CHAPTER V

OTHER ASPECTS OF TECHNIQUE: SYMBOLISM; NARRATIVE DEVICES; USE OF LANGUAGE
As a writer Katherine Mansfield produced no single magnum opus. Thus it is not possible to assess her achievement or identify her distinctive qualities by concentrating on any one work. Many readers, like Leonard Woolf, feel that *In A German Pension* is her characteristic achievement. Some may find her childhood stories more worthy of attention. Then again, others, who find her social analysis to be her most notable feature, may prefer stories in which there is a good deal of supporting evidence for their contention.

It is difficult to find a central organizing principle for assessing her work. To attempt to do so might lead to neglect of one aspect or the other of her work. The best one can do is to identify the different perspectives, and to see which face they show.

The use of symbolism, in Katherine Mansfield's short stories has been insufficiently recognised. She was influenced by symbolist literature, and it was through her study of Arthur Symons's critical books that she was introduced to French Symbolist poetry, and to other such writers. She was also, to a large extent, influenced by Oscar Wilde. "The symbolist belief in the artist's ability to create himself, to become his mask, sustained her throughout her career."¹ The doctrine which Wilde propounded

in "Dorian Gray", that one could literally become whatever one wished, greatly influenced her.

Katherine Mansfield was always concerned about the "truth"..."truth of the idea", the "essential truth of the situation." She was constantly searching for the right symbols and ways for their proper handling. This problem was essentially a problem of her generation, and Katherine Mansfield was conscious of the arbitrary nature of the "classical" standard of truth in fiction. She felt that civilization was losing its stability and its connections were being viewed as irrelevant. Thus, she wanted to avoid the traditional approach and technique, and this resulted in a controlled, though personal, delicacy of response to detail. Katherine Mansfield thought that the old ideas involved a false objectivity and she recognised that there was now a shift of emphasis in the whole organization of narration... she began to believe in a personal sense of truth. She sought for greater objectivity by making art more subjective. This is a paradox which confronts us frequently in art. Katherine Mansfield found the greatest truth of the idea in the reactions of her own sensibility. Her aim was always to get completely outside her own self.

Katherine Mansfield wrote in her journal:

"Calm yourself. Clear yourself. Anything that I write in this mood will be no good; it will
be full of sediment... One must practise
to forget oneself."¹

The mind had to be a perfect glass through which objective
truth could be clearly seen.

"I can't tell the truth about Aunt Anne
unless I'm free to enter her life without
self-consciousness."²

Katherine Mansfield was a sensitive artist and she
tried to cultivate in herself the ability to see in objects
what others, not possessed of this sensitivity, could not see.
It was the observer, Katherine Mansfield, who possessed this
quality, and she was thus able to arouse emotions by a subtle
use of symbols which a casual reader might regard as merely
stray facts or objects. Her work has to be interpreted in
terms of a personal sense of value. Her sensitivity was thus
the measure of the difference between the personal and the
conventional types of interpretation of observed experience.

Katherine Mansfield had the capacity to respond to
experience in such a manner that she could extract and present
the greatest significance from a limited phase of it:

"She preferred to approach human activity from
a very limited single situation, and would then
work 'out', by her manipulation of symbols. She

1. Stead, C., K. (ed.) Katherine Mansfield - Letter and

2. Ibid.
started with a particular incident; and the universal aspects which emerged indirectly, by implication, were a result of her organization of detail.¹

Her work is like lyric poetry where conception unites subject (matter) with style (form). In The Daughters Of The Late Colonel it would be difficult to understand the idea behind the story unless we read it with an awareness of the terms employed by the writer herself.

As David Daiches aptly observes:

"Katherine Mansfield expresses a personal sense of truth embodied in a personal vision of an aspect of human behaviour. It is literature as vision rather than as fable."²

Katherine Mansfield was influenced by the belief that an abstract state of mind or feeling should be conveyed through concrete images and symbols — as such, a theme must be evoked, not described, in order to be successfully conveyed. Every Mansfield story has both a narrative as well as a symbolic function. The images are intended to work in harmony in order to create a particular mood without any direct statement. Her stories have to be read with the same attention as one would bring to the reading of a symbolist poem.

