

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE – FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA
ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

The Depiction of Inner Consciousness in the Short Stories by Katherine Mansfield

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí bakalářské práce (supervisor):
Doc. Clare Wallace, PhD. M.A.

Zpracoval (author):
Tereza Bambušková

Studijní obor (subject):
Anglistika a amerikanistika

Praha, 27.5. 2014

Declaration

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného či stejného titulu.

I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

V Praze dne 27.5. 2014

Tereza Bambušková

Permission

Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used to study purposes.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, doc. Clare Wallace, PhD, MA, for her helpful advice and valuable feedback in writing this thesis.

Table of contents

Declaration	ii
Permission	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of contents	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: The Role of Mediation and Language in Presenting the Conflict of Ego and Superego.....	6
Chapter 3: The Use of Symbols to Depict the Inner Consciousness.....	14
Chapter 4: The Epiphany as a Manifestation of the Ego.....	22
Chapter 5: The Influence of the Superego in Terms of Group Psychology	29
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	36
Bibliography.....	39
Thesis abstract.....	42
Abstrakt práce	43
Key Words.....	44
Klíčová slova.....	45

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the space of four chapters, this thesis will discuss the formal as well as the thematic devices that Mansfield uses to depict the subjective outlook of the main character, to present his or her thought processes and to subtly convey the theme and conflict of the story through the character's mind. It could be said that the height of Mansfield's accomplishment in depicting the inside of the character's mind is her rendering of the barely perceived struggle in the mind of the character that is stirred by a certain impression or impulse, which flashes through the mind and then gradually subsides, leaving the character with a sensation that the mind is unable to process, or is distracted from, therefore showing the fickle quality of the consciousness, as well as the nebulous quality of one's self-knowledge, which connects the stories to real life.

The thesis will use the framework of Modernism for the discussion of Mansfield's stories, since most of the devices that she uses to depict the thought processes and psychology of her characters are distinctly modernist. Formal devices such as free indirect discourse and extensive use of focalization could be considered modernist innovations. The use of symbols which are rather prominent in some of Mansfield's stories is also a strategy connected with modernism, discussed in Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* as well as in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, in both cases in close connection with the workings of the human mind. Mansfield's thematic approach to the short story could be linked to the idea of "perspectivism"¹ which Richard Lehan describes as "the belief that the way reality was perceived was more important than the content of what was perceived."² Moreover, the

¹ Richard Lehan, *Literary Modernism and Beyond: The Extended Vision and Realms of Text* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2012) 11.

² Lehan, 11.

concept of epiphany which was introduced by Joyce as “a sudden spiritual manifestation”³ receives a novel treatment in Mansfield, and further contributes to the definition of her writing as modernist.

The discussion of the characters’ inner consciousness will be based on the theories of Sigmund Freud, whose writings on psychoanalysis were one of the major influences on Modernist thought. He believed that “our conscious acts are the outcome of an unconscious substratum created in the mind in the main by hereditary influences”⁴, introducing the idea of parts of mind that are not under direct control of the individual and that manifest themselves as motivations for behaviour which is not explicable by the conscious mind. The distinction that we are interested in is between the super-ego, or ego-ideal, which could be described as a sum of influences, primarily of our parents but also of other models and the ego as the “representative of external world, of reality”⁵ and “a coherent organization of mental processes”⁶. The ego is here simply taken to mean the part of mind that is conscious and governed by the individual’s own decisions. The super-ego is a subconscious influence on the individuals’ ego, compelling him or her to act in accordance with the acquired values. The third component of Freud’s theory, the id, which represents the subconscious, primitive instincts inherited from one’s ancestors, is not important for the present discussion and therefore will not be further expanded on. This thesis will draw on the notion that “the super-ego [represents] the influence, essentially, of what is taken over from other people whereas the ego is principally determined by the individual’s own experience, that is, by accidental and contemporary events.”⁷ I will argue that in the stories discussed, Mansfield depicts the

³ Leigh Wilson, *Modernism* (London: Continuum, 2007) 158.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949) 8.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, “The Ego and the Id” *The Major Works of Sigmund Freud* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1990) 707.

⁶ Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, 699.

⁷ Sigmund Freud, “An Outline of Psycho-Analysis”, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII (1937-1939): Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis and Other Works* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74): 147.

essential conflict between the characters' personal consciousness and the influence of the family as well as the society. Freud argued that

each individual is a component part of numerous groups, he is bound by ties of identification in many directions, and he has built up his ego ideal upon the most various models. Each individual therefore has a share in numerous group minds – those of his race, of his class, of his creed, of his nationality etc.- and he can also raise himself above them to the extent of having a scrap of independence and originality.⁸

Therefore it could be argued that the characters in Mansfield's stories are conditioned by their upbringing to have a certain mentality, which at times is at odds with their attempts to think independently and establish their own opinion. The effect that is produced when the individual is among the members of the same social group, with the same ideas, could be compared to a mild version of group psychology, which in its full effect, according to Gustave LeBon (quoted by Freud) entails

the disappearance of the conscious personality, the predominance of the unconscious personality, the turning by means of suggestion and contagion of feelings and ideas in an identical direction, the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts; these, we see, are the principal characteristics of the individual forming part of a group. He is no longer himself but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will.⁹

While the effect on the main protagonists of Mansfield's short stories is not so dramatic, I will argue that there is a conflict between the behaviour of the character when under the influence of his or her family or social group and in the moments when he or she makes an individual judgement based on the external realities.

⁸ Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 101.

⁹ Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 12.

The strategies that Mansfield uses to present the two different aspects of the characters' mind, and the difference between the conscious and the subconscious in their behaviour will be examined in four chapters proceeding from the formal and structural features of the stories to the thematic ones.

The first chapter will focus on the use of formal devices such as indirect discourse, focalization as well as language and speech patterns and their significance in rendering the different states of the characters' mind. I will attempt to prove that traces of the social influence can occasionally be found in the language that the characters employ in their thoughts, and will search for possible significance of favouring certain devices over others while depicting the characters' current state of mind. In terms of focalization, the chapter will discuss the possibility of the author's direct participation in the description of the characters' thought processes through the selection of what the reader is allowed to know, which may sometimes be more than the characters are aware of.

The second chapter will discuss the symbolism in Mansfield's short stories, which may be regarded as related to the question of the role of the author in the story. I will argue that the symbols may serve as a way for the author to communicate information about the character to the reader which the protagonist is not aware of. Moreover, the symbols are closely connected with the mind or inner consciousness of the character, symbolizing a part of it or throwing light at some aspect of it, regardless of whether the character realizes it or interprets them correctly. On the one hand it could be argued that the symbols are the author's comment on the matter of the story, however an ambiguous one, which is left for the reader to interpret, and in some cases possibly not allowing a single, definite interpretation at all. On the other hand there are cases in which the character seems to be conscious of the symbol and interprets it as well, and these interpretations will also be discussed in terms of the dichotomy between the character's ego and ego ideal.

The third chapter is concerned with the ambiguous endings of most of Mansfield's stories. Mansfield, to a certain extent makes use of the Modernist device termed by Joyce an 'epiphany' and by Woolf 'a moment of being'¹⁰, however in her stories such epiphany is in most cases only hinted at and does not seem to make full impact in the mind of the main character. It could be argued that the epiphanies in the selected stories can be interpreted as moments of clear consciousness, when the character is fully aware of him or herself and therefore free from the subconscious constraints of social conditioning. According to Freud "a state of consciousness is characteristically very transitory..."¹¹ which could explain why the epiphanies are in most cases unfinished, not fully articulated and soon forgotten or even suppressed by the characters.

The last chapter will look at the characters' behaviour in terms of the opposition between individual and social, as well as conscious and subconscious motivations. Mansfield often chooses to depict the inner consciousness of a character that feels, or is beginning to feel something that goes against the norm of the society. By contrasting this individual with the rest of the characters that seem to be nearly identical in behaviour as well as in the way of speaking and thinking, Mansfield manages to convey her social critique without having to openly state it. Her individual more often than not succumbs to the "herd instinct"¹² and follows the rules of the society, however it is the moments of individual consciousness or ego escaping the influence of the subconsciously instilled notions that constitute the main theme of the stories.

¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, "Moments of Being", *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories* (University of Adelaide: eBooks@Adelaide, 2012)

¹¹ Freud, "The Ego and the Id", 697.

¹² Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 81.

