggest their social class and story settings. While the English middle class characters speak standard English, some of those in the New Zealand countryside or the lower class use non-standard English. For instance, Ian French, a young artist from Britain and Miss Moss speak standard English while the woman at the Store and Millie use a New Zealander dialect. In "The Doll's House," Else, talks to her sister in a low-class dialect, as seen in its ungrammaticality such as "I seen the little lamp" (391). In stories with foreign settings, foreign words are also used. For example, the little governess uses a few German words during her journey. Such careful details mark Mansfield's delicate portrayal of her characters. Two other techniques are significant in characterization: free indirect speech or interior monologues, and settings. Both help to subtly reveal the characters' inner world or situations.

2.1 Through Free Indirect Speech

Free indirect speech or an interior monologue is a type of reported speech in which a character's thoughts and those of the narrator are mixed with no special

marking. Such utterance is thus free (Wales, 1989 : 191). In the stories under this study, the characters' thoughts are often disclosed through their talk to themselves or their mental pictures. McRae and Carters (2000 : viii) point out that the author employs free indirect speech in her psychological exploration:

Her uses of dashes, of semicolon, of short sentences moving without warning from direct speech to free indirect speech or thought, takes us on a mental journey through false certainties to alarming fears and back again, learning about the characters themselves and their small world along the way.

An example is the little governess's shock after being molested by the old man. Her inner talk which shows her thought is blended with the narrator's description without the speaker's signals.

It was a dream! It wasn't true! It wasn't the same old man at all. Ah!, how horrible! The little governess stared at him in terror. (188)

These sentences she said to herself let us see her psychological state: she is so disturbed by his act that she can't accept it as reality.

Mental pictures generally occur to anyone, as Rohrberger says, "men think in images" (1977 : 119). Below is an example from Miss Moss's mind in "Pictures."

A pageant of Good Hot Dinners passed across the ceiling, each of them accompanied by a bottle of Nourishing Stout....(119)

Miss Moss's imaginary food in her hungry dream appears as if it were real; no introducing clause signals that it is a fantasy of a starving unemployed woman.

The insertion of the characters' thoughts as well as their mental pictures in the texts without warning helps create psychological depth and makes the characters' mind visible. Without the suggestion of the characters' process of thoughts, readers directly experience their states of mind, identifying with the characters themselves.

Mental texts can be subtle, involving the readers' ability to separate what occurs to the characters in the external world from their internal world, as the speakers or the sensors are not indicated.

2.2 Through Setting

Mansfield makes use of the setting to suggest her characters' psychological states. Certain times and places chosen in her texts consequently hint at the characters' inner world. An example is in "The Garden Party" when the pleasant time of the garden party in the morning signifies the protagonist's innocent and optimistic view towards the world.

And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer... As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels. (245)

The marvel of the day seems fantastic. The abundance of roses at their party, emphasized by a repetition of their number, "Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds" reinforces their stunning and sudden presence of these flowers, "in a single night." This magnificent visual image of the roses enhanced by the simile "as though they had been visited by archangels" gives a magical touch to the party. All the details contribute to the protagonist's childish fantasy. To signal Laura's psychological development, the joyous scene of the garden party is contrasted with the mournful and ghostly place of the dead in the evening towards the end of the same story.

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere a man lay dead, and she couldn't realize it....

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. (258-259)

The dusk here coincides with Laura's emotional state as she is encountering the first scene of death in her life. The description of the place creates a dismal and dreary atmosphere. Here, many senses are evoked. The mysterious air is hinted by the words "smoky and dark." The "low hum" suggests the eerie sound at funeral. The lack of light and the slow movement of the shadow imply the approach of the unknown. All point toward the frightening side of life and death as well as a darker view of the world which Laura is to experience.

Likewise, in "The Little Governess," the lively daytime of a cheerful place signals the happy time of the young and optimistic protagonist's journey.

Over the white streets big white clouds fringed with silver—sunshine everywhere. Fat, fat coachmen driving fat cabs; funny women with little round hats cleaning the tram-ways line; people laughing and pushing against one another; trees on both of the streets and everywhere you looked almost, immense fountains; a noise of laughing from the foot-paths or the middle of the streets or the open windows. (185)

In the above quotation, the lively daytime atmosphere with sunshine and laughing people contributes to the little governess's happy view of life. This is the opposite of the evening scene at the old man's ugly place where she will "learn" more about life.