Katherine Mansfield also sought to create the "Unity of

   University of Chicago Press (Chicago 1938).

2. Ibid.
impression", advocated by Poe. Hers was a symbolist belief in the organic unity of the perfect work of art.

There are constant references in her letters and journals to the "essential form" when she writes about her work. She felt that though art must be nourished by life, it had its own laws and nature which were distinct from those of reality.

Katherine Mansfield like other symbolist writers including Pater, attempted to convey meaning in her stories by exploiting the "physical properties", of language, and sound-sense. Thus, she seems to have been trying to find a musical analogy for her prose. She wrote of Miss Brill:

"after I'd written it I read it aloud... numbers of times — just as one would play over a musical composition... trying to get it nearer and nearer to the expression of Miss Brill... until it fitted her."

We have symbolism running through much of the work in her earlier years, during which she wrote imitative pieces with a vocabulary and subject matter drawn from Symons, Pater and Wilde:

"Through her vignettes she was able to explore the possibilities of prose as a medium, experimenting with rhythm, cadence, and isocolon in a style in which the influence of Pater is especially marked."

Her main focus was on a series of images being introduced through techniques of daydreams or reverie and these in harmony evoked a mood.

The Tiredness Of Rosabel, a psychological sketch, concentrated essentially on the mood and inner feelings of Rosabel. Her use of the technique of flashbacks not only gives us additional narrative information about Rosabel but also finds a contrast between the "real" Rosabel and the Rosabel seen as a social object. Katherine Mansfield used the same kind of pattern in A Cup Of Tea where we have an indirect representation of the inner consciousness. Here the subjectivity of a woman's experience is expressed indirectly through a third person, in the past tense and this technique also seems to be taken up from the "psychological sketches", of the 1890's. Apart from the major symbols, that is the Aloe, in Prelude, the pear tree in Bliss we also have music in many of her stories which is more than a pleasing sound, for example: Her First Ball, Honeymoon, Mr Reginald Peacock's Day, and The Wind Blows.

Though the symbols do not, as a rule, stand out conspicuously in Katherine Mansfield's works, we may think of the stories as symbolic in the sense that, like all good literature, they are so in the total orchestration of the whole rather than in some particular detail. That this is so may be seen from their effect, from their suggestion of some archetypal pattern. The impression finally left is not
that of a particular person in a particular set of circumstances reacting in a particular way but of a "general truth" about the nature of the human creature or about the nature of life.

We have traces of this symbolical design in Katherine Mansfield's later works as well. For example, *The Child Who Was Tired* also moves 'inward'. Here too we find a stress on the child's feelings, her growing sense of disgust with the Frau and her babies. Here, the narrator of the story is involved and often enters the thought patterns of the child as in *The Tiredness Of Rosabel*.

As in the stories of Joyce's *Dubliners*, the forward movement of the narrative is slowed down...retarded...by the introduction of symbolist technique of parallelism and the use of a leitmotif.¹ We find this in most of her German Pension stories — *Frau Brechenmacher Attends A Wedding* and *A Birthday*. Most of the Katherine Mansfield's longer stories employ symbols effectively as may be seen in the following examples.

In *Prelude* Katherine Mansfield was able to give greater depth to her work. This can be described as being wholly symbolic because, in accordance with the symbolist theory, she conveyed abstract states of mind or feelings through concrete images. Katherine Mansfield rejected 'descriptive analysis'

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¹ Leitmotif — musical term for a theme associated throughout a piece with a person, situation or sentiment.
and was in favour of 'revelation' through the slightest
gesture. In Prelude the detail of character, setting and
scene is all towards the evocation of a mood. She always
wanted to eliminate explanations and bring out her theme
through imagery, interior monologue and scene. In Prelude
her characters are more revealed than explained. Linda's
character is revealed to us thus, (when she was a child):

"People barely touched her; she was regarded
as a cold, heartless creature, but she seemed
to have an unlimited passion for that violent
sweet thing, called life...just being alive
and able to run and climb and swim in the sea
and lie in the grass." ¹

The structure of Prelude is also symbolic as each episode is
played off against the other to form a complex pattern of
thematic parallels or contrast; for example, a woman's role
is explored through different characters, that is, Linda and
the grandmother and Beryl.

