CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERS AND DEVICES OF CHARACTERIZATION
The themes have been discussed first in this study of Katherine Mansfield's stories so that we may be able to see how character, plot situations and other fictional devices contribute to the externalization of the themes and ideas. We must recognize that it is the people, the characters, who are the main source of interest and attraction. Very rarely do we read a story only for the sake of the idea it may convey. Our first interest is in the human figures, agents or sufferers who inhabit this fictional world. Even the events are interesting only in so far as the people responsible for, or affected by them are objects of our interest. Good drama, said T.S. Eliot, is built around persons rather than ideas; and this is no less true of good fiction. Since, in short stories, we cannot have the architectonics of complex plot construction, the characters have to carry the major burden, ensuring our interest by being in some way absorbing, and thereby holding our attention.

Most of Katherine Mansfield's stories are peopled by interesting characters. Their temperament is revealed by their actions and reactions. And in Katherine Mansfield's works, which can quite properly be described as character-oriented, (she was greatly interested in human psychology and in 'people') the characters are interesting not simply
for themselves, but also because of the situations in which they are placed. We can thus direct our attention to the people who inhabit Katherine Mansfield's fictional world.

Prelude, Katherine Mansfield's major fictional work, has three generations of women and the point of view shifts from one character to another, so that the situation is seen from various angles. The characters define the situation and define themselves in the process.

Anton Chekov wrote, "In nature everything has a meaning," and in Prelude, Katherine Mansfield too sees the physical setting equally as a character.

The three generations are explored with the study of the Grand mother, Mrs. Fairfield, Linda Burnell married and with a family, and Beryl, her unmarried sister, dissatisfied with her surroundings. The children are represented by Isabel, Lottie and Kesia.

Linda is a vaguely dissatisfied wife and mother who is neither well nor ill in a definite way. She is the enigmatic present, and her feelings are misty, her identity a puzzle. She is full of romantic ideals, and they float around her while she dreams. Hers is a most complicated nature, and she accepts the shifting to a new house with resignation. The novelty of the new house passes her by, as she is involved in her own self and the deeper aspects of a
thing. Life and birth do not concern her, and she gets so involved in the intricacies of a thing that she is unable to comprehend it in its fullness.

"She turned over to the wall and idly, with one finger, she traced a poppy on the wall paper with a leaf and a stem and a fat bursting bud. In the quiet, and under her tracing finger, the poppy seemed to come alive. She would feel the sticky, silky petals, the stem, hairy like a gooseberry skin, the rough leaf and the tight glazed bud. Things had a habit of coming alive like that. Not only large substantial things like furniture, but curtains and the patterns of stuffs and fringes of quilts and cushions. How often she had seen the tassel fringe of her quilt change into a funny procession of dancers with priests attending...But the strangest part of this coming alive of things was what they did. They listened, they seemed to swell out with some mysterious important content, and when they were full she felt that they smiled...sometimes, when she had fallen asleep in the daytime, she woke and could not lift a finger, could not even turn her eyes to left or right because They were there; sometimes when she went out of a room and left it empty, she knew as she clicked the door to that They were filling it...'It's very quiet now,' she thought. She opened her eyes wide, and she heard the silence spinning its soft endless web. .....Only she seemed to be listening with her wide open watchful eyes, waiting for someone to come who just did not come, watching
for something to happen that just did not happen.  

Linda feels that life is like an Aloe, fierce and beautiful, yet with thorns; That is, Life has to be accepted with its limitations.

Linda is fond of her husband Stanley. "She loved and admired and respected him tremendously", and finds him, "the soul of truth and decency", but her delicate sensibility is unable to understand his strength and coarseness.

"If only he wouldn't jump at her so and bark so loudly, and watch her with such eager, loving eyes. He was too strong for her; and she had always hated things that rush at her, from a child."  

Linda's feelings for Stanley are sharp and defined, and she finds it difficult to cope with the problems of life. She feels she is delicate and as she has already delivered "three lumps of children", Stanley should be more considerate.

1. The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.
   Alfred A. Knopf (New York 1954) p. 234
2. Aloe (Sputnik September 1934) called the prickly Aloe or the Century plant; but also tree Aloe as it grows very tall—considered a symbol of patience and endurance. Its juice is called Sabur from Arabic Sabr which means patience.
3. The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.
4. Ibid. p. 258.
5. Ibid. p. 258.
To Linda, her only hold on reality is her mother. She feels that life would be unbearable without "the sweet smell of her flesh and the soft feel of her cheeks and her arms and shoulders still softer."¹ The very sight of Mrs. Fairfield is a source of comfort to her.

In At The Bay Linda matures, and is more reconciled to her life. Even though she feels broken and weak through child-bearing, the baby boy she has had recently brings out her maternal instincts.

"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, it was something so new, so'... The tears danced in her eyes; she breathed in a small whisper to the boy, 'Hallo, my funny..."²

It is the sun-drenched experience with her son in At The Bay which enables Linda to make her adjustments to life.

Bertha Young in Bliss is a woman of thirty who has all that life can offer...a devoted husband, financial security, and a charming baby. Bertha is young for her age and her nature is such that she is constantly testing her own descriptions against an imaginary audience. She also seems unsure and hesitant and, in the story, her character gains growth and maturity in the end. She had perceptions and

¹. Ibid. p.236
². Ibid. p.280
sensibilities that she was unable to use constructively.

It is in her final appeal that we are able to make out how she will continue to evade responsibility, retreating into depression.

The last lines, in their simple declaration of helplessness, are true to her character when she cries out: "Oh what is going to happen now?"

Bertha is a woman who refuses to see the realities of life, and is thus entrapped by her environment and the other characters in the story.

In *A Cup Of Tea* Rosemary Fell is once again an immature woman, very much in love with her husband and happy, delighting in shopping for trivialities. In the very beginning of the story Katherine Mansfield introduces her as "young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books, and her parties were the most delicious mixture of the really important people and...artists...quaint creatures, discoveries of hers some of them too terrifying for words, but others quite presentable and amusing."¹

It is her fondness for quaint creatures which makes her pick up the poor young girl, and she takes her home and

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¹. Ibid. p. 584.
offers her tea. Rosemary is almost childish in the way she decides to satisfy this whim. She feels it would be thrilling. "It would be thrilling. And she heard herself saying afterwards to the amazement of her friends:

"I simply took her home with me..."\(^1\)

Thereafter, Rosemary uses a patronizing tone, not really understanding the poor girl's despair and her sad plight:

"She was going to prove to this girl that ...wonderful things did happen in life, that ...fairy Godmothers were real...that...rich people had hearts, and that women were sisters."\(^2\)

Her thoughts here, like the girl's thoughts in *Taking The Veil*, reveal her adolescent self-dramatization (romantic, in a rather foolish sort of way.)