...she sat with her back safely turned to the ornamental clock that pointed to twenty five minutes to seven...

So they walked out of the garden down a long alley. The day was nearly over...“Now just before I find a cab for you, will you come and see my little ‘home’ and let me give you a bottle of attar of roses I told you about in the train?...”

The passage was quite dark...He opened a door and stood aside for her to pass, a little shy but curious, into a strange room. She did not know quite what to say. It wasn’t pretty. In a way it was very ugly....(187)

The departure of the day and the shift from the pleasant place into a gloomy one suggest the end of her happiness and innocence. This turning point parallels her critical move toward experience, her realization that the old man is a false hero.

Another description of the setting used to introduce the main character’s inner life is the following depiction from “Millie.” Here, Millie’s isolated and arid place symbolizes her detachment and barren life.

In the distance along the dusty road she could see the horses, like brown spots dancing up and down, and when she looked away from them and over the burnt paddocks, she could see them still—just before her eyes jumping like mosquitoes. It was half-past two in the afternoon. The sun hung in the faded blue sky like a burning mirror, and away beyond the paddocks the blue mountains quivered and leapt like the sea. (571)

The extreme dryness of the hot afternoon on the vast parched grassland which signifies her sterility is seen in the images of “the dusty road,” “burnt paddocks,” as well as “the sun hung in the faded blue sky like a burning mirror.”

Similarly, the isolation of a deserted, hostile and arid natural environment is depicted in the opening scene of “The Woman at the Store” to reflect the protagonist’s desolation and spiritual dryness, the lonely condition of being cut off from the love of any human community.

All that day the heat was terrible. The wind blew close to the ground; it rooted among the tussock grass, slithered along the road, so that the white pumice dust swirled in our faces, settled and sifted over us and was like a dry-skin itching for growth on our bodies...Hundreds of larks shrilled; the sky was slate colour, and the sound of the larks reminded me of slate pencils scraping over its surface. There was nothing but wave after wave of tussock grass, patched with purple orchids and manuka bushes covered with thick spider webs. (550)

As seen above, the natural surroundings are unfriendly and give no pleasure: the sky has a dull colour, birds make a sharp piercing sounds, and bushes are covered with spider webs. All details point to fierce struggles for survival of the forsaken.

Even this woman's place suggests her degradation. "We walked together up the garden path. It was planted on both sides with cabbages. They smelled like stale dish-water." (553). The olfactory image of the cabbages hints at the protagonist's hideous part of her life to be disclosed later in the story.

Further into the story, her dark side is portrayed in the description of the dilapidated inside of her house.

It was a large room, the wall plastered with old pages of the English periodicals. Queen Victoria's Jubilee appeared to be the most recent number. A table with an ironing board and wash-tub on it, some wooden forms, a black horsehair sofa and some broken cane chairs pushed against the walls. The mantelpiece above the stove was draped in pink paper, further ornamented with dried grasses and ferns and a coloured print of Richard Seddon. There were four doors—one, judging from the smell, led into the "Store," one on to the "backyard," through a third I saw the bedroom. Flies buzzed in circles round the ceiling, and treacle papers and bundles of dried clovers were pinned to the window curtains. (553-554)

The seedy and gaudy decorations of the room, broken and disorganized pieces of furniture, dried plants, stinks, and flies point to the protagonist's grotesque qualities—her rage, unhealthy sexual life, violence and murder.

With the visitors' arrival, the parched isolated and hideous setting is changed together with the female protagonist whose spirit is now refreshed by Jo's attention. In the background, there were lightning, thunder, and later, rain.

Rain whipped in our faces, the land was light as though a bush fire was raging. We behave like two children let loose in the thick of an adventure, laughed and shouted to each other....(560)

And towards the end of the story, a pleasant atmosphere is depicted.

The rain ceased. The little kid fell asleep, breathing loudly. We got up, stole out of the whare, down into the paddock. White clouds floated over a pink sky—chill wind blew; the air smelled of wet grass. (561-562)

As a literary symbol, rain suggests her sexual activity with Jo, which gives a new life to her barren existence. The "pink" colour returns to the sky with floating white clouds while heat and drought disappear.

Through the use of setting, the author can clarify the characters' inner self and their situation. Yet, the implied meaning of the setting requires decoding; otherwise, it does not have any function.