The central image of the story is "The Aloe", the title
she gave to her first draft. Its exact meaning is yet to be
agreed upon but some critics have suggested that the Aloe is
either "a phallic free or knowledge" or an image of female
sexuality, attractive to Linda because of its infrequency of
bearing. The Aloe seems to represent the fundamental life
force itself, the essential will or energy behind appearance.

¹ The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.
Alfred A. Knopf (London 1954)
Stanley and Beryl never approach it because they are incapable of understanding the deeper issues of life. Those who come near it are struck by conflicting feelings. Linda looks at it and she is reminded of the main problem in her life, the fear of child-bear. and Kesia finds it aged and ugly looking. Still they both feel that it might flower. The potential flowering of the Aloe enables us to foresee the 'flowering of the self' which occurs to Linda in At The Bay when she discovers love for her son and forgets herself.

Katherine Mansfield made an entry in her journal in 1920.

"...a self which is continuous and permanent which... thrusts a sealed but through years of darkness until, one day, the light discovers it can shake the flower free and...we are alive...we are flowering for one moment upon the earth. This is the moment which, after all, we live for...the moment of direct feeling when we are most ourselves and least personal."

It is through the symbol of the Aloe that Katherine Mansfield gives us her view of life...the aloe is like life, often cruel and unlovely, with periods of darkness but it has the power to flower which justifies its existence "which after all, we live for."

Katherine Mansfield wrote a few other stories, like Bliss where she again employed the same technique as in Prelude. This story was taken up by T.S. Eliot as an example of the
modern temper in a discussion in "After Strange Gods."
Katherine Mansfield wrote in a letter to Virginia Woolf that
she found the Prufrock poem 'after all a short story' which
suggests that she was aware of affinities of method and
content. The imagistic technique of Bliss links it to the
poetry of Eliot and the moderns.

Virginia Woolf described Bliss as "not the vision of an
interesting mind." Some readers found the story 'cruel' and
'disagreeable'. Katherine Mansfield wanted to express the
meaning of Bliss through language and imagery. The analogy
with a lyric poem is pertinent here. In this story Katherine
Mansfield effaces the narrator figure, and allows the images to
speak for themselves. The thoughts, vocabulary and the very
mode of perception of Bertha seem to merge with the writer's
voice; for example, "although Bertha young was 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,
to throw something up in the air and catch it again, or to
stand still and laugh at—nothing—at nothing simply."¹ Bertha
always seems to be performing to an imaginary audience and
there is a sense of inadequacy about her.

Katherine Mansfield wrote to Murry in a letter in 1918:

"What I meant (I hope it don't sound high
falutin') was Bertha, not being artist, was

1. **The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.**
yet artist manquee enough to realize that these words and expressions were not and couldn't be hers. They were, as it were, quoted by her, borrowed with...an eyebrow...yet she'd none of her own.¹

There are words and phrases which occur frequently like 'at nothing simply,' 'the most amusing orange coat, 'so incredibly beautiful,' and Katherine Mansfield at the same time gives us more immediate and naturally phrased perceptions, 'what creepy things cats are' in order to create an effect of incongruity. The internal structure of the story through repetition of imagery, the word-play, leads to the inevitable conclusion that there will be no change for Bertha. The last paragraph of the story shows us the technique of muted direction,

"Your lovely pear tree - pear tree - pear tree! Bertha simply ran over to the long windows. "Oh what is going to happen now?" she cried. But the pear tree was as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still."²

Here it is through the diction that meaning is released.

The shock of the experience, so sudden, so unexpected, and for which in her immaturity she was so completely unprepared, has been brought out in all its fullness. The pear-tree is almost like a suggestion that nature or the world goes serenely on, indifferent to human life.

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¹. Letters to John Middleton Murry. p. 211.
². Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.
As Katherine Mansfield pointed out, she is the 'artist
manque' of the type analysed by Thomas Mann, condemned to
suffer because she lacks initiative'.