Chapter 2: The Role of Mediation and Language in Presenting the Conflict of Ego and Superego

In discussing the mediation of the stories, this chapter will make use of Genette's concept of focalization, of which he gives two different definitions. Firstly, Genette proposed to replace the term 'point of view' with the term focalization in order "to avoid the too specifically visual connotations of the terms *vision*, *field* and *point of view*"¹ and "replace *who sees?* with the broader question of *who perceives?*"² Secondly, he defines focalization as

a restriction of "field" – actually, that is, a selection of narrative information with respect to what was traditionally called *omniscience*...The instrument of this possible selection is a *situated focus*, a sort of information- conveying pipe that allows passage only for information that is authorized by the situation.³

Apart from this, the thesis will at least partially, rely on the interpretation of Genette's concept given by Jesch, who maintains that "Genette's concept of focalization is actually an amalgamation of two wholly independent elements... The first element is the perception of the world invented by the author through narrators and other agents also invented by the author; the second element is the regulation of narrative information within the communication between author and reader."⁴ She employs the term "perspectivization"⁵ for the first concept and "focalization"⁶ for the second. This distinction is particularly useful in permitting "the possibility that the author uses clues to reveal more to the reader than the narrator or agents

¹ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, transl. J.E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980) 189.

² Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, transl. J. E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988) 64.

³ Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 74.

⁴ Tatjana Jesch, Malte Stein, "Perspectivization and Focalization? Two Concepts – One Meaning? An Attempt at Conceptual Differentiation" *Narratologia: Contributions to Narrative Theory* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009) 59.

⁵ Jesch, 65.

⁶ Jesch, 65.

(can) perceive and know”⁷ Therefore she argues that the author can give information to the reader that the character does not have despite the fact that the story is told from the character’s perspective. It could be argued that the selection of information in the following examples serves to alert the reader to facts that the characters may not be fully aware of and to help him draw conclusions from them. In the beginning of “At the Bay”, when Jonathan bathes, we are given his thoughts on life in general: “That was the way to live – carelessly, recklessly, spending oneself...”⁸ but the paragraph ends in these words: “and stalking up the beach, shivering, all his muscles tight, he too felt his bathe was spoilt. He’d stayed in too long.”⁹ This dry remark at the end seems to be a way to bring Jonathan’s hypocrisy, of which he may not be aware, to the attention of the reader. Similar device is also used in the same story to a different purpose in the passage where Kezia and her grandmother talk about death. Kezia wants her to promise that she will never die, but they both become distracted, tickling each other, Kezia repeating “Say never...say never...say never –”¹⁰ The scene turns into a comfortable family picture, however the paragraph ends in “Both of them had forgotten what the ‘never’ was about”¹¹, therefore alerting the reader again to the serious discussion that was originally taking place. The author can also speak to the reader through choice of words, such as in “The Fly”, when we are told that the boss “wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep.”¹² These words immediately suggest that something is not quite right, and hint at the later development of the story.

Another, less conspicuous way of the author’s influencing the reader is “reflectorization”¹³ which is, according to Fludernik, “an intra-diegetic viewpoint, but one that is clearly

⁷ Jesch, 64-65.

⁸ Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2006) 168.

⁹ Mansfield, 168.

¹⁰ Mansfield, 182.

¹¹ Mansfield, 182.

¹² Mansfield, 346.

¹³ Monika Fludernik, *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1993) 390.

personalized, although no character is ‘on stage’”¹⁴ In some stories, for example in “The Garden Party”, the reflectorization is used to make even those passages that are not mediated through a character to be in keeping with the general discourse of the Sheridans, therefore introducing the reader into a world that is described fully in their terms and in which Laura’s struggle stands out even more than if it were described neutrally. The reader is ushered into this situation at the very beginning of the story: “And after all, the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden party if they had ordered one...as for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties...”¹⁵ The use of the second-person pronoun seems to be significant as well, since it invites the reader to identify with the general viewpoint of this class of society. It seems as though the author herself adopts a persona that belongs to the environment and through this persona lures the reader in as well, in order to make even more acute the inner struggle that takes place in Laura’s mind. Floudernik terms this “an implicit narrative presentation of events through the typicalized evocation of group psychology.”¹⁶ In this way the opposition of the individual and the group is in some cases present even in the mediation of the narrative.

In terms of language it could be said that the characters often employ the discourse of the society even in their mind. This influence is signalized by their use of familiar phrases, which need not be given much thought, by affected exclamations such as are often heard in the spoken language as well as frequent modifications by a set of overused adjectives such as “marvellous”¹⁷, “terrible”¹⁸, “despicable”¹⁹ and others. Moreover, the protagonist often seems to be subconsciously trying to convince him or herself about the truth of what he or she is

¹⁴ Floudernik, 390.

¹⁵ Mansfield, 197.

¹⁶ Floudernik, 391.

¹⁷ Mansfield, 43.

¹⁸ Mansfield, 209.

¹⁹ Mansfield, 43.

thinking. In such cases we can observe frequent repetitions, such as in Beryl's thoughts, rendered by free indirect discourse: "Oh, she was restless, restless. There was a mirror over the mantel. She leaned her arms along and looked at her pale shadow in it. How beautiful she looked, but there was nobody to see, nobody."²⁰ Beryl is attempting to style herself in a certain way and in her thoughts she uses exclamations and repetition in order to reassure herself that this is what is happening. Another means of reassurance frequently observed in the thoughts of the protagonists who are beginning to feel doubts about their situation and attempt to placate themselves is the use of fillers such as "really"²¹ and "indeed"²². This is clearly visible in "Bliss", when Bertha is trying to convince herself that her life is perfect: "really – really - she had everything"²³ and "indeed, she loved little B so much."²⁴ This is the kind of discourse in which the characters are firmly rooted, and therefore it is difficult for them to think in any other way. Nevertheless, in the instances when they shed the influence of the society the language of the thoughts could be said to change its form slightly. Hesitations and pauses appear, as well as attempts at reformulation. Bertha in "Bliss" starts thinking in the accustomed form, using exclamations and repetition: "How idiotic civilization is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?"²⁵ However, it appears that with this thought, she becomes conscious of something potentially interesting, and she begins to reformulate the thought: "No that about the fiddle is not exactly what I mean," she thought... "It's not what I mean because –"²⁶ This hesitation and attempt at finding a reason instead of only exclaiming or asking rhetorically could be linked to Bertha's attempt to think for herself, which is nevertheless interrupted by everyday tasks such as searching for a key. Bertha's attention is diverted, proving the transitory nature of consciousness.

²⁰ Mansfield, 27.

²¹ Mansfield, 73

²² Mansfield, 71.

²³ Mansfield, 73.

²⁴ Mansfield, 71.

²⁵ Mansfield, 69.

²⁶ Mansfield, 69.

Another sign of conscious thought effort is that the comfortable buzz words disappear and the discourse becomes simpler. When Laura has her moment of clarity over the dead man she thinks “All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.”²⁷ While this discourse does retain some of the features of the language her family employs (“just as it should”²⁸) it becomes simpler, without unnecessary additions. The formulations such as “I am content”²⁹ instead of “how content the face seemed” and the absence of strong modifications and fillers such as “really” seem to indicate that Laura for once has a substantial thought in which she frees herself from the familiar and comforting phrases and ways of thinking. It is significant that when she meets her brother, she is unable to express the thought in words. She begins saying “Isn’t life...”³⁰, but then she is unable to finish her statement. Severn argues that “if completed, the question would have been constructed to presuppose agreement and would have embraced the fundamental rhetorical strategy of the Sheridan family,”³¹ further suggesting that “ ‘couldn’t’ could also signify Laura’s refusal to present her experiences in the form she starts to employ.”³² Therefore it could be said that the transitory originality of her thoughts, which is partially signified by what we are given of them but partially left unstated, cannot be incorporated into the only verbal discourse that Laura is familiar with and for that reason is left unstated. However if the words that follow “No matter. He quite understood”³³ are to be also attributed to Laura’s thoughts and not to the author’s ironical comment, they could be read as a resignation and return to the familiar, reassuring, empty discourse, convincing herself that she needn’t make any effort because her brother “quite understood”³⁴ what she meant even though she does not fully know herself. In this act Laura seems to be

²⁷ Mansfield, 210.

²⁸ Mansfield, 210.

²⁹ Mansfield, 210.

³⁰ Mansfield, 210.

³¹ Stephen E. Severn, “Linguistic Structure and Rhetorical Resolution in Katherine Mansfield “The Garden Party,” *Journal of the Short Story in English* 52 Spring 2009: 16.

³² Severn, 18.