Characterization is essential in conveying the literary messages. While the vivid and realistic characters are striking, the depth and richness in their pictures add subtle perspectives of life for observant readers.

3. Point of View

The literary point of view is the perspective from which a story is told. It frames readers' outlook of what is going on in narrative pivoting on the narrator. It leads the readers' feelings and attitudes towards certain characters or situations.

Generally, the choice of a narrator relates to the author's purpose in that piece of work. In the nine short stories, there are both types of narrators, the first-person, and third-person.

3.1 First-Person Point of View

With a first-person narrator, readers are assumed to be the narrator's addressee. What is told comes through the narrator's own view, judgment as well as prejudice. The two stories told by this kind of narrator are "The Woman at the Store" and "The Lady's Maid." The first story is presented through the view of "I," a minor character who travels with two companions and finds a grotesque side of life at a remote store. "The Lady's Maid" is told by Ellen, a lady's maid who tells why she decides to remain with her mistress rather than getting married.

In "The Woman at the Store," the female narrator is an outsider who observes the protagonist's horrible living condition. Below is her impression of the protagonist.

"Good Lord, what a life!" I thought. "Imagine being here day in, day out, with that rat of a child and a mangy dog. Imagine bothering about ironing. *Mad*, of course she's mad! Wonder how long she's been here—wonder if I could get her to talk." (554)

The use of such narrator serves a double function: an in-depth understanding of a woman's hard lot on the one hand, and the shocking state of life distorted by deprivation as seen by an objective outsider on the other hand. Besides, the limited knowledge of the first-person narrator makes the sudden revelation of the crime especially striking at the end.

In "The Lady's Maid," readers have plenty of chance to interact with the first-person narrator because her incomplete dialogue with her lady's visitor invites readers to involve themselves in the story as her addressee. Filling in the unsaid marked by dots, we follow what Ellen, the lady's maid, says and form our own different views of the whole story. Unlike the first person narrator in "The Woman at

the Store,” who is only the observer of the morbid protagonist, the narrator of “The Lady’s Maid” is the protagonist telling her own story from her childhood to the present, adding comments on her own feelings and decision. However, readers have to make their own judgment about her account as she proves to be an uncritical and thus unreliable narrator as she confesses in her concluding remark below.

...Oh dear, I sometimes think...whatever should I do if anything were to...But, there, thinking’s no good to anyone—is it, madam? Thinking won’t help. Not that I do it often. And if ever I do I pull myself up sharp, “Now then, Ellen. At it again—you silly girl! If you can’t find anything better to do than to start thinking...!(380)

The author’s first-person point of view allows the readers to closely follow the narrator. The narrator’s limited knowledge of what is going on can surprise or call for the readers’ active participation and interpretation.

3.2 Third-Person Point of View

There are two types of third-person point of view: the limited one and the omniscient one. A limited third-person narrator reports details of one character as well as his or her inner world to the readers (Bergman, 1998 : 101). An omniscient third-person narrator knows everything and can inform the readers of all the characters’ actions and thoughts. Some authors use this kind of narrator as their mouthpiece (Bailey, 2001: 56). Some of the selected stories are told by limited third-person narrators who focus on the protagonists. Readers can go in and out of the characters’ minds. For example, in “Her First Ball,” the narrator pays attention to Leila’s actions and thoughts throughout the story. The narrator knows what is going on as much as the protagonist. Many times, the author uses both limited and omniscient third-person narrators to explore the characters’ psychological depth to suggest some significant ideas which cannot be done through the use of a limited third-person narrator.

“The Garden Party” is told by a third-person narrator. The focus of the story, of course, is Laura and the narration is mostly done through Laura’s consciousness.

Laura's actions as well as feelings, thoughts and memories are revealed through the narrator. In general, the tone of the story demonstrates her mood. However, the detached tone of the ending part of the story which describes the dead man and how he seems to feel reflects an omniscient third-person narrator.

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed, they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing this marvel had come to the lane. Happy...happy... All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content. (261)

The serene outlook which transcends the petty concerns seems to sneer at Mrs. Sheridan's insensitivity of bringing the leftover to the dead's house as the dead is actually no longer enslaved by worldly desires and pleasure. Unlike the dead, the living, particularly the materialistic still concern themselves with their supposed superiority based on wealth or class distinction and find it hard to achieve peace.