_The Wind Blows_ describes a windy day in Katherine
Mansfield's home town of Wellington. She wrote this story
for her brother Leslie Beauchamp soon after his death. This
story is considered the most purely symbolist among her works.
Many critics have written about its power including Virginia
Woolf and Bertrand Russell. Katherine Mansfield took great
care with each detail of the story so that there was a
narrative context along with a theme which is indirectly stated.

The three major symbols of the story are concerned
with Matilda's development — her growth to maturity. Music
is associated with romantic love and Matilda's youth is
stressed and finally she begins to cry, melting under Mr
Bullen's sentimental kindness:

"Mr Bullen takes her hands. His shoulder
is there — just by her head. She leans
on it ever so little, her cheek against
the springy tweed." 1

Mr Bullen speaks of "marking time" and "waiting" and
"that rare thing, a woman:" Mr Bullen's room is a shelter
against the storm and yet there is a dead and barren look
about it. "It smells of art serge and stale smoke and
chrysanthemums."

1. _Ibid_. p. 217
It has been said that one of the most consistent themes of the story is that of solitude and the problem of "living with oneself." Matilda is constantly frightened of being on her own. It is only when her brother joins her that she is happy. Matilda looks into the mirror:

"Bogey's ulster is just like hers. Hooking the collar she looks at herself in the glass. Her face is white, they have the same excited eyes and hot lips. Ah, they know those two in the glass goodbye, dears; we shall be back soon."

We can thus see that Katherine Mansfield's brother's presence was essential in order to give her security and the strength to recall her past experiences -- the break with family and home left a great sense of insecurity within Katherine Mansfield.

The story seems to emphasize the fact that Katherine Mansfield wanted to remember always the happy times with her brother. The whole story is narrated in the present tense and this is played off against shifting time levels -- a pattern which Katherine Mansfield followed in some other stories also.

Katherine Mansfield wrote Miss Brill and was careful to maintain unity of action, time and place and yet there are narrative suppressions in Miss Brill which are not so obvious.

1. Ibid., p. 213
In this story Katherine Mansfield adhered to the symbolist principles and kept her narration objective. The events and images in the story have their own separate tale.

"The box that the fur came out of was on the bed. She unclasped the necklace quickly; quickly, without looking, laid it inside. But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying."\(^1\)

The last sentence is entirely Miss Brill's and we understand her fear and horror. We have everything conveyed in the story obliquely and through Miss Brill's interior monologue. The story is a perfect example of the technique Katherine Mansfield was striving for — oblique, and delicately suggestive.

Katherine Mansfield wrote to Murry, "I might write about a boy eating strawberries or a woman combing her hair on a windy morning and that is the only way I can ever mention (deserts of vast eternity)."

The whole story thus conveys by the sounds of the words and prose rhythms a deeper meaning. Katherine Mansfield was satisfied to some extent with the structure of this story. There are a series of contrasts and parallels which expose the inner state of the central character. There is an opposition between age and youth, solitude and community, illusion and reality.

Miss Brill is an old woman and her fur is also old, with 'dim' eyes and its nose is not at all firm. Miss Brill decides

1. Ibid. p. 554
to give it a dab of sealing wax when necessary as she dislikes the idea of old age and decay.

In the story we have several characters who act as parallels to her. Most of the people who visit the park are old. "They were odd, silent, nearly all old." There is an old couple who sit "still as statues." The single woman in the toque who has tried to remain young is very much like Miss Brill, who had made great efforts to improve her appearance. Along with these pictures of the old, Miss Brill has younger people coming to the park. They are strong and energetic and the conductor flaps his arms, the bandleman blow out, their cheeks. Little children 'swoop' and 'laugh'. The young mothers rush around and, as Miss Brill sees all this, she feels she is part of the scene. It is only when the young couple whisper to one another and she overhears them that her world collapses.