Rosemary finds it fascinating and terrible when the poor girl begins to cry, because in her secure, sheltered world, she herself had never encountered anything of this sort. She also suffers from pangs of jealousy when Philip, her husband, finds the poor girl pretty. Being impulsive by nature, she promptly takes out money and, offering the girl three notes, sends her away:

\(^{1}\) *Ibid.* p. 586

\(^{2}\) *Ibid.* p. 587
"She opened a drawer and took out five pound notes, looked at them, put two back, and holding the three squeezed in her hand, she went back to her bedroom." ¹

In the end, true to her character, she seeks re-assurance by asking her husband, "Am I pretty."

She is a spoilt and pampered woman, inexperienced and without any knowledge of the sufferings that the poor have to undergo. She is content in her narrow environment, unwilling to move out, to widen her experiences.

In *Marriage à la Mode* Katherine Mansfield gives us an almost cruel character in Isabel who is unfeeling and harsh, selfish and self-centred, which makes her taunt her husband, William. She finds him stuffy and tragic:

"Just because I've got to know really congenial people, and go about more, and am frightfully keen on...on everything, you behave as though I'd",..."Isabel tossed back her hair and laughed,""killed our love or something. Its so awfully absurd."

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Isabel seems so completely engrossed in her circle of friends and their pleasures, that she does not understand William's true devotion. Theirs is a one-sided relationship, and she hardly shows any love or consideration towards William.

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1. Ibid. p. 59¹
2. Ibid. p. 55²
She tells her friends, "Oh no! Oh no!" cried Isabel's voice. "That's not fair to William. Be nice to him, my children! He's only staying until tomorrow evening."

It is only at the end of the story that we feel there is a possibility that Isabel might change, when she reads William's letter and her friends laugh and jeer. She decides to reply to his letter and feels she has committed a very bad mistake.

In The Black Cat also, it is the woman who is unhappy in her marriage. She is dissatisfied, and pities herself because she feels that her husband doesn't care for her at all:

"He doesn't want a woman at all. A woman has no meaning for him. He's not the type of man to care deeply for anybody except himself. I've become the person who remembers to take the links out of his shirts before they go to the wash - that is all!"

She is proud and independent, refusing to vegetate in the country raving over the lettuces she has grown. She thus decides to stay with her lover but finds he is not so wonderful after all, and in the end goes back to her husband. In this way, she changes in her attitude. She finds that she had been mad, and is sane once again.

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1. Ibid. p. 306
The Frau in *Frau Brechenmacher Attends A Wedding* is a woman suffering from constant child-bearing and a husband who dominates her. She is more like Linda (*Prelude*) who feels that there is no more to life than slaving in the house for her husband, looking after his comforts. For her, getting ready for a wedding is also a terrible business as she first had to put the babies to bed and then polish her husband's boots and iron his clothes and polish his buttons. It is not in her nature to complain and she goes about her chores in the usual way.

The Frau feels almost like a young girl again when she sees the couples dancing at the wedding. "Her roughened hands clasped and unclasped themselves in the folds of her skirt", and it was only when the music stopped that she realised that it was all a dream. As it is not in her nature to rebel against the circumstances, she wants to go home again. She feels that the people are laughing at her because she is not strong enough to revolt. It is in the end, when she lies down covering her face with her apron, that we find how simple and timid she can be. She, "put her arm across her face like a child who expected to be hurt..."

The Frau is represented again in many of Katherine Mansfield's feminist stories such as *A Marriage Of Passion, The Mating Of Gwendolen*, and *At Lehmanns*. Frau Lehmann is to deliver a baby, and she is reconciled to her fate, accepting her husband's comments dutifully, remaining upstairs when he
tells her that, as she had grown so big and unappetising, she had better remain upstairs and sew.

Katherine Mansfield has written many stories in which she has explored the emotions and feelings of an adolescent girl.

Laura Sheridan in The Garden Party is an adolescent who gradually develops into maturity and discovers that death has to be accepted along with life. Laura is selfconscious and impetuous, and she gets easily excited at the thought of a party. She loves to arrange things and feels she can do so much better than anybody else. Her sense of importance is greatly increased when her mother calls her the, "artistic one", and "she blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them." (That is, the workmen). The workmen seem big and impressive, and actually made her stammer and she tried to copy her mother's voice. Laura's is a very gentle nature, and she wishes she could have workmen for friends when she sees one of them, the tall fellow, caring for the smell of lavender:

He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and fore-finger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. ¹

Laura is very much in love with life and, in the beginning of the story, does not feel that there is an

¹ Ibid. p. 536
unhappy aspect to it as well. Her worries are mainly about her clothes, the arrangements for the garden party, the band and the flowers brought in for decoration.

She has the sensitiveness of the young adolescent, and she loves her family very much. Her mother is adorable and she feels it deeply when she is unaffected by a carter's death and continues with her plans for the garden party.

Laura is impressionable enough, and her mother is able to tempt her with a pretty, new hat trimmed with gold daisies and a long black velvet ribbon. She decides to remember the poor widow and her little children once the party is over. She resents it when her mother wants her to carry the scraps of food, the party leftovers, to the dead man's house. She feels things deeply, and thus she reacts differently from her mother and sister. It is her brother who gives her a sense of comradeship:

"When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot down the lane because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up, Laura and Laurie sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still one must go everywhere; one must see everything, so through they went."

1. Ibid. p. 542.
She undertakes the trip down the dark lane, unsure of her position and she is unable to face the dead man's widow. She has never faced death before and she views the dead body as if it is something in a fairy tale. She feels that the dead man is a sleeping prince who must be allowed to rest in peace, that he is happy.

Laura, thus, grows up and is able to understand the meaning of death. Her mind is able to absorb this sad fact in the end.

Laura has a warm and affectionate character, and it is this which makes her depart from her mother's attitude towards life, and she finds these class distinctions absurd. The whole story revolves around Laura's growth into maturity.

In *Taking The Veil*, Edna's engagement to Jimmy is nearly broken because she becomes infatuated with an actor, when she sees him in a play. She is a young girl of eighteen, "extremely pretty, with the cheeks and lips and shining eyes of perfect health." She is at a stage when she is unable to realize why her parents do not understand her feelings. She asks herself all the typical questions which any adolescent might do, and feels that the world is a cruel place.

Her love for the actor seems the most important thing in her life. She would follow him to the ends of the earth at a nod or a sign, and is gradually filled with fits of
despair and agony while at the same time she finds the whole affair thrilling.

She has also a tendency towards self-dramatization, and decides to join a convent, when she obviously cannot marry her actor and she is obsessed by this idea. This leads to what amounts to romantic day-dreaming, but at the last minute she changes her mind when she imagines Jimmy's hair turning white with grief and her parents weeping.

Edna loves to exaggerate any emotion, and she imagines herself with sorrowful eyes and an unearthly look, greeting children when they come to the convent. Life for her is always one of extremes, and she thinks of the people discussing her sad fate..."of her youth, her beauty, of her tragic, tragic love."

At the end of the story she once again decides to return to Jimmy and feels that, "love came flying through the air to her." Hers is a very imaginative temperament, impressionable, and her shifting nature ultimately takes her back to Jimmy. "She knew what it was to be in love, but...in...love."