³³ Mansfield, 210.

³⁴ Mansfield, 210.

surrendering her individuality again, waiting for the society, represented by her brother, to define her. An example of such definition by the society could be found at the very beginning of the text, when the Sheridans need someone to go overlook the workmen. Laura is told: “You’ll have to go Laura; you’re the artistic one”³⁵ and a moment later the reader learns that “she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.”³⁶ After the scene where it is the workman, not Laura, who chooses the most suitable place, it seems that Laura feels she is good at these things simply because she has frequently been told so by her family. Therefore the story could be said to go the full circle back to Laura’s original impressionability when she confidently supposes that her brother knows what she thinks better than herself.

It could also be said that changing of focus or ways of representation in the instants when the characters are experiencing one of the moments of full consciousness are rather significant for their interpretation. The reader is never allowed to learn everything, which is at least partly due to the nature of the mind. Drewery argues that “the textual description of the inner sanctum of the mind is...thwarted by the fact that language is capable of conveying only the textual equivalent of the rhythms, flux and nuances of the mind.”³⁷ Mansfield’s way of dealing with this problem can be observed in the following passages. In “At the Bay” Linda encounters something unfamiliar while looking at her baby “Linda was so astonished at the confidence of this little creature...Ah, no, be sincere. That was not what she felt; it was something far different, something so new so...The tears danced in her eyes; she breathed in a small whisper to the boy, ‘Hallo, my funny’”³⁸ At the crucial moment the perspective is switched from the inside of Linda’s mind to the outside and the reader is left with only the

³⁵Mansfield, 197.

³⁶Mansfield, 197.

³⁷ Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011) 86.

³⁸Mansfield, 179.

description of what she does, not what she thinks – it remains unrevealed whether she arrived at any conclusion concerning the feeling. It is possible that this is the point where language becomes insufficient and the reader is supposed to imagine the feeling that cannot be put to words without being destroyed.

It is also interesting to observe the conflict between the ego and superego in the inner discourse of Beryl at the end of “Prelude”. She gradually proceeds from a rather pretentious contemplation of her looks to remembering the instances when she attempted to show off her beauty and tempt the men:

How despicable! Despicable! Her heart was cold with rage. ‘It’s marvellous how you keep it up,’ said she to the false self. But then it was only because she was so miserable – so miserable. If she had been happy and leading her own life, her false life would cease to be. She saw the real Beryl – a shadow...a shadow. Faint and unsubstantial she shone. What was there of her except the radiance? And for what tiny moments she was really she. Beryl could almost remember every one of them. At those times she had felt: ‘Life is rich and mysterious and good, and I am rich and mysterious and good, too’ Shall I ever be that Beryl forever? Shall I? How can I? And was there ever a time when I did not have a false self?...But just as she had got that far she heard...³⁹

It seems that Beryl starts to think along the right lines but becomes distracted in the process, falling back into her accustomed ways of thinking. Instead of considering her behaviour honestly she dramatically overdoes the criticism at first, exclaiming “despicable”⁴⁰ repeatedly, then she starts to pity herself extravagantly, repeating “miserable.”⁴¹ She proceeds to conjure up an unnecessarily romantic image of her “real self”⁴² as a shadow based on a feeling, which, as described by her may be pleasant but does not seem to guarantee sincerity. When she

³⁹ Mansfield, 43.

⁴⁰ Mansfield, 43.

⁴¹ Mansfield, 43.

⁴² Mansfield, 43.

finally starts asking the right question – Was there ever a time when I did not keep pretending all the time – it is as far as she gets. On the structural level it could be said that as the thoughts proceed the structure becomes more personal. It changes from free indirect discourse in the third person to directly rendered thoughts in first person without quotation marks. Nevertheless, as the thought arrives at the point where the language may cease to be sufficient, it is interrupted by an outside influence, and when we return to Beryl's mind, she is back to her usual line of thought: "Botheration! How she had crumpled her skirt, kneeling in that idiotic way."⁴³ This last thought, rendered by free indirect discourse, describes full circle back to the insincere, socially conditioned discourse, which is signalled by the structure of the sentence, which is an exclamation, and also vocabulary such as "idiotic"⁴⁴, not to mention the content. From examples such as this one it becomes clear that the moments of clear consciousness in Mansfield are never fully linguistically rendered, the crucial part always remaining only hinted at.

To sum up, it could be said that although there is no clear pattern that would determine in which situations Mansfield uses free indirect discourse, indirect discourse, an unspoken dialogue or an utterance with or without quotation marks to render the thought processes, the combination of these techniques can sometimes serve to differentiate between the thoughts influenced by the society and those stemming from the character's consciousness. There are also differences to be traced between the language used by the characters in their thoughts when conforming to the society and when attempting to think originally. Moreover, the author's interference in the text through mediation serves to emphasize the sense of this conflict.

⁴³ Mansfield, 43.

⁴⁴ Mansfield, 43.

Chapter 3: The Use of Symbols to Depict the Inner Consciousness

This chapter will discuss Mansfield's use of symbols in rendering the conflict between the ego and the superego. They are used by the author to depict the inner consciousness and the struggle of the characters as well as to communicate with the reader. The symbols in Mansfield's stories could be divided into the ones that the characters are aware of and interpret such as the pear tree in "Bliss" or the aloe in the "Prelude", and the ones that the characters do not seem to recognize as such and that serve as a way for the author to indirectly communicate with the reader. Arthur Symons maintains symbols to be a "revolt against exteriority, against rhetoric, against a materialistic tradition; in this endeavour to disengage the ultimate essence, the soul, of whatever exists and can be realised by the consciousness..."¹ It could be argued that Mansfield's use of symbols is slightly more specific. One symbol usually relates to one character, although it may symbolize another. Moreover, most of the symbols that Mansfield uses can be interpreted in numerous ways, not retaining one stable meaning. However, all the possible interpretations seem to define that particular character or, even more specifically, the inner conflict that he or she experiences, either through his or her interpretation of it or through the reader's understanding of it.

The symbols can indeed be perceived as Mansfield's way of communicating with the reader, however the aim of this communication does not seem to be to present the reader with the definitive, authorial resolution of the events, but rather to alert him to the subtle conflicts that take place within the story. Moreover, in terms of interpretation it appears more plausible that the symbols pertain to the story rather than to the author herself. It is problematic to reconcile Celeste Wright's interpretation of the fly in "The Fly" as "an excellent symbol of Katherine

¹ Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London: Archibald Constable & Co Ltd., 1908) 8, 9.

herself, overwhelmed with misfortune,”² with Mansfield’s effort to present the story through the consciousness of the characters, without openly intervening. Adrian Hunter argues that “Mansfield set out to ‘eliminate personal intrusion’ in the narrative.”³ While it could be said that Mansfield intrudes in the story in subtle ways in order to direct the reader’s attention to the right place, it does not seem likely that she would insert her own problematic situation as a symbol into a story. Furthermore the scene with the fly constitutes the central action of the story and therefore should not be viewed as the author’s arbitrary ventilation of her own problems but rather as a symbol that is key to the interpretation of the boss’s situation. As such, it is rather complicated. J.D. Thomas points out the interpretation that “the fly stands for the boss’s dying grief”⁴ is not feasible since “the tormenting of a struggling insect is not at all analogous to the attitude of the boss toward his mourning.”⁵ Moreover, a symbolic meaning could also be assigned to the ink. Thomas claims that “by every literary tradition and every law of associative psychology, those darkly oozing patches must be identified with the boss’s grief.”⁶ It is difficult to imagine that the boss identifies with the fly, since he admires its ability to recover while he tells people about himself that he cannot “live [his] loss down.”⁷ It is possible that he might see in the fly’s death what will happen to himself if he does not stop torturing himself with grief, however this interpretation is somewhat spoiled by the fact that his grief is not strong enough to withstand the distraction of a fly. I would argue that what matters about the episode is that the boss changes his situation from passive to active. He knows he is expected by the society to grieve and attempts to do it, however he ends up taking control over the situation, acquiring power, albeit only over a fly. Therefore the boss, perhaps not completely consciously, refuses to take the passive role of a sufferer crushed by outward

² Celeste Wright, “Darkness as a Symbol in Katherine Mansfield,” *Modern Philology* 51.3 Feb. 1954: 206.

³ Adrian Hunter, *Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 75.

⁴ J.D. Thomas, “Symbol and Parallelism in ‘The Fly,’” *College English* 22.4 Jan. 1961: 261.

⁵ Thomas, 261.