Miss Brill understands that while she was feeling one with the community, this was a play within her mind. She was creating an atmosphere around herself by the power of her imagination, which is torn apart by the cruelty of the young couple. As there was no one who give her love and affection her imagination had filled this void, but this comfortable illusion is eventually destroyed. The brief description of the sea, golden leaves, the blue sky are all objective, and they are not so important to Miss Brill. They are rather
thematic motifs. Through a combination of character and circumstance Miss Brill's happiness is destroyed and she has hardly anything to live for.

The Daughters Of The Late Colonel was one of Katherine Mansfield's favourite stories. She wrote to William Gerhardi, "The only story that satisfied me to any extent is the one you understand so well 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'" and parts of Je Ne Parle Pas. She was greatly satisfied with the story's technical aspects. She again wrote to Richard Murray:

"I have written a huge long story of a rather new kind. It's the outcome of the Prelude method — it just unfolds and opens — But I hope it's an advance on Prelude. In fact, I know it's that because the technique is stronger."

Here again she adopts the interior monologue externalized by the use of the third person and there is continuous shift of focus from the daughters conversation together, their individual thoughts, the writer's own comments. It is here that Katherine Mansfield proceeds to move from inside to outside. In the end, the perspective is entirely Josephine's and it is from her thoughts that we proceed to the happenings in the street below. The barrel-organ playing, the sunlight —

"And Josephine, too, forgot to be practical and sensible; she smiled faintly, strangely", On the Indian carpet there fell
a square of sunlight, pale red, it came and went and came —— and stayed, deepened —— until it shone almost golden.

"The Sun's out' said Josephine, as though it really mattered," and then we have the music again.

In this story the ideas are developed at random along with the daughters' thought processes.

_The Fly_ was written in Feb. 1922 and it aroused a great deal of critical commentary, in the 'Explicator' in 1940 and 'Essays in Criticism' in 1962. In the latter, F. W. Bateson and B. Shahevitch said that in _The Fly_ Katherine Mansfield had employed the technique of narrative realism using 'irrelevant descriptive detail' in order to make the external setting of the story seem 'historically authentic', thus enabling the reader to suspend his disbelief and enter the world of the story. The examples cited as irrelevant are the green chair on which Mr Woodfield sits and the detailed description of the son's photograph.

E.B. Greenwood, in a reply to this criticism, said that the detail might function metonymically; for example, the Boss' furniture might exhibit some characteristic of the owner such as his materialism.

Many others have felt that the story has allegorical and symbolical aspects. What has to be seen in _The Fly_ is that it functions both on literal and symbolic levels —— it
is typical of Katherine Mansfield's fictional technique. The 'greenness', of the chair is in keeping with Woodifield's natural character and the photograph is crucial for thematic development as it shows us the difference between memory by rote, and natural grief, the latter having replaced the former. In this story the symbolist patterning is essential for shaping the form but Katherine Mansfield seems to be unhappy about it. She wrote in a letter that she 'hated' writing it. There is a possibility that the symbol of the fly is too inflexible for the development of the story. The story lacks the richness displayed in Katherine Mansfield's other stories with similar themes, for example, *The Garden Party* (change in tone and shifting perspectives). The metaphysical equation in *The Fly* between the Boss as he plays with the fly and the gods, playing with the lives of human beings "for their sport", seems to have been in Katherine Mansfield's mind as she thought up the story. *The Fly* seems to have been too consciously written. Katherine Mansfield often said she had a tendency to 'cleverness', and *The Fly* might have been created during such a moment.

In her Journal on 27th October 1921 Katherine Mansfield mentioned *The Doll's House*, under the original title of "N.Z. At Karori. The little lamp. I seen it, and then they were silent."  

1. Journal. p. 268
The conclusion of the story must have been in her mind as she noted this point for Else nudges her sister and tells her, "I seen the little lamp, then both were silent once more."

The Sun which is generally used as a symbol of life in Katherine Mansfield's stories is here symbolised under a new shape, that of the lamp. The lamp is the central reality, symbol of light and in its toy form symbol of childish awakening.

"The little lamp is not only light but art, the central reality amidst the material splendours of the doll's house...It stands as a symbol against all the materialist values of the stiffly sprawling parents, seen by the few, but a reward all the more intense for its inaccessibility and the rarity with which it is achieved."