The use of both limited and omniscient third-person narrators, therefore, helps to subtly present the idea. While the limited third-person narrator conveys Laura's view, the omniscient one mocks the upper-class's condescending view of the poor, which would otherwise not be clear enough through the eyes of the child protagonist.

"The Little Governess" is another story told by a limited and an omniscient third-person narrators. Mostly, it is presented through the little governess's consciousness. An example is her response to the high price of the strawberries during her journey.

“Two marks fifty, Fraulein.” “Good gracious!” She came in from the window and sat down in the corner, very sobered for a minute. Half a crown! “H-o-o-o-o-o-e-e-e!” shrieked the train. (183)

Notice that the narrator focuses on the little governess and her thought or self-talk (“Half a crown”) which is inserted between the description of her and the train’s shriek. Readers, therefore, are allowed to have a glimpse of the character’s thought, then, taken back.

However, the narrator of this story suggests an omniscient view through a speculation of what the old man is probably thinking.

How kindly the old man in the corner watched her bare little hand turning over the big white pages, watched her lips moving as she pronounced the long words to herself, rested upon her hair that fairly blazed under the light. Alas! How tragic for a little governess to possess hair that made one think of tangerines and marigolds, of apricots and tortoiseshell cats and champagne! Perhaps that was what the old man was thinking as he gazed, and that not even the dark ugly clothes could disguise her soft beauty. Perhaps the flush that licked his cheeks and lips was the flush of rage that anyone so young and tender should have to travel alone and unprotected through the night. Who knows he was not murmuring “*Ja, es ist eine Tragödie!* Would to God I were the child’s grandpapa!”(180)

The narrator’s words warn that the protagonist is at risk because, very likely, the old man who admires her beauty may harm her.

The later shift from the omniscient narrator to the limited narrator helps the author present the protagonist’s emotional development after the old man’s molestation as seen in her expression of shock which is contrasted to her former attitude or her admiration of him.

It was a dream! It wasn’t true! It wasn’t the same old man at all. Ah, how horrible! (188)

The use of various points of views as discussed above, therefore, allows the readers to see both in-depth views of the focused characters as well as different angles of the same situation.

4. Setting

The setting generally involves time and place where the story occurs. It can intensify the meanings of the text as well as evoking the readers' feelings. In the nine short stories, the description of setting is often indispensable as it is carefully chosen to achieve verisimilitude and suggest the characters' psychological states as already discussed in detail under Characterization.

Places Mansfield knows well frequently appear in her stories: New Zealand as seen in the description in "The Woman at the Store."

It was sunset. There is no twilight in our New Zealand days, but a curious half-hour when everything appears grotesque—it frightens—as though the savage spirit of the country walked abroad and sneered at what it saw.
(554)

Below is a vivid and realistic scene of northern Europe which the author knows well. It is what the little governess sees on her journey from England to Germany.

In one house a woman opened the shutters, flung a red and white mattress across the window frame and stood staring at the train. A pale woman with black hair and a white woolen shawl over her shoulders. More women appeared at the doors and at the windows of the sleeping houses. There came a flock of sheep. The shepherd wore a blue blouse and pointed wooden shoes. (182)

Another foreign setting is the artist's quarter in Paris portrayed in "Feuille d'Album." In this short story, however, the time of the year is more focused to introduce the theme of a young man's first love which blooms in spring.

One evening he was sitting at the side window eating some prunes and throwing the stones on to the tops of the huge umbrellas in the deserted flower market. It had been raining—the first real spring rain of the year had fallen—a bright spangle hung on everything, and the air smelled of buds and moist earth. Many voices sounding languid and content rang out in the dusky air, and the people who had come to close their windows and fasten the shutters leaned out instead. Down below in the market the trees were peppered with new green. What kind of trees were they? he wondered. And now came the lamplighter. He stared at the house across the way, the small, shabby house, and suddenly, as if in answer to his gaze, two wings of windows opened and a girl came out on to the tiny balcony carrying a pot of daffodils. (163-164)

Spring and its rain relate to the time of rebirth, life, growth, as well as rejuvenation. In this story, it signals new experience, his first love. Ian French no longer locks himself in his room of rigid rules "at the top of a mournful building...where the concierge lived in a glass cage on the ground floor..."(162). The description of his place suggests his isolation whereas the concierge's "glass cage" hints at inhuman life under limitation of modern urban inhabitants. At the first encounter with the girl with a pot of daffodils at the window, "His heart fell out of the side window of his studio, and down to the balcony of the house opposite—buried itself in the pot of daffodils under the half-opened buds and spears of green...." (164). It seems the young love sets his heart free, ready for healthy growth.