⁶ Thomas, 261.

⁷ Mansfield, 346.

circumstances. Without realizing it, the boss acts out a conflict of two parts of his mind – the part that believes that it is the socially acceptable thing to grieve and the part that reacts to the outer circumstances – superego and ego.

The author's use of symbols to alert the reader to the inner conflict taking place in the character's mind can also be illustrated on the hat that Laura is given in "The Garden Party." Laura herself does not seem to be aware of the hat's symbolism for the most part of the story, however the reader seems to be directly encouraged by the text to ponder its conflicting interpretations. Laura's mother gives her the hat to distract her from insisting on cancelling the party because of the death of a workman. Dominic Head argues that "the hat motif is here installed as a symbol of the transference of discourse, and continuing ideological control."⁸ By accepting the hat Laura becomes part of the society that attends the party, and is accordingly praised for it by many of its members. Therefore the hat could be seen as a symbol of her position within the family. Severn also points out that "Laura's name is derived from "laurel," the classic Greek victory crown. Therefore, her very name furthers conflation of her identity with the object, even as it reinforces its symbolic resonance."⁹ Therefore the hat seems to mysteriously alter Laura's way of thinking, rooting her firmly in the trivial concerns of her class. However, it is also interesting to note that the hat is black, "with a long black velvet ribbon,"¹⁰ which could possibly be seen as prefiguring the scene with the dead body, reminiscent of a funeral. Laura's apology for the hat further complicates matters. According to Head,

in recognizing the need to apologize for it she seems implicitly to be rejecting it and the world it represents. At the same time, however, the hat symbolizes the fallen Sheridan discourse, a notion confirmed here by Laura's concern at the impropriety of

⁸ Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 134.

⁹ Severn, 14.

¹⁰ Mansfield, 205.

her headgear: the voice of Mrs Sheridan is heard once more making an irrelevant and superficial response.¹¹

To these interpretations we could add another one. Since the hat is black, it could be argued that it is not completely inappropriate for a funeral. Therefore Laura's apology could be interpreted not as an apology for the inappropriate hat, but for her own weakness and superficiality, in allowing herself to be bribed with a hat to abandon her moral concerns as well as for bringing to the poor house the very object for which she exchanged her sympathy to them. Therefore Laura's remark concerning the hat can be interpreted both in terms of her superego and her ego, and no definitive interpretation is offered. In this way Mansfield offers not one, but many possible significances of the hat, all of which contribute considerably to the central conflict of the story. Head maintains that "the literary device of a stable symbolism is rejected together with the false imposition of a social hierarchy."¹² Therefore it could be said that Mansfield's original use of symbols is also a part of her strategy of representing the conflict between society and individual.

Another matter to consider are the characters' own interpretations of the symbols, which provide significant insight into their inner conflicts. Van Gunsteren points out that "the obvious implication of the narrative projection of data from the mind of a character, without any compensatory comment by the narrator, is the potential for unreliable assertions."¹³ An example of this could be found in "Bliss", on the occasions when Bertha sees the pear tree. Her first interpretation of the tree is as "a symbol of her own life."¹⁴ Nevertheless immediately after this thought she proceeds to delude herself about her life, convincing

¹¹Head, 137.

¹²Head, 137.

¹³ Julia Van Gunsteren, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B. V., 1991) 118.

¹⁴ Mansfield, 73.

herself that she has everything, defining “everything”¹⁵ in the terms given by the society. Therefore it seems that at this point Bertha perceives the tree as a symbol of the perfection of her life, however the perfection is defined in terms of her superego, in other words the notions of what is perfect as perceived by the society. When she sees it she is convinced “that it had not a single bud or a faded petal,”¹⁶ which would suggest that she also sees her life as being on the peak in every way. However, on the second occasion when Bertha interprets the meaning of the tree, her perception is changed. She is now connecting it to herself and Pearl Fulton, whom she feels to be her soul mate. She no longer focuses on the perfection of the tree but rather on its seeming movement: “it seemed, like the flame of a candle, to stretch up, to point, to quiver in the bright air, to grow taller and taller as they gazed – almost to touch the rim of the round, silver moon.”¹⁷ She describes Miss Fulton as having “moonbeam fingers,”¹⁸ which makes it very plausible that in this interpretation she feels herself to be reaching towards Pearl, and, by extension towards something that has been missing in her society-approved life. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the reader can never be fully certain whether what Bertha sees and hears is really what is happening, since she is not sure herself: “And did Miss Fulton murmur: “Yes, just *that*.” Or did Bertha dream it?”¹⁹ The implications of this passage could further lead to the reinterpretation of the scene Bertha witnesses between Pearl and her husband as the projection of Bertha’s own fears and jealousy, and a neat solution would offer itself as to why the pear tree in the end is “as lovely as ever”²⁰ – because nothing really happened. However this explanation would be arbitrary on the part of the reader, since there is not enough information to support it. I would argue that the events are intentionally presented through the consciousness of a character who is not particularly

¹⁵ Mansfield, 73.

¹⁶ Mansfield, 72.

¹⁷ Mansfield, 77.

¹⁸ Mansfield, 80.

¹⁹ Mansfield, 77.

²⁰ Mansfield, 80.

reliable, and thus numerous interpretations of the symbol and the events are suggested to the reader, none of them confirmed. Therefore in terms of Bertha's perception the pear tree is, rather confusingly, connected first with the socially conditioned reaction when Bertha sees it as a symbol of herself in her perfect society approved life and later it becomes a symbol of subversion when she imagines that she and Pearl are the only two people who are different from the society, possibly also with other not society-approved subtext. The work of Bertha's ego is arguably most apparent in the very last look at the tree when she seems to see it clearly as it is, without her superadded interpretations.

To further complicate matters, the pear tree also lends itself to various interpretations of the readers, however its ambiguity makes it possible to incorporate it into almost any theory that the reader may have. The word "pear"²¹ is suspiciously reminiscent of the name "Pearl"²² which problematizes the notion that the tree is supposed to stand for Bertha herself. Judith Neaman attempted to subsume the diverse interpretations of the symbol under one concept, suggesting connections between the "fiddle-shaped like a pear and analogue, like the pear, to a woman's body,"²³ also the pear tree as "pun on pair"²⁴ and even as the "tree of knowledge"²⁵ connecting all these interpretation with a framework that allows her to explain the ending of the story as well: "The pear tree remains "as lovely as ever and as still" because, like the tree of knowledge, it remains firmly rooted in perfect Eden. Only Bertha is expelled. The lasting beauty and seductiveness of the tree sound an ironic note of contrast with the imperfection of the love they provoke and disclose."²⁶ However, while it is possible to find evidence for such interpretations in the story, it does not seem feasible that the story has one ultimate interpretation. Bertha is confused – therefore the reader remains confused as well. It

²¹ Mansfield, 73.

²² Mansfield, 72.

²³ Judith S. Neaman, "Allusion, Image and Associative Pattern : The Answer's in Mansfield's 'Bliss'," *Twentieth Century Literature* 32.2 Summer 1986: 247.

²⁴ Neaman, 248.

²⁵ Neaman, 242.

²⁶ Neaman, 251.

is tempting to think that the author has left clues in the form of allusions that the reader can decipher and therefore arrive at a definitive conclusion, however I would argue that while the story can be tweaked to agree with many explanations, none of them can be considered a definitive one.

There is another example of such multi-layered use of symbol in the “Prelude” where the aloe is a symbol connected to Linda Burnell. There are several conflicting images in Linda’s perception of the aloe. When Linda first sees it she notices that it is “holding so fast to the earth it grew from, it might have, it might have had claws instead of roots.”²⁷ However, later Linda imagines the aloe in terms of a boat: “the high grassy bank on which the aloe rested rose up like a wave, and the aloe seemed to ride upon it like a ship with the oars lifted.”²⁸ In this way the image of stability and unshakeable shelter that Linda recognizes in her first impression of the aloe is replaced by an image of flight, which significantly complicates the interpretation of Linda’s desires. Moreover we are told that “she had always hated things that rushed at her,”²⁹ meaning her husband, however she seems to enjoy the idea of the aloe turned into ship rushing at her and her being “caught up out of the cold water into the ship.”³⁰ It could be argued that Linda is torn between the idea of mobility and self-sufficiency, possibly the manifestation of her ego, and the need for protection, isolation, stable space that could not be invaded, which on the one hand conforms with the acquired notion that the woman should be protected by her husband, however on the other hand is also subversive since Linda seems to want to be protected from her husband and children rather than by her husband. Similarly there is the image of the thorns – “the long sharp thorns that edged the aloe leaves”³¹ as opposed to the buds which Mrs Fairfield points out – “I believe it is going to flower this year.