The self-dramatization of the adolescent is beautifully brought out here, with the feelings intense but not durable. Leila in Her First Ball is a young girl full of dreams, thrilled at the prospect of going to her first Ball. She is
eager and excited and tries her best not to smile too much. In her delight, it seemed to her that even the bolster on which her hand rested felt, "like the sleeve of an unknown young man's dress shirt." She has never been to a ball before and as she dances away her evening she asks herself why happiness did not last for ever. "For ever wasn't a bit too long."

It is her encounter with an old man that shatters Leila's illusions. Being young, she had never thought of old age and loneliness. At no point in her young life had she felt cynical or depressed, and she was seeing life through rose-coloured glasses. The fat man with whom she dances explains the transitoriness of things, that nothing lasts for ever.

Leila who had been finding the music marvellous, and the dance floor golden, now wonders, "was this first ball only the beginning of her last ball after all."

But she is rescued from the gloom into which she has been plunged, by the arrival of a handsome young man, who wants to dance with her, almost like a prince, in a fairy-tale. She bounces back to gaiety and she even refuses to recognize the fat man again.

Laura, Edna, Leila all seem to have to face the realities of life, and it is a natural phenomenon. All of
them shed some of their illusions and even though, it is a traumatic experience, they stand to gain by it. This quality can also be seen in Rosemary, in A Cup Of Tea, though she is not quite an adolescent. She, too, has the self-dramatizing quality which calls forth ironic amusement from the author, however indulgent.

Beryl in, Prelude, Linda's unmarried sister, lives constantly in an imagined future. She is immature and thus unhappy at being shut away so far from town...to rot in the country. Beryl is always getting at the children and checking them to see if they are naughty. Much as she likes the new house,

"Oh yes, I like the house immensely and the garden is beautiful, but it feels far away from everything to me." ¹

She is filled with despair because now she thinks she might not find a suitor easily.

She indulges in romantic fantasies, and often imagines herself meeting some young man:

"It was warm and somewhere out there in the garden a young man, dark and slender, with mocking eyes, tip-toed among the bushes, and gathered the flowers into a big bouquet and slipped under her window and held it up to her." ²

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1. Ibid. p. 237
2. Ibid. p. 229
She resents her brother-in-law, Stanley, and feels he is very unreasonable at times. Being dissatisfied with her lot, she wishes she had money of her own. This sets her fantasising again about a rich young man, recently arrived from England and wanting to marry her, that there could be a ball in Government House and people would enquire "who is that exquisite creature in Eau de Nil satin? Beryl Fairfield..."

Beryl is also unable to understand her mother's way of managing things. She finds her mother's actions maddening at times but excuses them "loftily", because of her old age.

In The Doll's House Beryl chases the Kelvey children away at the end of the story, as she is very conscious of her status. She prefers to keep the maidservant at a distance. In At The Bay when she sees Alice, the maid, going out, she feels the girl must have picked up "some horrible common larrkin and they'd go off into the bush together." She always felt that the servants should be kept in their place and could never be civil to them.

She longs for the company of a young man but when Harry, Kember tries to embrace her, she gets frightened and pushes him away, shouting "you are vile, vile."

She is happiest when she can vanish into her own world of fantasy, and has no idea of the realities of life.
At times she is despondent and frustrated and then at other times happy, singing to herself.

She, along with Linda, presents a contrast between the young and the old ... the latter represented in the figure of Mrs. Fairfield.

Desmond MacCarthy observed that in *Prelude*, most of Katherine Mansfield's characters seem to be out of contact with one another — isolated inside its bubble, each in their "little private worlds."  

By her use of day dreams, MacCarthy says, Katherine Mansfield is able to get inside her characters:

"She continues to emphasize what is the distinctive note in her sense of the world — that each person lives to himself or herself alone. The filaments which we throw across the gulf to each other figure strangely little in her picture of life."

There are three tales of violence — *The Woman At The Store*, *Ole Underwood*, and *Millie* in which the deaths occur outside the main narrative. In these stories, the characters are psychological studies. The writer shows what can happen to a person, if left alone, in a raw unbroken country. In


2. Ibid.
The Woman At The Store: the woman is a yellow-haired "backblocks hag," who is secretive and tends to become violent, keeping a rifle by her side, lest strangers trouble her. She turns as savage as her landscape and it is her oppressive loneliness which makes her kill her husband.

Ole Underwood is again a character, largely influenced by his surroundings. He is an adventurer, unstable, and insecure. He seems to appear rootless, and his movements are abrupt and restless: "E was a sailor till 'e married 'er."

It is his odd behaviour which helps in developing the story. Katherine Mansfield gives us a physical description:

"He wore a black peaked cap, like a pilot; gold rings gleamed in his ears and his little eyes snapped like two sparks. Like two sparks they glowed in the smouldering of his bearded face."¹

Underwood is virtually mad after his wife has betrayed his love, and he repeats a lot of gibberish as he rushes out of the bar.

Towards the end, his wander-lust returns as he gazes towards the wharf and he feels young again. Yet, little does he know that he is soon going to find himself in another provocative situation.

Millie in the story named after her is an up-country station-hand's wife, childless and unfeeling. It is only when a youth who has committed a murder seeks refuge in her home that she becomes almost human for a little while. Still, she is rather like Underwood because, in the end, she reverts to her old self once the hunt for the youth begins again. "Like Ole Underwood and the woman at the Store she is the antipodean landscape itself, and civilisations Nadir."¹

These three stories deal in particular with the relation of character to environment, and movement to atmosphere, in a raw, traditionless country, though Katherine Mansfield may have unconsciously made this effort.

In dealing with the older woman, Katherine Mansfield gives a detailed account of Mrs. Fairfield, in Prelude, whose character she based most probably on her grandmother - a lady whom Katherine Mansfield loved very much and who gave her a great deal of affection.

Mrs. Fairfield is a practical woman, wholesome and wise, and always helpful to an ever-dreaming Linda to save herself from getting lost among her illusions. She appears to possess all the qualities which Linda finds lacking in herself. Mrs Fairfield tries to arrange everything in the house symmetrically and wishes everything would be arranged

¹ Alpers, Antony: Katherine Mansfield - A Biography.

so that her daily needs can be fulfilled. The whole house is filled with her presence, and she seems to represent the former well-bred class without any feelings of class consciousness. She seems mild and tranquil, always standing outside the action, having about her an air of bodily and mental sweetness and radiance. There is still the capacity for spontaneous feeling in her when she deals with Kesia.

Mrs. Fairfield, "was always so fresh, so delicious. The old woman could bear nothing but linen next to her body"; and she is extremely happy moving around in the new kitchen planning her currant jam.

"Old Mrs. Fairfield's arms were bare to the elbow and stained a bright pink." She had a queer precise touch and moved about the kitchen in a leisurely manner. She is able to provide Beryl also with comfort when things become difficult for her, though Beryl finds her too complacent at times.

Mrs. Fairfield seems to represent the goodness of her class, and she has reached an age when she is able to adjust between unavoidable accommodations and the necessary resistance to the pattern in life. She is able to accept death and when Kesia asks her if it makes her sad to think of Uncle William who had died, she considers:
"Did it make her sad? To look back, back. To stare down the years, as Kesia had seen her doing. To look after them as a woman does long, after they were out of sight. Did it make her sad? No, life was like that."  