As seen above, the vividness of setting the author knows well sets the atmosphere of the story as well as introduces the reader to the theme and unfolds the characters' inner world.

5. Irony

Irony which is “a contrast or discrepancy between appearance and reality” (Pickering and Hoeber, 1994 : 1762) is a significant literary device to point out the deceptiveness of appearance. Two types of irony used in the selected short stories are situational irony and dramatic irony.

Situational irony shows that the character’s situation does not come out in the expected way or as it should be (Pickering and Hoeber, 1994 : 90). One can find this type of irony in stories of initiation, as initiation often comes when one learns to differentiate the real from the unreal. A good example is in “The Little Governess” in which the young protagonist mistakes a kindly-looking old man for a friendly helper, but he turns out to be a molester.

Dramatic irony is the audience’s double vision, their perception of what is going on in the story, the understanding superior to that of the involved characters or even the narrator (Pickering and Hoeper, 1994 : 90). Such irony can be seen in “The Lady’s Maid.” Here, Ellen Evans, the unreliable narrator who is a simple and kind-hearted maid is her lady’s prey as the latter manipulates her so that she gives up her marriage plan.

...The day came he was to call me to choose the furniture. Shall I ever forget it? It was a Tuesday. My lady wasn’t quite herself that afternoon. Not that she had said anything, of course; she never does or will. But I knew by the way that she kept wrapping herself up and asking me if it was cold—and her little nose looked...pinched. I didn’t like leaving her; I knew I’d be worrying all the time. At last I asked her if she’d rather I put it off. “Oh, no, Ellen,” she said, “you mustn’t mind about me. You mustn’t disappoint your young man.” And so cheerful, you know, madam, never thinking about herself. It made me feel worse than ever. I began to wonder...then she dropped her handkerchief and began to stoop down to pick it up herself—a thing she never did. “Whatever are you doing!” I cried, running to stop her. “Well,” she said, smiling, you know madam, “I

shall have to begin to practice.” Oh, it was all I could do not to burst out crying. (379)

Being grateful and devoted to her lady, Ellen does not realize her lady’s selfish appeal for her sympathy. However, readers can recognize the lady’s ploy. The use of dramatic irony here helps characterize Ellen as naive and unreliable narrator.

Another example is in “The Little Governess” when the protagonist is so happy with the old man’s companionship that she forgets her real mission of the journey, the appointment with her prospective employer.

“I wonder what the time is,” asked the little governess. “My watch has stopped. I forgot to wind it in the train last night. We’ve seen such a lot of things that I feel it must be quite late.” “Late!” He stopped in front of her laughing and shaking his head in a way she had begun to know. “Then you have not really enjoyed yourself. Late! Why, we have not had any ice-cream yet!” “Oh, but I have enjoyed myself,” she cried, distressed, “more than I can possibly say. It has been wonderful! Only Frau Arnholdt is to be at the hotel at six and I ought to be there by five.” “So you shall. After the ice-cream I shall put you into a cab and you can go there comfortably.” She was happy again. The chocolate ice-cream melted—melted in little sips a long way down. The shadows of the trees danced on the tablecloths, and she sat with her back safely turned to the ornamental clock that pointed to twenty-five minute to seven. “Really and truly,” said the little governess earnestly, “this has been the happiest day of my life. I’ve never even imagined such a day.” In spite of the ice cream her grateful baby heart glowed with love for the fairy grandfather. (186-187)

The last four lines of this quotation is extremely ironical. The speaker considers the day “the happiest day of [her] life” and her heart “glowed with love for the fairy grandfather.” However, with such clues as “the shadows of the trees danced on the table cloths” acting like a bad omen, readers can easily anticipate that it will soon turn

out to be her most unfortunate day, and surely, “the fairy grandfather” is, in fact, an ordinary dirty old man.