²⁷ Mansfield, 23.

²⁸ Mansfield, 38.

²⁹ Mansfield, 38.

³⁰ Mansfield, 38.

³¹ Mansfield, 38.

Are those buds or is it only an effect of the light?"³² Therefore the interpretation of the thorny aloe that hardly ever flowers as the image of sterility linked to Linda's desire to escape having children is complicated by the fact that there are signs that the aloe that flowers "once every hundred years"³³ has buds at that very moment. It is not certain whether the flowering is a good thing or bad – it could symbolize the advent of yet another child, but it could also symbolize the slow flowering of Linda's self-consciousness. However, the scene appears to end in resignation rather than in resolution to action: "I shall go on having children and Stanley will go on making money and the children and the garden will grow bigger and bigger, with whole fleets of aloes in them for me to choose from."³⁴ In this last resigned thought the aloe appears to have ceased to be a symbol for Linda's individual desires since it becomes integrated into the conventional scene delineating the roles within the family.

In conclusion it could be said that the symbols, similarly to focalization, provide Mansfield with a subtle way to direct the reader's attention to the main conflict of the story as well as to depict the character's mental state through his or her interpretation of them, however, both the characters' and the readers' interpretations of the symbols are varying and ambiguous, which in itself could be seen to symbolize the unstable and ungraspable character of the consciousness. Mansfield's use of the character's interpretations of the symbols to mirror the conflict between the social conditioning and the independent judgement based on the circumstances is evidenced by the fact that the symbols typically play a central role in the epiphanies, or moments of clarity that the characters experience.

³² Mansfield, 38.

³³ Mansfield, 23.

³⁴ Mansfield, 39.

Chapter 4: The Epiphany as a Manifestation of the Ego

This chapter will discuss the epiphany in Mansfield's short stories as a means of rendering the state of self-awareness. I will argue that the moment of epiphany could be regarded as an instant when the individual temporarily sheds the influence of the society and of the subconsciously acquired ideas, perceives the reality of his or her situation and reacts to it. Freud stated that "the super-ego [represents] the influence, essentially, of what is taken over from other people whereas the ego is principally determined by the individual's own experience, that is, by accidental and contemporary events."¹ Therefore the epiphany could be considered a moment when some experience, whether significant or not, impinges on the individual consciousness of the character, which results in a moment of lucidity and individual judgment independent from the influence of the family or the society. However, this moment does not last long due in part to the transitory character of consciousness² and also to the fact that the influence of the society is deeply ingrained within a person and therefore difficult to resist for long. Consequently, the experience is often forgotten altogether or reinterpreted so that it does not contradict the inculcated values and conventions of the characters' class of society. Moreover, the characters often lack the ability to process the unusual experience or express it by means of language when they return to the accustomed ways of thinking and the familiar expressions. Mansfield herself described the epiphany in her stories as a "moment of suspension ... [in which] the whole life of the soul is contained. One is flung up – out of life – one is 'held' and then, down, bright, broken, glittering on the rocks, tossed back, part of the ebb and flow"³ This definition could also be read in terms of originality against conformity, if we imagine that when one is "flung up,"⁴ it means he or she

¹ Sigmund Freud, "An Outline of Psychoanalysis", 147.

² Freud, "The Ego and the Id", 697.

³ Katherine Mansfield, *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield 1904-1922* (London: Constable, 1962) 203.

⁴ Mansfield, *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, 203.

is free to think independently for a short time and then becomes “part of the ebb and flow”⁵ again, which could be read as a metaphor for the group that acts and thinks the same.

The opposition of society and individual is also reflected in the circumstances of most of the epiphanies. The characters are usually either alone or at least removed from the source of the influence on them. They are often in a time of transition, as for example Josephine and Constantia after their father dies in “Daughters of the Late Colonel”, or in an uncommon place, like Laura in the “Garden Party”. Sydney Janet Kaplan argues that “such “moments” are experienced by characters who are *alone* [since] the epiphany itself uncovers their frightening isolation and reveals the destruction of the illusion of unity with another.”⁶ However, it could also be argued that the characters most often experience the epiphany when alone because it is when they are away from the influence of the other members of the society that they are not distracted and can properly consider the circumstances. Isabel in “Marriage a La Mode” escapes from her group of friends in order to think more clearly: “And before they could recover she ran to the house, through the hall, up the stairs into her bedroom.”⁷ However, her own judgement weakens in proportion to the proximity of her friends, and finally she succumbs to the wish to be a part of the group and runs to meet them. It could be said that the characters experiencing an epiphany are isolated in the sense that in the moment of the epiphany they wrench themselves free from the rules of the social group to which they belong, which renders them vulnerable and alone. This could be another reason why such states are untenable and why the characters often quickly divert their attention elsewhere, since humans are social beings that feel better as a part of a group and dread to be perceived as outsiders.

⁵ Mansfield, *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, 203.

⁶ Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D.H. Lawrence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 2010) 73.

⁷ Mansfield, 258.

The opposition between the individual and the society is further complicated in epiphanies such as Beryl's at the end of "At the Bay", which lends itself to several different interpretations. At the beginning of the scene, Beryl is imagining a scene with a lover that seems to be taken out of a romantic novel: "Beryl saw plainly two people standing in the middle of her room. Her arms were round his neck; he held her. And now he whispered, 'My beauty, my little beauty!'"⁸ Significantly, the expression is not Beryl's own but rather echoes Mrs Kember's earlier statement: "what a little beauty you are!"⁹ This suggests that Beryl's mental picture, although idealized is still based on the influence of other people. Then, when the desired lover arrives in the form of Harry Kember, Beryl experiences warring emotions, which, in keeping with Mansfield's artistic practice are rendered ambiguously. Peter Hühn argues that

Morally (and rationally), this refusal to transgress has to be interpreted as the avoidance of a mistake, the obedience to the norms, the rejection of a change for the worse, the preservation of personal self-control and therefore as fundamentally positive (in the eyes of the contemporary society). In other respects... the refusal (out of timidity, fear and a lack of energy) to transgress the boundary has to be seen in a negative light, as a corroboration of the stagnation and repression of vitality as features of society, a confirmation of its sensual and social restrictive character...¹⁰

While it could be said that Beryl confirms the rules of the society by her refusal to transgress, there is also another possible interpretation of the same behaviour. It could be argued that in the moment when Beryl steps out to meet Harry Kember, she wakes up from the haze of her romantic imagination and begins to perceive the actual circumstances: "now that she was here, she was terrified, and it seemed to her everything was different."¹¹ This might mean that Beryl comes to realize that the situation is not the same as in the chivalric romances and that

⁸ Mansfield, 259.

⁹ Mansfield, 176.

¹⁰ Peter Hühn, *Eventfulness in British Fiction* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010) 171.

¹¹ Mansfield, 195.

the man who came under her window might pose a real threat to her. However, the phrasing of the sentence only contributes to the ambiguity since it is “it seemed to her”¹² instead “it was.” Clearly, the reader is only given Beryl’s perception of the situation. The author does nothing to dispel the ambiguity. Therefore the reader is left to judge whether the moment of clear perception is when Beryl decides to take the risk in spite of the conventions, and her subsequent refusal is a return to the rules of the society or whether the epiphany is when she realizes that her romantic ideas derived from cultural sources such as literature and music are false and she is in actual danger.

The inability to process the unusual experience or new realization brought by the epiphany can be found in “The Garden Party”, “The Fly” and other stories, and is rendered particularly obvious in “Daughters of the Late Colonel.” The influence of the society in this story is represented by the father, who seems to have a firm grip on his daughters even after death. When they hear the organ grinder under the window, the sisters reflexively spring to action since their father always made them stop the noise. However, there comes a moment of freedom when Josephine and Constantia realize that “they would never have to stop the organ grinder again.”¹³ Listening to the organ, the “perfect fountain of bubbling notes,”¹⁴ becomes a liberating act in which both sisters start to realize their own needs that had been suppressed in caring for their father. The fact that they are experiencing a moment of clear consciousness could be attested by their intense perception of their surroundings as well as their own bodies, and moreover, their remembering of similar moments in their previous life. Constantia remembers that “it was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself.”¹⁵ The memories of previous moments in her life that were not dominated by the father represent a connection to the possibilities of the

¹² Mansfield, 195.