To her birth and death are acceptable and she does not long for the unattainable. She is a stabilizing factor in *Prelude* and in *At The Bay*.  

Ma Parker in *Life Of Ma Parker* is a woman whom life has not treated very kindly; she, too, feels that happiness has always evaded her. After an unhappy marriage with frequent childbearing she became a widow when her husband died of consumption. Yet, being courageous, she took all the pain and suffering in her stride.  

If the neighbours would mention her hardships, she would feel as if they were just commenting on some ordinary factor in her life ... She was so used to pain.  

The man she works for is unfeeling and callous but she has it in her nature to feel sorry for him. He would always leave the house looking like a gigantic dust bin, but Ma Parker bears him no grudge: "She pitied the poor young gentleman for having no one to look after him."

It is only when her much-loved grand-son dies that she is utterly broken, and realizes that "she'd had too much in her life to bear."

Ma Parker is a strong woman, not given to fits of weeping, and has always been going around with a proud face. But her misery is now overwhelming and she wishes she could escape from this world where nobody seems to care:

"It was cold in the street. There was a wind like ice. People went flitting by, very fast, the men walked like scissors, the women trod like cats. And nobody knew...nobody cared."¹

She feels utterly lonely, an alien to her cheerless surroundings and harsh environment.

Katherine Mansfield introduces another elderly character in Miss Brill, who is an old woman living in her own world of illusions, thinking that people care about her and that she is part of one big family. She starves for company and it is only when she sits in the park listening to other people's conversation that she is happy:

"She had become really quite expert, she thought, at listening, as though she didn't listen, at sitting in other people's lives just for a minute while they talked around her."²

Miss Brill loved to watch the people in the park, and felt it was like a play. She would make it a point to come on time to the park so that she wouldn't be late for the

1. Ibid. p. 490
2. Ibid. p. 550
performance. She is a highly imaginative woman, and it is this quality which enables her to continue in a world which otherwise may have been too cruel for her.

She is hurt and shattered when the young couple laugh at her and wish she would leave the park, but she does not break down and cry. She is able to reach home, "her room like a cupboard", and think for a long time. It is very obvious that she would once again try to overcome her hurt and move again into the world of pretence and make-believe.

We are able to see that in Katherine Mansfield's fictional world, it is the woman who plays a more important role. She is explored in all her aspects at various stages of her life and her reactions are paged. There are the young girl, the married woman, the unmarried girl, and the unhappy lonely woman, who are observed...and Katherine Mansfield is able to give us a vivid picture of each of these characters.

The male characters in Katherine Mansfield's stories are not treated generally in a sympathetic manner. They are selfish and self-centred, seeking their own pleasures and often cut a poor figure. The stories are women-oriented, and the man seems to provide a background, to enable the story to develop by contrast.

The hero in *This Flower*, Roy, is only concerned with his physical satisfaction. He is not bothered about the girl's
health, and can only express his relief at the doctor's verdict. We are told:

"Roy, unable, of course, to miss the smallest dramatic opportunity had obtained his rather shady Bloomsbury address from the man in whom he always confided everything who although he'd never met her, 'knew all about them'."

He only wants that the affair should be a quiet one, lest the doctor should talk. Roy was frightened throughout, and felt it would have been fatal to have the secret revealed.

The man in The Man Without A Temperament is a weak, unsure character living at his wife's beck and call. He seems to have no mind of his own, and is constantly running around trying to please his wife. He cannot do anything right as far as his wife is concerned, and she nags him constantly. He is almost to be pitied for enduring her attitude and acting in such a servile fashion.

In The Black Cap the man is almost a comic figure, the way he rushes around and gushes over the female character. He seems to be totally besotted, and continues to speak in superlatives. He is an ardent young fellow and can be happy only when his, "queen is her happy self again." He is made to wear a cap and gams at himself fatuously and anxiously in case it looks wrong. He utters words like "My joy" and "My

1. Ibid. p.406
wonder", and at the end of the story when the woman leaves him he can only worry about his cap. His character seems shallow and superficial, and he registers more as a comic than a pathetic figure. The male character in The Escape is very much the husband in The Man Without A Temperament. He is always fetching and carrying for his wife, and takes the blame for everything that goes wrong. She nags him about his smoking: "No human creature could know and be so cruel." She continues in the same tone, that he should not encourage beggars by giving them anything. The man blames himself "wholly and solely", when they are late and miss the train, and she imitates his speech, finding it absurd and ridiculous.

Katherine Mansfield most probably patterned several of her characters on her father Harold Beauchamp and this is seen mostly in her New Zealand stories like The Stranger, The Little Girl, Prelude and At The Bay.

Mr. Hammond in The Stranger is an anxious husband who waits at the wharf to receive his wife. He is as excited as a puppy to get her back and, in his eagerness, even forgets that he will be re-united to his children. Their union goes awry because he finds his wife preoccupied with the death of a stranger on the ship. Mr. Hammond being dependent on his wife because of his devotion to her, becomes very childish, and he thinks his hopes are dashed, "forever."
He is not generous enough to let things be and is immature in letting jealousy overcome his better nature, even his commonsense. So, we have two male types—the dominating, selfish type and the helpless, clinging and even cringing type.

Mr. Burnell in Prelude is a bustling and肌肉-conscious husband who loves physical exercise and is very proud of his body. He would do deep-breathing exercises squatting like a frog and shooting out his legs:

"He was so delighted with his firm obedient body that he hit himself on the chest and gave a loud, 'Ah',."¹

It is this vigour which sets him worlds apart from Linda who tells him that he can never put on weight, being energetic. In At The Bay Stanley is at his happiest swimming, the water bubbling around his legs, and he feels upset when the "unpractical idiot", Jonathan, joins him for a swim. He is uncertain within and it is Linda who gives him comfort, and provides him with encouragement in moments of gloom. She only has to smile and curl her fingers into his big red hand for him to whistle out, "Pure as a lily, joyous and free."

Stanley is fond of money and country life and good food. He is an extrovert by nature. On his way home from office, he feels contented with his life:

¹. Ibid. p. 232.
"And this drive in the fresh warm air, knowing all the while that his own house was at the other end, with its garden and paddocks, its three tip-top cows and enough fowls and ducks to keep them in poultry, was splendid too."

He is full of enthusiasm at the prospect of a secure farmer's life.

He is a simple man who is able to plan out his seven days in the week and Sunday for him meant some time spent in Church after which he would stay with Linda. Linda is able to sort out his uncertainties, and talking things over with her always helped, even though they drifted off the point. The only thing which worries him is the distance from his office to his home and he can never reach home early. This fills him with thoughts of possible disaster.

To Linda, he is a man who, though devoted to her, is always full of plans of how to make more money, and she sometimes refers to him as a dog when he becomes brutal. Yet there are moments when Stanley is the soul of decency and "for all his practical experience he was awfully simple, easily pleased and easily hurt..." That is, he was more of an overgrown child.