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Katherine Mansfield was a very conscious and conscientious artist, and was concerned to capture the exact shade, the very texture of an experience and that everything in a story must match and blend, and orchestrate together. That she set high standards for herself and that she was her own severest critic is obvious from her comments, more often expressive of dissatisfaction than of approval.

(Artistic Purity)

"Until these things are judged and given each its appointed place in the whole scheme, they have no meaning in the world of art", thus wrote Katherine Mansfield protesting the method of Dorothy Richardson.

Language, according to Bergson, is an instrument of the intelligence, a crystallization of mobile thoughts and emotions. It is only a bold writer who can capture the fluid reality by employing words in new arrangements and combinations — and this Katherine Mansfield has been able to do in her stories.

It is through language that a writer's conception or visualization of the world of people and events comes alive to the reader. The purposes for which language is used in a story may broadly be classified as narration, description and dialogue; and we may say that the qualities required for
effective evocation are swiftness in narration, vividness in
description of persons and events, and an ease in dialogue.
We may add tone to these features which colours all aspects
of the language. Interesting effects can be created not only
by a tone matching the recital but by varying it, as Poe says,
in his Philosophy of Composition, using an unusual tone for
presenting common-place events or a common place tone for
unusual events.

We can see Katherine Mansfield's skill in the use of
language in 'Her First Ball.' The narration in this story
indicates the flurry of activity when the dance was about to
begin:

"At that moment the band began playing; the
fat man disappeared. He was tossed away on
a great wave of music that came flying over
the gleaming floor, breaking the groups up
into couples, scattering them, sending them
spinning..."

The series of present participles, scattering, sending,
spinning, all give the feeling of swiftness, and this is
again conveyed in a sentence such as: "And they went through
the swing doors, down the passage to the supper room."

Here the prepositions through, down and to are placed
in positions calling for some stress.

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1. The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.
We have similar examples of language suggestive of rapid movement as in *The Garden Party*:

"Away they skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the verandah and into the porch," and, again in *Prelude*, as Kezia sees the bull which she did not like:

"She had walked away back through the orchard, up the grassy slope, along the path, by the lace bark tree and so into the spread tangled garden."

This is a favourite type of sentence construction as there are several examples of it in her stories. We see this effect, too, in the description of the big dray as it:

"rattled into unknown country, along new roads, with high clay banks on either side, up steep hills, down into bushy valleys, through wide shallow rivers."

For description Katherine Mansfield adopted both objective and impressionistic styles. The happy bustle of anticipation and preparation before the ball begins is beautifully brought out:

"Here the crowd was so great there was hardly any space to take off their things; the noise was deafening. Two benches on either side were stacked high with wraps. Two old women in white aprons ran up and down tossing fresh armfuls. And

1. Ibid. p. 238
2. Ibid. p. 225
everybody was pressing forward trying to get at the little dressing-table and mirror at the far end.¹

And again:

"A great quivering jet of gas lighted the ladies room. It couldn't wait, it was dancing already. ...Dark girls, fair girls were patting their hair, tying ribbons again, tucking handkerchiefs down the fronts of their bodies, smoothing marble white gloves. And because they were all laughing it seemed to Leila that they were all lovely."²

These sentences have a number of words ending in "ing", giving the feeling of animation to the scene.

The description of Leila's dance lessons at the boarding school is obviously from her memory but may, in the main, be classified as objective. The shabbygentle, depressing and even forbidding quality of that situation is conveyed by a series of swift pictures, and it provides a contrast with the exciting atmosphere at Leila's first ball:

"Every Saturday afternoon the boarders were hurried off to a little corrugated iron mission hall where Miss Eccles (of London) held her "select" classes. But the difference between that dusty-smelling hall — with calico texts on the walls, the poor terrified

¹. Ibid. p. 513
². Ibid. p. 513
little woman in a brown velvet toque with rabbit's ears thumping the cold piano, Miss Eccles poking the girl's feet with her long white wand — and this was so tremendous...