¹³ Mansfield, 226.

¹⁴ Mansfield, 227.

¹⁵ Mansfield, 228.

present situation. However, Constantia is not quite able to grasp the whole meaning of it: “What did it mean? What was she was always wanting? What did it all lead to? Now? Now?”¹⁶ The moment of clarity seems to be over when she makes “one of her vague gestures”¹⁷ and is unable to articulate the “something frightfully important about the future and what...”¹⁸ Parke argues that “ellipsis avoids resolution and refers to both the evanescence of epiphanic experience and to the difficulty of conceptualizing and integrating the body’s experience in the realm of the symbolic. Language is somehow inadequate: whatever might be said is “forgotten”.”¹⁹ Josephine’s moment of epiphany seems to be essentially connected with the same desire that Constantia is unable to articulate, however, she appears to be rather mourning the lost opportunity than expecting a new one, identifying herself with the cry of the sparrows: “...Josephine felt they were not sparrows, not on the window ledge. It was inside her, that queer little crying noise. ‘Yeep – eyeep – yeep.’ Ah, what was it crying, so weak and forlorn?”²⁰ Then she falls into memories of an unfulfilled possibility, ending her meditation, similarly to Constantia with “But now? But now?”²¹ Andrew Maunder considers the memories as a “retreat into the subjective memory of an “eternal” past that functions like a prison.”²² It is indeed interesting to notice that while the sisters have little trouble articulating the memories in their minds, when it comes to the present moment they become rather lost, and the future they are not even able to think of. Ultimately, when they both admit they have “forgotten,”²³ the frail hopes of emerging awareness are dispelled and the reader cannot be sure if they ever really knew.

¹⁶ Mansfield, 228.

¹⁷ Mansfield, 228.

¹⁸ Mansfield, 228.

¹⁹ Nigel Parke, “Rites of Passage in the Modern Epiphany” *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Epiphany* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1999) 228.

²⁰ Mansfield, 227.

²¹ Mansfield, 228.

²² Andrew Maunder, *The Facts on File Companion to the British Short Story* (New York: Facts on File, Inc. 2007) 102.

²³ Mansfield, 229.

As was already mentioned, the effects of the epiphanies are often emphasized by the use of symbols. Some of the most noticeable symbols that appear at the centre of epiphanies are the hat in “The Garden Party”, the fly in “The Fly” and the pear tree in “Bliss”, all of which were already discussed in the previous chapters. Another symbol that plays a central role in the epiphany, contributing greatly to the final effect of the story, is the fur in “Miss Brill.” Miss Brill experiences something that could be called a false epiphany. She is sitting in the park, observing the people and trying to convince herself that she is a part of the group, and her “revelation” is fashioned to suit this desire to belong:

Miss Brill discovered what it was that made it so exciting. They were all on the stage. They weren't only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting. Even she had a part and came every Saturday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all. How strange she'd never thought of it like that before!²⁴

By assigning herself an active rather than passive role, Miss Brill convinces herself that she is important to the other people whom she does not even know. She seems to feel the joy of everything finally falling into place, explained. She is deluded into thinking that she finally understood the entire situation, while she could not be further from the truth. It is rather significant that Miss Brill wants to see herself as a part of the group, suppressing any hints that she is excluded from the society. Nevertheless the real moment of revelation comes when she overhears the conversation of the young couple: “Why does she come here at all – who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly mug at home? It's her fu-ur which is so funny...”²⁵ Miss Brill's final decision seems to be to comply with the opinion of the girl, putting away the fur that she loves, but which has been singled out as the source of her social unacceptability. Therefore it seems that Miss Brill is putting away her own individuality along with the thing

²⁴ Mansfield, 270.

²⁵ Mansfield, 271.

that defined her: “She unclasped the necklet quickly; quickly, without looking she laid it inside. But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying.”²⁶ In this scene, similarly to Josephine and the sparrows, it seem to be Miss Brill’s regrets at giving up her individuality that cause her to imagine the crying sound.

In conclusion it could be said that the epiphanies represent the individuality of the characters at its highest point, which is not necessarily high at all. However, due to the nature of the consciousness these moments can only be rendered obliquely and ambiguously. Consequently what follows the epiphany comes to complement the moment of clarity which cannot be very well stated outright but can be rendered in contrast to the reaction of the character or his or her return to the modes of thinking and behaviour conditioned by the society.

²⁶ Mansfield, 272.

Chapter 5: The Influence of the Superego in Terms of Group Psychology

This chapter will discuss the possibility of interpreting the influence of the society on the behaviour of the characters using the concept of group psychology. In many of Mansfield's stories the opposition between the superego and the ego within the individual is emphasized by means of juxtaposing this person with a group of characters who have very little individuality, however, in their traits as a group they represent perfectly the norm of the class of society. The conflict of the story is then developed through the individual's interaction with this group. The effect of conformity that the presence of such a group often has on the character could be described as a very mild version of group psychology, among the symptoms of which, according to Gustave LeBon (quoted by Freud), are

the disappearance of the conscious personality, the predominance of the unconscious personality, the turning by means of suggestion and contagion of feelings and ideas in an identical direction, the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts...¹

It could also be argued that these effects are exemplified on the characters that already belong to the group. Further contributing to the aforementioned features of conformity are identical means of expression, which constitute a sociolect that signals an individual's belonging to the group. When the same features are temporarily extended to the main character of the story, they create a pronounced contrast with the moment of clarity, when he or she makes an independent judgement based on the circumstances.

One of the best examples of the individual's assimilation with the group can be found in "Marriage a La Mode." In this story a group of pseudo-artists and hedonists effectively takes

¹ Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 12.

over the life of the protagonist's wife, Isabel. She refuses to be separated from the group for a longer period of time, despite the wishes of her husband, which could suggest that she is unable to sustain her behaviour outside the influence of the group that effectively alters her lifestyle. Through the thoughts of her husband, the reader finds out that "the new Isabel"² changed every aspect of her life according to the ideas acquired from her new friends. The children are no longer allowed to have their old toys "because they were so "dreadfully sentimental"³ and "so appallingly bad for the babies' sense of form".⁴ It is important to notice that the upbringing of the children is affected, and they are conditioned from early age to accept the ideas and conventions of the group. In this way Isabel's new friends take over not only her own individuality but also her children's. This is evidenced by Isabel's statement that may sound rather ominous to the reader: "It's so important,...that they should like the right things from the very beginning. It saves so much time later on."⁵ Isabel's integration into the group is also signalled by her adoption of their ways of speaking as well as the dramatic mannerisms. She laughs "in the new way"⁶ and "wails"⁷, "cries"⁸, and "gurgles"⁹ instead of speaking normally. Her expressions are just as over the top as those of her entourage. Furthermore, Isabel's friends do not seem to have any practical concerns whatsoever and freely exploit Isabel's household, taking money and food from her. Since Isabel is not yet fully integrated into the group she cannot help but occasionally wonder about practical things such as "what had happened to the salmon they had for supper last night. She had meant to have fish mayonnaise for lunch and now . . ." ¹⁰ Nevertheless she does not consider the circumstances in a realistic way, following instead the mode of behaviour of her new friends,

² Mansfield, 250.

³ Mansfield, 250.

⁴ Mansfield, 250.

⁵ Mansfield, 250.

⁶ Mansfield, 250.

⁷ Mansfield, 254.

⁸ Mansfield, 255.

⁹ Mansfield, 258.

¹⁰ Mansfield, 257.

who are not concerned with anything even remotely pragmatic. It is interesting to note that it is this remark made by one of the group: “I always thought those letters in divorce cases were made up...”¹¹ that seems to wrench Isabel, at least temporarily, from its influence. It is possibly the only remark made by any member of the group that deals with something serious, although the person who made it undoubtedly meant it as a joke. Isabel is reminded of the reality of her circumstances and the possibility that she could lose her husband. In the brief moment of conscious thought Isabel seems to realize the effects of conformity and thinks about her new friends in terms of a homogeneous group lacking any kind of individuality : “And again she saw them, but not four, more like forty, laughing, sneering, jeering, stretching out their hands while she read them William’s letter.”¹² Nevertheless, she cannot sustain her individual judgement, and when she is summoned, she runs back to join the group, “laughing in the new way,”¹³ and the “herd instinct”¹⁴ is re-established.