Jonathan is the very opposite of Stanley Burnell and he presents a direct contrast to his character. He is basically a dreamer, more like Linda who, in her turn, finds

1. Ibid., p. 241.
him lacking in ambition and self-determination. His speech is flowery and he addresses Linda thus: "Greeting, my Fair One! Greeting my celestial Peach Blossom."

The thought of being shut up in an office gives him a caged-in feeling and he wonders: "Would ye have me laugh, my fair sister? Would ye have me weep."

Only Linda ignores these words because she is accustomed to his peculiar style of talking.

Jonathan Trout ponders over the meaning of life and feels it is too short. He desires to explore the undiscovered but finds himself more like a moth or a butterfly -- unable to achieve his aim in life. He is "a pathetic and loving uncle with his flowery absurdities in the language of light opera."

Katherine Mansfield wrote to Dorothy Brett in a letter (September 1921) that while looking through a book of Cezanne she was shocked to find that one of his men was the "spit", image of Jonathan Trout "to the life."

As the years catch up with him, Jonathan feels old. He had always been fond of books and music, his mind swarming with new schemes and ideas but nothing came out of it. It is almost as if he has no guiding principle, no stamina. Though dissatisfied with his life in the office, he lacks the will to make any changes. Unlike Stanley Burnell, he cannot make any definite move.
Raoul Duquette in *Je Ne Parle Pas Français* is the narrator in the story, and thus we have his self-characterization. He is a complex character; being a free artist, and feels that art is self-development. He has an edgy awareness of the inadequacy of his feelings, and often embarks into nostalgia and sentiment. He is unable to communicate with anyone or anything in Paris, and fails in his attempts to control other people. Critics have compared Duquette's character to that of a man Katherine Mansfield knew, Francis Carco, with whom she had a brief escapade three years earlier in 1915. Still, the autobiographical elements have been cleverly disguised by Katherine Mansfield in the story.

Duquette gives us a self-portrait by asking the question:

"How can one look the part and not to be part? Or be the part and not look it? Isn't looking — being? Or being — looking? At any rate, who is to say it is not."

In this way, he continues to pose questions and breaks the rules that he has imposed upon himself. He registers on our mind as a self-deluding cripple.

Katherine Mansfield recreated with great fidelity and warmth the world of children. Her "children" live imaginatively and she has given us characters like Kezia Burnell, the Kelvey children, Dick in *Sixpence*, Fenella in

1. *The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.*
The Voyage and others.

The Kesia Burnell of Prelude and At The Bay is shown a little older in The Doll's House where she attends school with her sisters. She is sensitive and playful, extremely fond of her grandmother, for whom she arranges the little bits and pieces of the surprise she has planned for her:

"...She looked down at the slope a moment; then she lay down on her back, gave a squeak and rolled over and over into the thick flowery orchard grass. As she lay waiting for things to stop spinning, she decided to go up to the house and ask the servant girl for an empty match-box. She wanted to make a surprise for the grandmother...She often made these surprises for the grandmother and they were always most successful."  

Kesia gets tremendous comfort from her father in The Little Girl after a nightmare, and the card game scene in Prelude has a haunting quality. Kesia does not know the meaning of social outcast, and she resists her mother's efforts to separate her from the poor children:

"Many of the children, including the Burnells, were not allowed to speak to them. They walked past the Kelveys with their heads in the air",  

and it is here that Kesia differed from her sisters. She refused to take part in the general pecking at the Kelveys.

1. Ibid. p. 239.
2. Ibid. p. 573.
What Kesia likes more than anything in *The Doll's House* is the little lamp, and she treasures it as the prize exhibit. She loves to display it, and so she breaks the rule and invites the Kelvey children into the house.

The Kelvey children, on the other hand, are social outcasts and Lil Kelvey tells Kesia bluntly: "Your Ma told Our Ma you wasn't to speak to us."

These children accept readily the authority exerted by their parents. They are "like two stray cats", and always stand outside the circle of children in the school playground. Even the teacher had a special voice for them. They were the daughters of a spry, hardworking little washer-woman, who worked as a "daily" in most of the houses. Their father was in prison and their mother made them look very conspicuous because she dressed them in "bits", given to her by people for whom she worked.

Lil wore a dress made of a tablecloth and the Logan's curtains, and Else: "was a tiny wishbone of a child, with cropped hair and enormous solemn eyes—a little white owl." She was a very quiet girl, who would never smile, and went through life holding on to Lil, with a piece of Lil's skirt screwed up in her hand. She had a peculiar way of communicating, and would just give her sister's skirt a tug and Lil would stop.
They are used to being kept apart, and do not question their position. At the end of the story Beryl refers to the Kelveys as "little rats", and the poor children rush out, Lil handling along like her mother and Else absolutely dazed. Else has in her the power to forget easily, which most children possess, and she smiles her rare smile. "I seen the little lamp."

Fenella in *The Voyage* is an unhappy little girl since her mother has died recently, and she clings to her grandmother who represents security. Her father's taciturn behaviour, her grandmother's anxiety that he should leave the ship soon and her breaking down into tears, all intensify her feeling of fear. When she hears her grandmother cry, she is very upset. It "was so awful", and she "turned her back on them, swallowed once, twice and frowned terribly at a little green star on a mast head."

In *The Voyage* we have Fenella's eye-view of everything.

Once the ferry is on its way, she feels more reassured and new impressions begin to occupy her mind. She is able to find greater security in her strange surroundings. Her impression of being shut up in a box with grandma, in the cabin, is typical of a child's reactions, and she finds great comfort in her grandmother's touch.

When Fenella sees land, she is very excited and she trembles: "Oh, it had all been so sad lately. Was it going
to change." To her the horses are "little", the cart is "little", and the path up to Grandma's house is "little." She only finds the bed in the little house where grandpa lies, large. Here, she is able to relax and does not find anything menacing. For her the house and her grandparents meant security and happiness.

In this way, we have women young and old, adolescents developing to maturity, men who are ruthless, especially in their relationship towards their womenfolk, weak men, seeking support like Stanley and, above all, the world of children which has characters like Kesia and Fenella who enable the reader to have glimpses into a child's mind and its many emotions.
We may now turn to the devices of characterization. Primary among these are the most usual devices of defining or establishing a character through actions or reactions and through speech. How shall the author present his character? Directly, with a summary of his traits and characteristics or dramatically, through dialogue and action? The very nature of fiction suggests that dialogue and action would prove more suitable, and yet direct presentation is frequently used. Ultimately, it all depends on the scope and scale and the underlying purpose of the story.

Brooks and Warren speak of the importance of the truth of coherence as distinguished from the truth of correspondence. As a work of fiction is not a "factual document, but a typical and representative 'action', the demands of truth of correspondence to human nature and to the human norms." As far as the story goes, we are primarily concerned with truth of coherence, as to how the parts cohere into a total meaningful pattern. In character presentation, coherence is of the utmost importance. A character must be credible and his thoughts and actions must be coherent. Ultimately it all goes back to Aristotle's requirements of a character - truth to life, truth to type and consistency.