The scene at the railway station as the young governess in, The Little Governess, boards the train:

"People began to assemble on the platform. They stood together in little groups talking; a strange light from the station lamps painted their faces almost green. A little boy in red clattered up with a huge tea wagon and leaned against it, whistling and flicking his boots with a serviette. A woman in a black alpaca apron pushed a barrow with pillows for hire... wreaths of white smoke floated up from somewhere and hung below the roof like misty vines."

One may notice, too, the vividness gained by the attention to colour as well as to movement — the green looking faces, the red clothes of the boy, the woman's black alpaca apron, the white smoke.

Katherine Mansfield seems at her best where the description is impressionistic. In Her First Ball having an eager, excited and somewhat nervous girl as her protagonist, the author is able to describe the outer scene through Leila's impressions, which serve simultaneously to reveal her feelings and attitudes. (This as noticed earlier is one of Katherine

1. Ibid. p. 515
2. Ibid. p. 203
Mansfield's devices of characterization. We may see both
the external and internal situations so skillfully presented
in the opening paragraph of the story:

"She sat back in her own little corner of it
(the carriage) and the bolster on which her
hand rested felt like the sleeve of an unknown
man's dress suit; and away they bowled, past
waltzing lamp-posts and houses and fences and
trees."\(^1\)

Then, we are presented the details which caught
Leila's attention:

"But every single thing was so new and exciting
...Meg's tuberoses, Jose's long loop of amber,
Laura's little dark head pushing above her
white fur like a flower through snow."\(^2\)

And again, Leila comes out as clearly as the scene in
the following description:

"The road was bright on either side with
moving fan-like lights and on the pavement
gay couples seemed to float through the air,
little satin shoes chased each other like birds."\(^3\)

There are many other stories which have this kind of
subjective impressionistic kind of description.

In *The Child Who Was Tired* the poor, weak, harassed
girl is weary of the housework and:

\(^1\) *Ibid.* p. 512
\(^2\) *Ibid.* p. 512
\(^3\) *Ibid.* p. 513
"The child drew a pail of water, turned up her sleeves frowning the while at her arms, as if to scold them for being so thin, so much like little stunted twigs, and began to mop over the floor."

In Pension Seguin the lady who requires a room is uncertain of her situation and she stammers in a ridiculous fashion:

"As though a pack of Russian wolves were behind me, rather than five flights of beautifully polished French stairs."

and as she moves into the salon which is long and narrow, there are white mats and white walls with white curtains:

"You would have thought that all the long years of Madame's virginity had been devoted to the making of white mats — that her childish voice had lisped its numbers in crochet work stitches. I did not dare to begin counting them. They rained upon me from every possible place, like impossible snowflakes."

In The Voyage, the little girl Fenella, who is about to embark on a voyage, carries clasped to her, her grandma's umbrella, and "the handle, which was a swan's head, kept giving her shoulder a sharp little peck as if it too wanted her to hurry."

The outside atmosphere is described thus:

1. Ibid. p. 93
2. Ibid. p. 148
3. Ibid. p. 148
"Men, their caps pulled down, their collars turned up, swung by; a few women all muffled scurried along, and one tiny baby, only his little black arms and legs showing out of a white woely shawl, was jerked along angrily between his father and mother; he looked like a baby fly that had fallen into the cream."¹

The reactions of a child out for the first time on the boat are beautifully presented as the small cabin seems: "like being shut up in a box with grandma."

One of the delights offered by a Katherine Mansfield story is the beauty of description...landscape or seascape, garden or fairground or people...their features, their dress, their movements...in what may be called factual imagery.

In At The Bay the beach is shown to be deserted as the tide is out and:

"The Sun beat down, beat down hot and fiery on the fine sand, baking the grey and blue and black and white veined pebbles. It sucked up the little drop of water that lay in the hollow of the curved shells; it bleached the pink convolvulus that threaded through and through the sand hills."²

And she moves on to describe:

"Over there on the weed-hung rocks that looked at low tide like shaggy beasts come down to

1. Ibid. p. 525
2. Ibid. p. 280
the water to drink, the sunlight seemed to spin like a silver coin dropped into each of the small rock pools. They danced, they quivered and minute ripples laved the porous shores. Looking down, bending over, each pool was like a lake with pink and blue houses clustered on the shores. And Oh! the vast mountainous country behind those houses — the ravines, the passes, the dangerous creeks and fearful tracks that led to the water's edge. ¹

Here the description is not only vivid but, as I.A. Gordon has remarked, we are also able to see the scenery through the eyes of Kesia who has yet to appear and to whose fanciful mind everything appears larger than life... The rocks like great beasts, the pool clustered around with 'houses', backed by mountains, and the sense of fear and danger that a child might experience.