Another example of the influence of the group on the individual can be found in the “Garden Party”. Laura’s struggle for retaining her independent judgement is juxtaposed against the other members of her social group, who seem to act, speak and think as one unit. Severn points out that the Sheridans share the same rhetorical strategy, based on “negative rhetorical question...constructed to presuppose agreement.”¹⁵ This suggests that the members of the group are so certain that the opinion of the others is the same as theirs that they do not pose real questions, but only elicit affirmation of the opinion that is previously agreed on, in questions such as “Aren’t I in good voice, mummy?”¹⁶ To this could also be added the repetitive vocabulary and frequent exclamations. All these features make up a specific sociolect, which defines the group and makes any deviation from this way of speaking

¹¹ Mansfield, 258.

¹² Mansfield, 258.

¹³ Mansfield, 259..

¹⁴ Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 81.

¹⁵ Severn, 16.

¹⁶ Mansfield, 201.

particularly striking. When Laura learns about the dead workman, she asks Jose a true, practical question: “however are we going to stop everything?”¹⁷ She automatically supposes that her sister reached the same conclusion as she did, however, when the question does not elicit the reaction that she expected, Laura’s confidence seems to slightly waver. When she presents the same question to Mrs Sheridan, she has already returned to using the Sheridan discourse: “Of course, we can’t have the party, can we?”¹⁸ She does not get the affirmation, and the rhetoric strategy is turned against her when her mother asks: ““If someone had died there normally...we should still be having our party, shouldn’t we?” Laura had to say ‘yes’ to that, but she felt it was all wrong.”¹⁹ It is interesting to note that while Laura is, at least temporarily, at odds with the group opinion, Jose and Mrs Sheridan react almost identically, one saying “Laura, don’t be so absurd”²⁰, the other “You are being very absurd, Laura.”²¹ It is possible that this synchronization plays a role in convincing Laura, who is unable to retain her own opinion when she sees the others reacting uniformly against it. The uniformity of the general opinion is even more emphasized by the fact that everyone at the party agrees on the beauty of Laura’s hat. As a testament to their importance only as a homogeneous group, the people who attend the garden party are never described individually but only as “streams”²² and “couples.”²³ Comments such as: “Darling Laura, how well you look!”²⁴ “What a becoming hat, child!”²⁵ and “Laura, you look quite Spanish. I’ve never seen you look so striking.”²⁶ are not attributed to anyone in particular, since they are only variations on the general opinion of the group as a whole. It is only after the party ends that the reality of the dead workman is brought up again by Mr Sheridan. Mrs Sheridan attempts to defuse the

¹⁷ Mansfield, 204.

¹⁸ Mansfield, 205.

¹⁹ Mansfield, 205.

²⁰ Mansfield, 204.

²¹ Mansfield, 205.

²² Mansfield, 206.

²³ Mansfield, 206.

²⁴ Mansfield, 206.

²⁵ Mansfield, 206.

²⁶ Mansfield, 206.

situation by what she perceives to be the gesture of utmost charity – sending the leftovers from their privileged party to a family they would otherwise never associate with. Şebnem Kaya argues that “Mrs. Sheridan may be sending Laura off to the poor cottage as a reward for the performance she made at the party...so that she can reinforce Laura’s behavior and condition her to give the “right” response next time, too.”²⁷ In connection with the conditioning of Laura’s behaviour, it could also be argued that Mrs Sheridan’s intent is to show Laura the way in which it is suitable for people in the Sheridan’s social position to show their compassion. However, by sending Laura into the workman’s neighbourhood, she unwittingly gives her an opportunity to escape from the environment that dazzled her and to think clearly. Not much later she seems to realize this and sends Laurie after her to retrieve her from the danger of leaving her social sphere and actually empathizing with someone from the lower class. It works since Laura is distracted by Laurie, who brings the familiarity of their upbringing with him and without much effort diverts Laura from her original line of thinking and back into the old, acquired one.

To further complicate matters it appears that the characters are sometimes not aware of their own conformity, and that the individual can make part of the group even while imagining to be original. In “Bliss” Bertha seems to have an illusion of opposition between herself and the rest of the group. She is intentionally styling herself as different from the rest, except Pearl Fulton, who fits into her illusion in a different way. Moreover, while she is, in fact different than the group, the actual difference is suppressed, while she fancies herself better than the rest of the group, but ignores her doubts and dissatisfactions. Despite the fact that Bertha is, in her thoughts, rather condescending to her friends as well as her husband, she does not evince any real desire to stop being part of the group. She behaves very similarly to them in many respects. She speaks the same language, composed of exclamations and seemingly intellectual

²⁷ Şebnem Kaya, “Laura’s Lessons in Katherine Mansfield’s ‘The Garden Party,’” *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 1.2 Sept. 2011: 58.

and profound, but in fact nonsensical statements such as “She lives in taxis.”²⁸ Her concerns are no more practical than those of the rest of the group. She buys fruit so that it goes with the interior of the room, and admires her baby without having to actually take care of her. She even thinks of her group of friends as objects rather than individuals, thinking “what a decorative group they made, how they seemed to set one another off and how they reminded her of a play by Chekhov.”²⁹ It is interesting to note that the remark about Chekhov might not be understood as a compliment, given the fact that Chekhov’s work tended rather towards social critique. Whether this is intentional on either Bertha’s or the author’s part is not clear. It could be argued that while Bertha’s language and behaviour make her a part of the group, she enjoys to think of herself as slightly more intellectual, spiritual or possibly artistic than the rest of the group. Interestingly, the case might be similar with the other members, who also seem to enjoy thinking about themselves in terms of being more liberal or intellectual than others. Mrs Norman Knight exclaims “why is the middle-class so stodgy – so utterly without sense of humour!”³⁰, while Eddie Warren distinguishes himself as the deep feeling artist, possibly drawing reassurance of his superiority from the pseudo-artistic exclamations such as “I saw myself *driving* through Eternity in a *timeless* taxi.”³¹ Nevertheless, when seen together, they all behave the same way, negating any sense of originality they might want to evoke:

Face and Mug, Eddie and Harry, their spoons rising and falling – dabbing their lips with their napkins, crumbling bread, fiddling with forks and glasses and talking.

“I met her at the Alpha show—the weirdest little person. She'd not only cut off her hair, but she seemed to have taken a dreadfully good snip off her legs and arms and her neck and her poor little nose as well.”

“Isn't she very *liée* with Michael Oat?”

²⁸ Mansfield, 75.

²⁹ Mansfield, 76.

³⁰ Mansfield, 73.

³¹ Mansfield, 74.

“The man who wrote Love in False Teeth?”³²

Significantly, the names of the people speaking are not stated, which suggests that it really does not matter who says what, since all the participants share the same ideas and ways of expressing them, and do not possess enough individuality to distinguish themselves from the others. From this scene it seems to be clear that while the members of the group like to pretend to originality, they are in fact very much similar. Therefore it could be argued that Bertha herself, in considering herself special and better than others, is only conforming to the general pattern of thinking and behaviour shared by the group. It is only when her illusion is shattered that she truly becomes distinguished from the members of the group because she, however briefly, faces her real problems.

In conclusion it could be said that the contrast which Mansfield sets up between the behaviour of the group and the behaviour of the individual motivated by independent judgement further contributes to the contrast between the ego and the superego. The stories show very well that the influence of the society and upbringing is deeply ingrained within a person and therefore it is impossible to sustain independent behaviour for an extended period of time. Furthermore, Mansfield also shows various ways in which the group recognizes its members and ousts those who do not belong to it. Therefore the manner of speaking, the clothing as well as personal habits, ideas and opinions are shaped by the social group that the characters belong to and in extreme cases the character's identity merges with that of the group and he or she loses all traces of individuality.

³² Mansfield, 75-76.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Mansfield's short stories depict the conflict between the individual and the society, which is not stated outright or necessarily apparent in the character's actions or events of the story, however it is subtly woven into every level of the story including the language, narration, images, themes and behaviour of the characters. Unless interpreted, the events of some of the stories may not seem to suggest any conflict at all, since most of it takes place inside the mind of the character, sometimes possibly even without his or her knowledge. The character generally oscillates between two states of mind. One of them could be said to be influenced by what Sigmund Freud calls the superego, which he describes as "the influence, essentially, of what is taken over from other people."¹ While this does not necessarily have to mean deplorable values, Mansfield's stories focus rather on the negative influences and thus effect a social critique, particularly of the upper middle class. The other state of mind, which is generally only momentary, occurs when the consciousness sheds the influence of the superego and the character's individual consciousness acts on its own. The individual consciousness could, in Freud's terms be described as the ego, which "is principally determined by the individual's own experience, that is, by accidental and contemporary events."² Therefore ego manifests itself when the character becomes aware of the outer reality, however, his or her reaction to this occurrence can already be modified by other, unconscious, influences.