An author's selection of modes of character presentation will depend on whether he/she wants to describe directly or

summarize traits or simply present the character through action and speech. The character will be allowed to express his feelings dramatically, depending on the end of the story and the way in which the action of a story is to be developed.

We know the characters by learning what they have suffered and we know them, too, from what they say — the way in which characters talk, though we must recognize that, "actions speak louder than words", and the words spoken are not always or necessarily an expression of the true state of feeling or thinking.

We have already seen in an earlier chapter that the actions performed by the characters are rarely violent or dramatic in Katherine Mansfield's stories, and are very often ordinary, to the point of being — from the external point of view — trivial.

Katherine Mansfield's stories in the volume titled, *In a German Pension*, were written in Germany, when she was convalescing after an illness. They are believed to have been based on her own experiences and there is very little action in them. These stories are more in the nature of travelogues, the observations of men and manners by a sharp mind.

*Prelude* which marks the beginning of the final phase in Katherine Mansfield's development follows a very trivial incident, the shifting to a new house, by one family, though
Katherine Mansfield uses other appropriate means for unfolding the characters — among them, "the subtle variation of tense."¹

Writing in her journal about another story, Katherine Mansfield is quite explicit about her method of construction:

"What I feel the story needs so particularly is a very subtle variation of 'tense', from the present to the past and back again — and softness, lightness and the feeling that all is in bud, with a play of humour over the character."²

Katherine Mansfield was able to recapture a narrative economy that English fiction had lost since Jane Austen. In The Daughters Of The Late Colonel we find such an example in the letter of condolence Cyril writes to his aunts "Dear Boy! what a blow his sweet, sympathetic little note had been! Of course they quite understood; but it was most unfortunate."

"It would have been such a point having him", said Josephine. "And he would have enjoyed it so", said Constantia, not thinking what she was saying.³

However, as soon as he got back he was coming to tea with his aunts. Cyril to tea was one of their rare treats:

"Now, Cyril, you mustn't be frightened of our cakes. Your Auntie Low and I bought them at Buzzard's this morning. We know what a man's appetite is...."⁴

⁴ Ibid. pp. 474-75
In *At The Bay* we are drawn into the daily routine of the Burnell family. The story is of a day in their life while they play and swim and argue with each other. The children are youngsters at the family's seaside cottage and Jonathan, Linda and Stanley Burnell, all try to make adjustments with their present existence.

There is more movement (external) in *The Cup Of Tea* where Rosemary Fell's character is depicted not only through description but also through her motives and action. She is young and pretty, extremely modern and spoilt, used to getting all that she desired in life. She would buy a particular flower simply because she liked its shape and she would go to shop in Paris, "as you and I would go to Bond street." She is not a very steady woman, and brings the poor girl home just for a thrill. Her desire to play fairy godmother to the poor girl ultimately fizzes out as she is overcome by jealousy, and her desire to show that rich people had real hearts and that all women were sisters is just a momentary feeling.

Katherine Mansfield uses the device of revealing Rosemary's character through the other character's reactions. The salesman is so servile and gratified, and feels that keeping the enamel box for her would be all that any human being could ask for. Then, the husband also pampers her and although he calls her a "wasteful one", he allows her to buy the box.
Rosemary reveals her own nature when she uses words like, "She's a real pick-up", and hears herself saying to her friends, "I simply took her home with me."

Katherine Mansfield sums up her character when she gives us a direct idea of her traits:

"Warmth, softness, light, a sweet scent, all those things so familiar to her she never even thought about them, she watched that other receive. It was fascinating."

Rosemary's shallow mind is revealed as she seeks reassurance: "Am I pretty?"

Laura in The Garden Party is a young adolescent, and the story is about her development to maturity. In the beginning, the innocent Laura is revealed by her own reactions, those of the other characters and also by the revelation of her thoughts and feelings.

Laura is greatly excited about the party and this is presented both dramatically as well as from the writer's viewpoint. She skips around the place, arrangements for the party occupying her time. She holds her piece of bread and butter, and loves having to arrange things. The workmen seem very genial, and Laura is easily impressed. She greatly appreciates the workman caring for the smell of lavender. Laura tells herself that she does not care for class distinctions and chats happily with them.

1. Ibid. p. 387
Laura’s youthfulness is revealed in the paragraph where she pauses, as it were, to listen, and all the doors in the house seemed to be open. She is loving and emotional, and the two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot and the other on a silver photograph frame, make her want to kiss the former. She has the tremendous capacity to feel each emotion deeply, and the death of the workman is too much for her tender heart. Everyone in the story is kind to Laura — her brother, mother, and sisters and also the cook who gives her fancy cream-puffs to eat. Mrs. Sheridan refuses to take Laura seriously, and more or less bribes her with a beautiful hat. Laura consoles herself, “I’ll remember it again after the party’s over.”

The Garden Party by itself is just an incident, and it is the dead workman who forces Laura to think seriously about the realities of life.

Laura realizes that she is so full of the party that she had no room for anything else. It is as she nears the cottage that she feels uncertain. She tells herself that her frock and her hat are most unsuitable. She argues with herself:

"Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?"

Such a pattern of thinking reveals how unsure she is about her appearance and how nervous she is. In the end, she reaches an

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1. Ibid. p. 546
understanding of the situation, and her brother, who is close to her, understands her feelings. "He quite understood."

In *The Fly*, old Mr Woodifield's character is revealed by the writer, (author-narrator) who tells us that he was a retired man and, since his stroke, his family kept him home. Each Tuesday he would come to meet his old Boss and would cling to his last pleasures, "as the tree clings to its last leaves." He is described as staring almost "greedily" at the Boss—an indication of his loneliness—and there is frequent use of the word "old", in reference to him.

The Boss is held up in contrast—stout and rosy; strong and still at the helm, while Woodifield is a frail old figure in his muffler.

It is as the story progresses that the Boss loses his confidence and, once he is on his own, he realizes the helplessness of all human beings, which results in his drowning the fly with a blot of ink.

"He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep," at the mention of his dead son. The Boss's weakness is revealed only at the moment where he recollects what a splendid boy his son had been. There is a transition to the past, and he relives the moments he had spent together with his son.

The action here is more internal than external, the breaking down of an individual as he remembers his dead son.
In *The Stranger*, Mr. Hammond is a loving and devoted husband and this is revealed by his impatient steps, his eager nervous glances while waiting for the return of his wife: "

"He was so tremendously excited, it never entered his head not to believe that this marvellous fact meant something to them too."¹

The fact was that his wife, dear Janey, was on the boat.

The action is restricted to the arrival of the boat and with it, his wife who had spent the night with a sick man. This news, that the man had died in Janey's arms, shocks him, and in his jealousy and despair, he feels things will never be the same again. "They would never be alone together again."

It is his reaction to this episode that reveals his character as an unstable person. His enthusiastic reception of his wife at the wharf is in direct contrast to his disappointment in the end. Even his conversation is jerky and stilted as he tries to recover. There are dashes and exclamation marks and pauses, marking his thought-process. He reveals a childishness in his character, a possessive quality which inevitably makes him nervous about the loss of his wife's love.