As seen from the discussed examples, the sharp contrasts of the ironies give the stories striking effects. Besides, by subtly arranging the ironic elements for perceptive readers to detect, the author offers the readers a double vision of life.

6. Symbolism

Pickering and Hoeper (1994 : 79) refers to literary symbols as “images, objects, events, and characters...often used deliberately to suggest and strengthen meaning, to provide enrichment by enlarging and clarifying the experience of the work, and to help to organize and unify the whole.” Symbols found in the nine short stories are varied and harmoniously and subtly form an integrated part of the story. They often furnish the narrative with remarkable images.

In one of Mansfield’s very famous short stories, “The Doll’s House,” the title introduces readers to the main symbolic object of the story. The “perfect, perfect little house,” coloured with “big lumps of congealed paint hanging along the edge” (383) seems to miniaturize the middle-class world of ostentatiously perfect exterior that probably covers the less than perfect real life, the typical middle-class hypocrisy. Within the rooms are life-like furniture and decorations. However, the people living here are “stiff” and seem ill at ease.

The father and the mother dolls who sprawled very stiff as though they had fainted in the drawing-room, and their two little children asleep upstairs, were really too big for the doll’s house. They don’t look as though they belong. (384)

Clearly, the father and mother dolls represent the unhealthy and rigid Victorian middle-class. The “too big” children dolls are like the middle-class children in the story; they adopt their parents’ prejudice and contempt for the poor. Of course, they do not include Kezia, the only middle-class girl who earnestly wants the poor outcasts to enjoy a glimpse of the doll’s house. It is no wonder, then, that only Kezia takes

special notice of the beauty of the “lamp” which probably symbolizes one’s kind heart that transcends class distinction of the materialistic world.

But what Kezia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully, was the lamp. It stood in the middle of the dining-room table, an exquisite little amber lamp with a white globe....

But the lamp was perfect. It seemed to smile at Kezia, to say, “I live here.”
The lamp was real. (384)

What this symbolic lamp stands for is so powerful that at the end of the story, even though having been chased away by Aunt Beryl, the quiet Else “smiled her rare smile” and ecstatically said “I seen the little lamp” (391).

In “The Lady’s Maid,” some symbols are used to hint at the servitude of the protagonist. Presented as a naive character exploited by her lady, her state is revealed through her words : “You see there was my uniform, and one thing and another. My lady put me into collars and cuffs from the first” (378). The symbolic message here lies in the double meanings of the words “collars” and “cuffs.” The speaker’s intended meanings are parts of a shirt, the part that fits around the neck and the end of her shirt sleeves respectively. However, collars can also refer to leather straps put around dogs’ or horses’ necks and cuffs can also mean handcuffs. These references symbolize inhuman subordination and lack of freedom to be oneself, the condition she is in.

The author further uses a donkey’s ride to represent the control of one’s own life. In this scene, the protagonist’s strong wish to ride a donkey suggests her dream of independence and authority which she has never experienced.

...Beautiful those donkeys were! They were the first I had seen out of a cart—for pleasure, as you might say....And quite big girls—older than me even—were riding them, ever so gay. Not at all common. I don’t know what it was, but the way the little feet went, and the eyes—so gentle—and the soft ears—made me want to go on a donkey more than anything in the world.

...Of course, I couldn't. I had my young ladies. And what would I have looked like perched up there in my uniform? But all the rest of the day it was donkeys—donkeys on the brain with me. I felt I should have burst if I didn't tell anyone; and who was there to tell?.... ...Well, madam, would you believe it, I waited for a long time and pretend to be asleep, and then suddenly I sat up and called out as loud as I could, "I do want to go on a donkey. I do want a donkey-ride!"(378)

A donkey ride symbolically demonstrates Ellen's subconscious wish to become a master of her own life. Sadly, in real life, she is the donkey, not the rider!

In "The Woman at the Store," a Freudian symbol is employed in the narrator's dream during her journey with her friends.

