

Thesis abstract

This thesis will discuss Katherine Mansfield's depiction of the consciousness of the focalizer character using Sigmund Freud's theory of the ego and the superego. The conflict between the society and the individual will be treated in terms of the opposition of the ego, which represents the individual consciousness of the character that reacts to present circumstances and the superego, which is the sum of influences of the family and the social class that the individual belongs in. The behaviour and thoughts of the main character of the story present a subtle conflict between the ways he or she had been conditioned to act and think and the moments of clarity, or epiphanies, which are treated in this thesis as a manifestation of the ego. The depiction of the influences of the ego and the superego will be analysed both on the level of language and narration and on the level of themes and events in the stories. The role of the author will also be looked into, focusing particularly on the question of whether she intervenes with the story or influences the reader in any way. Another important device used in the depiction of the characters' mind are symbols (such as the aloe in "Prelude", the pear tree in "Bliss", the fur in "Miss Brill", the fly in "The Fly", the hat in "The Garden Party" etc.). I will argue that Mansfield uses them on the one hand to bring the reader's attention to subtle points of the conflict which the character may not even be aware of and, on the other hand, to depict the influences of ego and superego on the character through his or her own interpretation of the symbol. Discussing the arguments stated above, this thesis will attempt to prove that Katherine Mansfield's short stories can be interpreted using some of Sigmund Freud's theories about the ego and superego.