*Honeymoon*, as the title suggests, is about a young couple on their honeymoon; and here the characters are revealed through their reactions to each other and also to

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¹ *Ibid.* p. 446
their environment. The dialogue between them reveals her as a young, romantic, newly married girl, while the boy is obviously trying to act the man of the world. They are very much in love, and Fanny acts dreamy as she wonders how good it is to be away from everybody: "With nobody to tell us to go home, or to — to order us about except ourselves?" Fanny is greatly interested in everything George has done. She is unable to look at any Villa except as a possible habitation for George and herself. Her state of mind is illuminated when she says:

"...But she'd made up her mind long before she was married that never would she be the kind of woman who interfered with her husband's pleasures."

George uses colloquial expressions of enthusiasm like "topping", and "ripping", and they both enter the hotel as if they were quite used to such a life. The writer intervenes to tell us:

"So, George, looking most dreadfully bored, and Fanny trying to look as though she'd spent years of life threading her way through strangers, followed after." (Here we have the writer's point of view). George feels he can see through the waiters who were constantly rushing around — the manager, who, "grimaced and smirked and flicked his serviette like a fin."

1. Ibid. p. 579
2. Ibid. p. 580
In their character, they are very different from each other, and their reaction to the music is very revealing. George finds the singer's voice funny, and it makes him realize that it is good to be at the beginning of things. Fanny, on the other hand, being romantic and emotional, wonders, after listening to the music, if George and she have any right to be happy, in such a cruel world. George, true to his character, almost groans, "Let's go before the old codger begins squawking again."

The Little Governess also has very little action in it apart from the Governess's trip to Munich where she is misled by a man who is actually a predatory male, wanting to seduce her. In this story, we see everything from the woman's viewpoint. Her reactions to the porter — "what a horrible man", her desire to be absolutely alone, which finally ends in her meeting the old man who strikes her as a grandfather, all only prove just how inexperienced and innocent she is. Her impressions of Munich are those of a young woman abroad for the first time and it is her inexperience which is exploited by the porter, the old man and the manager of the hotel. Her speech is that of a young and innocent girl as she says to the old man:

"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." ¹

¹ Ibid. p. 212
and her "baby heart" glows with love for her fairy grandfather.

It is in the stories which deal with violence that we have more of a dramatic presentation of characters, such as the woman in The Woman At The Store, Millie, and the poor weary child in The Child Who Was Tired and Ole Underwood.

The landscape in The Woman At The Store seems to echo the woman's loneliness and despair. The description of the dry land with dust swirling around and the slate-coloured sky help to provide the right background for her appearance with a child and a sheep dog, in the wilderness. The dog is a yellow mangy beast which scuttles away, his tail between his legs. The speech is characteristic of a woman who had led a wayward life: "I thought you was three 'awks. My kid comes running in ter me."

The men find her "a hungry bird", and speak of her as "female flesh."

The narrator is the woman herself, and it is her own speech about her life which gives us a true picture of her character.

Ole Underwood is a story where the weather and the sounds "Ah —K", the little girl's rushing to her mother, the Chinaman's shouting "Ya-Ya" all build up the grim picture of an old man who has suffered in life, and has turned mad. In the very beginning, Katherine Mansfield introduces him with a
direct description --- His eyes snapped like two sparks in a bearded face. His appearance is peculiar and he shuffles about, breaking into a run.

In *The Child Who Was Tired*, the narrator introduces the child, walking along a road that "led to nowhere" and she is slapped. It turns out to be a dream and, as the story develops, the girl decides to smother the baby which would end all her problems. There is a sequence of events here, culminating in a grim and gruesome ending. Each action brings home to the child how weary she is, and ultimately the girl kills the baby. The cruel man and the mistress seem to increase her suffering by nagging her and speaking of her as being free born.

Here, the narrator is involved with the character and seems to move along with the movement of the story. The child's thoughts are revealed at every moment as her stress increases.

Millie is also a lonely woman and she is presented to us as resigned to her fate, having almost forgotten her wedding day. She speaks the language of a farmer's wife, and it is the appearance of the young lad which awakens a soft feeling within her that she felt had died. It is the "English Johnny" who reveals this side of her nature, but in the end she reverts to her usual hard self, shouting and shrieking, "A-Ah, Arter. 'im Sid! A--a--a--hi! Ketch him, Willie, Go it! Go it! A-- ah Sid! shoot 'im down, shoot 'im."

Here we have a dramatic characterization of Millie with an omniscient author, and the dialogue and action unfold in a definite pattern. The Englishman helps to reveal Millie's craving for love and the company of others.

Katherine Mansfield was deeply interested in human psychology and wrote stories like *Ole Underwood*, *Millie*, and *Miss Brill* which may be called character-oriented, in the sense that she wrote about "people". She observed the inner life of human beings and brought them out in her stories with great vividness, but she did not attempt to provide conventional character sketches.

Another device used by Katherine Mansfield in characterization is the interior monologue and she has employed it in several stories such as *The Lady's Maid*, *The Canary*, *Prelude*, *Life Of Mr. Parker*, *Je Ne Parle Pas Francais*, *Miss Brill* and *Bliss*.

Katherine Mansfield, along with her contemporaries Joyce and Virginia Woolf, used the "stream-of-consciousness" technique, and tried to take the reader below the neatly arranged surface and show a multitude of secondary impressions. She tried to immerse herself in her character's stream of thought in order to represent his or her real nature.

In *The Lady's Maid* the maid's thought processes are fully revealed by her monologue. We learn of her childhood antics, her relationship with her grandfather, her engagement
to a man, which was broken ultimately and, most important of all, her loyalty to her mistress. The whole story comes out through her reminiscences which enable the reader to understand how attached she was to her mistress and how exceedingly gentle and self-effacing she was.

In *The Canary* we learn of a woman's deep attachment to a bird that has died, and here this story, a first person narrative, is presented entirely as a monologue. There is no audience, in the conventional sense, and no author narrator. There is the constant use of the present tense which brings the reader into close relationship with the main character. The reader is placed in a position of overhearing the whole story.

Here, as well as in *Miss Brill* and *Je Ne Parle Pas Français*, it is increasingly difficult to separate an author-narrator from the main character as narrator. In her first person narratives, Katherine Mansfield differed from the conventional method and made 'I', the teller, very much a part of the action of the story.

In *The Canary*, such a device expresses effectively the state of mind of a lonely woman who has suffered. The same kind of pattern can be traced in *Miss Brill* as she sits in the park and imagines she is part of a family. The narrator provides objective information and then we move into Miss
Brill's agitated mind, and the final thoughts in the story are Miss Brill's and not the narrator's.

The parallels and the contrasts provide a perfect understanding of her character, and the words used convey a clearer picture. Her state is not described directly. The characterization is subtle and oblique.