I half felt asleep and had a sort of uneasy dream that the horses were not moving forward at all—then that I was on a rocking-horse, and my old mother was scolding me for raising such a fearful dust from the drawing-room carpet. "You've entirely worn off the pattern of the carpet," I heard her saying, and she gave the reins a tug. I snivelled and woke to find Jim leaning over me, maliciously smiling. (551)

According to Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams," (Appignanesi, 1979 : 60-65) dreams signify one's fulfilling of hidden wishes, produced by the unconscious. When the unconscious is set free during sleep, dreams usually occur to satisfy prohibited desires. Images in dreams need to be decoded and are known as "Freudian symbols" (Appignanesi, 1979 : 60-65). In Freud's interpretation, horse-riding symbolizes sexual intercourse in psychoanalysis (Guerin et al, 1999 : 132). Thus, the narrator's dream of rocking horse-riding suggests her sexual wish-fulfillment while her mother's tug of the rein represents social restraint on her sexual instinct. The use of the Freudian symbol here relates to the theme of the story—the frustrated sexual need of the woman at the store. This unfulfilled need leads to rage, violence, and finally, murder.

Symbolism in the short stories does not seem very clear at first. However, when closely examined, it supports the themes as well as characterization. We can receive shades of hidden meanings and the psychological depth of the works.

7. Language Style

The language of these short stories creates certain effects. The following discussion will delineate the aspects of the language style found in the nine stories : word choice, imagery and figurative language, indirectness and songs. Free indirect speech or interior monologue is in fact part of Mansfield's language style. But as it is already elaborated under characterization, it is omitted here.

7.1 Word Choice

Realistic stories depict "real" people and "real" places. One way to make people seem real is to use authentic verbal expressions for individual characters. As the characters in the stories come from different classes and different countries, dialects of English and a few European words are carefully chosen to accord them. People from low classes, for example, use non-standard English both in pronunciation and grammar while foreigners' sentences have words of their mother tongues. An example of the use of non-standard English of a lower-class character is the dialect of the protagonist in "The Woman at the Store."

"Arf a mo!" the woman stood silent a moment, her nostrils expanding as she breathed. (553)

The variant "Arf a mo" is "Half a moment" or "Wait a second" in standard English.

The characters' first language is sometimes used to suggest their native tongue. An example is when the old man persuades the little governess to go around the German town in "The Little Governess."

It seems such a pity that you should have to spend the day at the hotel...*Nicht wahr?* (184)

The German expression “Nicht wahr?” (“Isn’t it?” or “Isn’t it true?”) makes the sentence seem a natural speech for a German.

False starts and fillers are also used to make conversation authentic. We will find dashes and dots marking pauses which are common in natural utterances. An example is Laura’s words to the workers in “The Garden Party.”

“Oh—*er*—have you come—is it about the marquee?” (246)

The filler “er” signals Laura’s hesitation to talk with people she is not familiar with.

7.2 Imagery and Figurative Language

Imagery refers to “all the objects and qualities of sense perception” through both literal and figurative description in literary works (Abrams, 1986 : 78). Like imagery, figurative language or a figure of speech provides mental pictures (Longman, 2003 : 590), offering ‘special meaning,’ and functioning as ornaments (Abrams, 1986 : 63). The short stories under discussion rely on imagery and figurative language to create sensuous impacts. The first example is the images in a scenery on the little governess’ journey in Europe.

Wreaths of white smoke floated up from somewhere and hung below the roof like misty vines. (177)

In this description, there are a metaphor referring to columns of smoke as “wreaths,” and a corresponding simile comparing it to “misty vines.” Besides beautifying the picture, the images give a dreamy impression of the foreign land in the little governess’s optimistic view towards the world and reinforce the thematic concept of the illusion in which she is plunging herself.

Another example is the description of the atmosphere Leila finds on her journey to “Her first ball.”

Exactly when the ball began Leila would have found it hard to say. Perhaps her first real partner was the cab. It did not matter that she shared the cab with the Sheridan girls and their brother. She sat back in her own little corner of it, and the bolster on which her hand rested feel like the sleeve of an unknown young man’s dress suit; and away they bowled, past waltzing lamp-posts and houses and fences and trees. (336)

The air of the ball is created by comparing the cab to her “first real partner,” and its bolster to “an unknown young man’s dress suit.” Besides, things along the street the cab is passing are personified as “waltzing lamp-posts and houses and fences and trees,” preparing the readers for her happy anticipation of the ball before being shocked by her real dancing partner.

The last example comes from “Millie.” The imagery is in the description of horse-riding men going away to hunt the murderer of a neighbor.

In the distance along the dusty road she could see the horse, like brown spots dancing up and down, when she looked away from them and over the burnt paddocks she could see them still—just before her eyes, jumping like mosquitoes (571).