It is clear that the individual cannot long resist the influences of the society and family that are deeply ingrained in him or her by upbringing and conventions. The rare occasions when the character shows independent judgement based on the outer realities are mainly depicted in the epiphanies of Mansfield's stories, which, symptomatically, are themselves often incomplete or unclear. Freud states that "conflicts between the ego and the ideal [the superego] will, as

¹Sigmund Freud, "An Outline of Psychoanalysis", 147.

² Sigmund Freud, "An Outline of Psychoanalysis", 147.

we are now prepared to find, ultimately reflect the contrast between what is real and what is psychical, between the external world and the internal world.”³ Therefore the conflict stems from the fact that the character is confronted by the reality, which is different from the ideas that were formed in his or her mind through the influence of the superego. Nevertheless, in the moment when the character attempts to process the experience, the influences ingrained in his or her mind become manifest again and therefore the epiphany often does not seem to make much impact. Traces of the influence of the superego tend to permeate the story in order to set up a stark contrast with the character’s moments of clarity. They are present in the language used by the characters, the patterns of behaviour, and the general conformity of the set of characters around the protagonist that can be compared to a mild version of group psychology, the symptoms of which include “the disappearance of the conscious personality [...] the turning by means of suggestion and contagion of feelings and ideas in an identical direction, the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts.”⁴ Lastly, while the author does not give the reader any explanations, and does not directly comment on the events of the story, she does seem to communicate with the reader through mediums such as focalization and, most importantly the symbols that are present in the story. Some of the symbols are moreover interpreted in various ways by the characters themselves, which provides yet another way to depict the subtle conflict between the ego and the influences of the superego inside the characters’ mind.

One of the difficulties encountered while applying Freud’s theories of ego and superego on Mansfield’s stories is the fact that the author leaves much of the story for the reader to conjecture, without stating it openly. The symbols present in the stories generally offer many various interpretations, all of which are plausible and none of which are confirmed by the

³Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, 707.

⁴ Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 12.

story's outcome. Therefore many of the symbols can be interpreted both in terms of the ego and the superego. Moreover, the perception of the symbols by the character may change and therefore the interpretations do not necessarily contradict each other. While these facts complicate efforts for straightforward interpretation, they contribute greatly to the depiction of the character's consciousness, which is transitory, ambiguous and often torn between different attitudes. The reader is not given a word for word account of the character's thought processes, elucidated by the author, but rather glimpses and fragments of ideas, ambiguous symbols and epiphanies that leave much to be imagined. If the character is confused, the reader remains confused as well. Arguably it is precisely this quality that makes Mansfield's depictions of the inner consciousness so vivid and plausible for the reader.

In terms of further research it might be beneficial to discuss greater number of stories, which might yield further information on Mansfield's depiction of the characters' thoughts and other possible ways of depicting the conflict between ego and superego. It would also be possible to widen the scope of the discussion and treat the influence of parents on children in stories such as "Prelude", "At the Bay", "The Doll's House", "Sun and Moon" etc. Similarly the influence of the family and the society could be traced in the characters of different genders and generations, possibly revealing some differences in the nature of the influences of the superego in different age groups or in male and female characters.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Mansfield, Katherine. *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield*. London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2006.

Mansfield, Katherine. *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield 1904-1922*. London: Constable, 1962.

Secondary Sources

Adler, Mortimer J., ed. *Great Books of the Western World, Vol. 54: The Major Works of Sigmund Freud*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1990.

Drewery, Claire. *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011.

Fludernik Monika. *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction: the linguistic representation of speech and consciousness*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Freud, Sigmund. "An Outline of Psycho-Analysis." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII (1937-1939): Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74: 139-208.

Freud, Sigmund. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. transl. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1949.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.

Head, Dominic. *The Modernist Short Story: a Study in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

- Hühn, Peter. *Eventfulness in British Fiction*. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010.
- Hunter, Adrian. *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Jesch, Tatjana, Stein, Malte. "Perspectivization and Focalization: Two Concepts – One Meaning? An Attempt at Conceptual Differentiation." *Narratologia: Point of View, Perspective, Focalization: Modeling Mediation in Narrative*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009: 59-78.
- Kaplan, Sydney Janet. *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D.H. Lawrence*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.
- Kaya, Şebnem, PhD. "Laura's Lessons in Katherine Mansfield's 'The Garden Party'". *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 1.2. Sept. 2011: 54-61.
- Lehan, Richard. *Literary Modernism and Beyond: The Extended Vision and the Realms of the Text*. Baton Rouge, LA, USA: Louisiana State University Press, 2012.
- Munder, Andrew. *The Facts on File Companion to the British Short Story*. New York: Facts on File, Inc, 2007.
- Neaman, Judith S. "Allusion, Image, and Associative Pattern: The Answers in Mansfield's 'Bliss'". *Twentieth Century Literature* 32.2. Summer 1986: 242-254.
- Parke, Nigel. "Rites of Passage in the Modern Epiphany." *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Epiphany*. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B. V., 1999.
- Severn, Stephen E. "Linguistic Structure and Rhetorical Resolution in Katherine Mansfield 'The Garden Party'". *Journal of the Short Story in English* 52. Spring 2009: 2-9.
- Symons, Arthur. *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. London: Archibald Constable & Co Ltd., 1908.
- Thomas, J.D: "Symbol and Parallelism in 'The Fly' ". *College English* 22.4. Jan. 1961: 256+261-262.

- Van Gunsteren, Julia. *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism*. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V. 1991.
- Wilson, Leigh. *Modernism*. London: Continuum, 2007.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Moments of Being". *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories*. University of Adelaide: eBooks@Adelaide, 2012.
- Wright, Celeste. "Darkness as a Symbol in Katherine Mansfield". *Modern Philology* 51.3. Feb. 1954: 204-207.

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.

Abstrakt práce

Cílem této práce je analyzovat prostředky, kterými Katherine Mansfieldová zobrazuje myšlenkové pochody své hlavní postavy s použitím Freudovy teorie o egu a superegu. Konflikt mezi jedincem a společností je v této práci nahlížen jako rozpor mezi egem čili nezávislým vědomím jedince, které reaguje na vnější okolnosti a superegem ve smyslu zakořeněných vlivů rodiny a společenské třídy do které jedinec náleží. Chování a myšlenky hlavní postavy v povídce jsou rozpolcené mezi jednáním a myšlením vštěpovaným společností a okamžiky jasného vnímání, které jsou v této práci považovány za projev ega. Způsoby zobrazení ega a superega jsou analyzovány jak na úrovni jazyka a naratologie, tak na úrovni témat a událostí v samotných povídkách. Dále se práce zabývá rolí autorky a otázkou, zda a jakým způsobem se autorka projevuje ve svých povídkách a popřípadě ovlivňuje čtenáře. Dalším důležitým prvkem použitým k zobrazení myšlenkových pochodů postav jsou symboly (například aloe v „Předehře“ („Prelude“), hruška v „Blahu“ („Bliss“), kožešina ve „Slečně Brillové“ („Miss Brill“) moucha v „Mouše“ („The Fly“), klobouk v „Zahradní slavnosti“ („The Garden Party“) atd.). Pokusím se prokázat, že autorka je používá na jedné straně k tomu, aby upozornila čtenáře na jemné nuance hlavního konfliktu, kterých si postava není nutně vědoma, a na druhé straně k zobrazení vlivů ega a superega na postavu skrze jeho nebo její vlastní interpretaci daného symbolu. Cílem práce je s použitím výše uvedených východisek dokázat, že povídky Katherine Mansfieldové se dají interpretovat s použitím poznatků Sigmunda Freuda o egu a superegu.

Key Words

Katherine Mansfield

Sigmund Freud

modernism

the short story

ego and super ego

group psychology

narratology

symbolism

“Bliss”

“The Garden Party”

“Prelude”

“At the Bay”

“The Fly”

“Marriage a la Mode”

“Daughters of the Late Colonel”

“Miss Brill”

Klíčová slova

Katherine Mansfieldová

Sigmund Freud

modernismus

povídka

ego a super ego

skupinová psychologie

narratologie

symbolismus

“Blaho”

“Zahradní slavnost”

“Předehra”

“V Zátocce”

“Moucha”

“Moderní manželství”

“Dcerušky nebožtíka pana plukovníka”

“Slečna Brillová”