In The Daughters of the Late Colonel, Katherine Mansfield employs the technique of interior monologue, externalised by the use of the third person. Here, the daughters converse together, have their separate channels of thought, and we also have the author's own distancing comments. The characterization is thus subjective and at the same time moves on to outside happenings.

There is very little action as the daughters mourn their father's death, and the wayward appearance of their actions serves as a reminder of their sunless existence. The daughters are trapped and they live in continual fear of things bursting out of confined spaces. For example, the time when they enter their dead father's room — Josephine and Constantia are full of their sense of inabilities and seem to suffer a sense of deprivation.

Katherine Mansfield wrote to Gerhardt in 1921 that very few of her readers understood Josephine and Constantia;
"I lived for it but when it was finished, I confess I hoped very much that my readers would understand what I was trying to express. But very few did. They thought it was 'cruel'; they thought I was 'sneering', at Jug and Constantia; or they thought it was 'drab'. And in the last paragraph I was "poking fun at the poor old things."

Katherine Mansfield confessed that the two sisters might seem amusing but if one looked deeper there was, the letter continues, "the beauty that was hidden in their lives and to discover that was all my desire...all was meant, of course, to lead up to the last paragraph when my two flowerless ones turned with that timid gesture, to the sun."

David Daiches gave Katherine Mansfield the accolade for her skill in the characterization of the sisters, saying that it was a landmark in the history of the short story.

Linda in Prelude is often dreaming and her thought processes reveal her experiences as a married woman, her relationship with the other members of the family and her dissatisfaction. It is in her reaction to the other characters in the story that we know how she loathes anything which is crude, and is unable to manage her children who are far too active, she being frail and delicate.


2. New Literary Values. Oliver and Boyd (Edinburgh 1936) p. 105
Linda spends her time in a steamer chair in *At The Bay* she "dreamed the morning away. She did nothing."

"And, lying in her can-a chair, Linda felt so light; she felt like a leaf. Along came life like a wind and she was seized and shaken; she had to go." ¹

The children in Katherine Mansfield's stories are "real." Their characterization is done directly and through speech and action. The language they use is typical of children and their reactions to situations in life are also very realistic, as seen in Kesia and the Kelvey kids in *The Doll's House*. Their sensitive reactions are expressed vividly as, in *Prelude*, Kesia is unable to stand the sight of the dead duck:

"Put head back! Put head back!" She screamed. ...No, she pressed her face into a bone in his shoulder and clasped her arms around his neck."²

This whole episode, where the duck is beheaded by Pat, brings out different reactions among the children. Pip being a boy is delighted to hold one duck while the other is struck down with a tomahawk.

Kesia and Fenella's bewilderment on being faced with death are presented under a similar situation; that is, they both have their grandmothers with them; only Kesia is able to

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¹ The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield. Alfred A. Knopf (London 1934) p. 278

² Ibid. p. 257
ask questions about death while Fenella accepts her mother's absence. We see her suffering by the way she clings to her grandmother and her father. Then again, it is her excitement on being aboard a ship, which helps her to think of a different life with her grandparents. Being a child, she has the ability to adjust to her new situation and her new surroundings.

Katherine Mansfield was greatly influenced by symbolist writers, and she used their technique in several stories. Symbolism helped her to reveal a particular mood in her characters which could not be stated directly, that is, as revelation of states of mind. (Katherine Mansfield's use of symbolism has been discussed in detail in the sub-chapter on Symbolism.)

Katherine Mansfield thus used several devices to present her characters and it is only Bank Holiday, which can be treated as a purely descriptive piece without a story-element, as each paragraph unfolds a scene and the reader is able to get a vivid picture of what happens on such a day.

It can now be seen that the varieties of narrative strategies found in her stories are of three kinds. The conventional story as told by author narrator; the participant or observer as narrator and, the third, the protagonist as narrator.

There are also stories where the story doesn't have an observer or participant narrator. Katherine Mansfield
quite often achieves the same effect by clearly suggesting that the description or the narration belongs to the character rather than author. The story of Taking The Veil could very well have been a first person narrative for it suggests a free rendering of the romantic girl's thought in her own language rather than that of the author.

"But...fallen...in love...The feeling was unlike anything she had ever imagined before. It wasn't in the least pleasant. It was hardly thrilling. Unless you can call the most dreadful sensation of hopeless misery, despair, agony and wretchedness thrilling."\(^1\)

Here the self-dramatizing nature of the adolescent character exposes her to adult amusement, however indulgent. One is tempted to read the story in an ironically exaggerated tone, precisely because the character comes through in the manner as well as the matter. This must be considered a variant of the protagonist-narrator convention rather than as an example of the author-narrator convention.

We also have the revelation of characters through subjective perception and comparisons are drawn with "as if", "like", or "as though".

Fenella in The Voyage feels "It was like being shut up in a box with grandma", Leila in Her First Ball, a young

\(^1\) Ibid., pp. 592-93.
girl going for her first dance is thrilled and it shows as she dances; she floats away "like a flower that is tossed into a pool."

In Mr and Mrs Dye, Reggie is a young, unsure man and when he goes to propose to Annie in his agitated condition, when he rings the doorbell, he feels on hearing the wild peals: "as if he'd come to say the house was on fire."

Reginald Peacock, in Mr Reginald Peacock's Day, fancies himself a great singer and loves to sing while having a bath. He seizes the towel in a magnificent operatic gesture and sings away as he rubbed himself "as though he had been Lohengrin tipped out by an unwary swan..."

In Sun And Moon we have a child's perception: "When you stared down from the balcony at the people carrying them the flower pots looked like funny awfully nice hats, nodding up the paths."

In Je Ne Parle Pas Francais, the narrator tells us in the very beginning that he doesn't believe in the human soul: "I believe that people are like portmanteaux...packed with certain things."

Katherine Mansfield uses effective description also to indicate character type or a state of mind and in The Stranger, for example, Mr Hammond is a "stronglooking middle--

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1. Ibid. p. 378
aged man", and Mrs Fairfield's sense of satisfaction is conveyed while she surveys her kitchen: "a smile beamed on her lips."

In Bliss Bertha's youthfulness is described though she is thirty:

"she still had moments like this when she wanted to run instead of walk, to take dancing steps on and off the pavement, to bowl a hoop..."  

Then again, in Germans At Meat, the narrator of the story is accosted by Herr Rat who tells her that the English eat a massive quantity at breakfast and she states that she did not have the courage to refute it:

"All eyes were suddenly turned upon me. I felt I was bearing the burden of the nation's preposterous breakfast...I, who drank a cup of coffee while buttoning my blouse in the morning."  

And when the narrator mentions that she is a vegetarian and had no family, Fraulein Stiegelanner remarked:

"Whoever heard of having children upon vegetables? It is not possible. But you never have large families in England now. I suppose you are too busy with your suffragetteing; now, I have nine children..."  

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1. Ibid. p. 337
2. Ibid. p. 37
3. Ibid. p. 38
Katherine Mansfield's characters are credible and are able to impress upon us as people capable of joys and suffering. She has managed with great success to render the thoughts and actions of her characters coherent, and this has been possible because of her skillful use of devices of characterization in her short stories.