In this simile, the riding men in distance are compared with dancing brown spots, and jumping mosquitoes. Such visual and kinetic images through the use of figurative expressions give a vivid picture of those male characters on horseback.

7.3 Indirectness

Modern writers tend to present their stories objectively with no explicit direction of the author, leaving readers to find the meaning themselves. This rests on the assumption that meaning or reality is not finite, but relative to an individual’s

interpretation. A text which requires such readers' attention, therefore, can involve the audience more than that which directly tells everything. Below is an unfinished talk of the confused protagonist of "The Woman at the Store" which leaves the readers to guess what she desperately needs.

She clutched her head with her hands and stared round at us. Speaking rapidly, "Oh, some days—an' months of them—I 'ear them two words knockin' inside me all the time—'Wot for!' but sometimes I'll be cooking the spuds an' I lifts the lid off to give 'em a prong and I 'ears, quite sudden again, 'Wot for!' Oh! I don't mean only the spuds and the kid—I mean—I mean," she hiccupped—"you know what I mean, Mr. Jo." (558)

The speaker above does not straightforwardly say what she is really after. From the text, one may conclude that she wants a better life with a person who can give her loving care and fulfill her need as suggested by the sexual overtone discussed under Setting in pages 27-28.

Another incomplete talk left for readers' interpretation is at the end of "The Garden Party":

"No," sobbed Laura. "It was simply marvelous. But, Laurie—" She stopped, she looked at her brother. "Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life—" But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

"Isn't it, darling?" said Laurie. (261)

In the above quotation, the encounter with death at the end of the joyous day is so stunning an experience that young Laura cannot find words to express it. (In fact, what life is is not easy to say even for an experienced adult.)

7.4 Songs

Lyrics have a role in these short stories. Songs sung by the characters suggest the singers' moods as well as reinforcing themes. Below is an example from "Pictures" in which a short quote of a lyric serves this purpose.

Ten minutes later, a stout lady in blue serge, with a bunch of artificial "parmas" at her bosom, a black hat covered with purple pansies, white gloves, boots with white uppers, and a vanity bag containing one and three, sang in a low contralto voice:

"Sweet-heart, remember when days are forlorn
It al-ways is dar-kest before the dawn." (122)

This song is sung by Miss Moss, the protagonist, who is in despair but is trying to encourage herself to live with hope. It reflects her doleful state of mind resulted by unemployment. These two lines sum up her desperate moment and at the same time reflect her career.

Another example is from "The Garden Party" where Jose, a teen-age girl, sings a song, but it is doubtful whether she understands its meaning.

Pom Ta-ta-ta Tee-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose's face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in

This Life is *Wee-ary*,
A Tear—a Sign.
A Love that *Chan-ges*,
 This Life is *Wee-ary*,
A Tear—a Sigh.
A Love that *Chan-ges*,
And then...Good-bye!

But at the word “Good-bye,” and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

“Aren’t I in good voice, mummy?” she beamed.

This Life is *Wee*-ary,

Hope comes to Die.

A Dream—a *Wa*-kening. (251-252)

This song helps shed some light on the idea of transience of joy, something a child needs to learn in their progress toward being experienced. Here, the young singer’s words indirectly foreshadow the unpleasant things in life waiting for the inexperienced. Ironically, the young singer does not really feel what her lyric implies, as seen in her “brilliant, dreadfully, unsympathetic smile” that accompanies the “sad” verse. The author’s language style, thus, enriches her stories, offering vivid pictures, psychological depth as well as sensual effects.

The nine short stories by Katherine Mansfield discussed in this chapter cover varied themes subtly portrayed through the expert use of literary devices. Her characters include both the young and the older people, the rich and the poor, European city dwellers as well as New Zealand isolated rural farmers. While many of the narratives deal with children or young adults’ concerns of the initiation motif, many others are about older adults’ issues: judgement about people and life, the hardship of the poor who are exploited or discriminated against, loneliness, isolation, and even hidden sexual drives. All these are unconventionally depicted as “slices of life,” often indirectly hinted in dialogues, interior monologues, symbolic objects, settings, incidents or images as well as songs. This is why these stories are not really easy for inexperienced readers, especially those from a different culture. To convey the author’s thoughts and literary art to them, it requires well-planned adapting strategies which are the focus of the next chapter.