In Bank Holiday a series of pictures build up a scene of stalls and men and women roaming around:

"The young ones are larking, pushing each other on and off the pavement, dodging, nudging; the old ones are talking." ²

And again:

"The only ones who are quiet are the ragged children. They stand, as close up to the musicians as they can get, their hands

1. Ibid, p. 282
behind their backs, their eyes big.
Occasionally a leg hops, an arm wags. A
tiny staggerer, overcome, turns round
twice, sits down solemn and then gets
up again."1

There is the lemonade stall where a whole "tank of it
stands on a table covered with a cloth and lemons like blunted
fishes blob in the yellow water."

The children cluster round the ice-cream cart and:

"little tongues lick, lick round the cream
crumpets, round the squares. The cover is
lifted, the wooden spoon plunges in; one
shuts one's eyes to feel it, silently scrunching."2

We have the shrivelled ageless Italian waiting to tell
your future and Professor Leonard, who is there from London to
tell your fortune from your face: "And he stands smiling
encouragement like a clumsy dentist."

Katherine Mansfield was fond of flowers, and Violets
and Arum lilies are mentioned in several stories. Each flower
is described with an eye for detail, as Kesia in Prelude goes
"into the spread tangled garden." The flowers seem real as
their beauty is revealed:

"The Camellias were in bloom, white and
crimson and pink and white striped with

1. Ibid. p. 437
2. Ibid. p. 438
flashing leaves. You could not see a leaf on the syringa bushes for the white clusters. The roses were in flower...gentlemen's button-hole roses, little white ones, but far too full of insects to hold under anyone's nose, pink monthly roses with a ring of fallen petals round the bushes, cabbage roses on thick stalks, moss roses always in bud, pink smooth beauties opening curl on curl, red ones so dark they seemed to turn black as they fell, and a certain exquisite cream kind with a slender red stem and bright scarlet leaves.1

Apart from the roses:

"There were clumps of fairy bells, and all kinds of geraniums and there were little trees of verbena and bluish lavender bushes and a bed of pelargoniums with velvet eyes and leaves like moths' wings. There was a bed of nothing but mignonette and another of nothing but pansies...borders of double and single daisies and all kinds of little tufty plants she had never seen before."2

In The Garden Party in the opening paragraph we have a day,

"Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud." The roses are described here as being the only flowers which impress people at garden parties:

1. Ibid. p. 239
2. Ibid. p. 239
"...the only flowers that people are certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes literally hundreds had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels."

Katherine Mansfield's description of people reveals the precision with which she writes, and there is nothing nebulous or vague. There is a sureness of touch in her description and Mrs Harry Kember in At The Bay is shown to be different from other women:

"She was a long, strange-looking woman with narrow hands and feet. Her face, too was long and narrow and exhausted looking; even her fair curled fringe looked burnt out and withered. She was the only woman at the Bay who smoked and she smoked incessantly, keeping the cigarette between her lips while she talked and only taking it out when the ash was so long you could not understand why it did not fall. When she was not playing bridge -- she played bridge everyday of her life -- she spent her time lying in the full glare of the sun...Her lack of vanity; her slang, the way she treated men as though she was one of them and the fact that she didn't care two pence about her house and called her servant, Gladys 'Glad Eyes', was disgraceful."

Again, the picture of an old tired char-woman is presented in Life of Ma Parker, thus:

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1. Ibid. p. 534
2. Ibid. p. 273
"Ma Parker bent her head and hobbled off to the kitchen clapping the old fish bag that held her cleaning things, and an apron and a pair of felt shoes... Ma Parker drew the two jetty spears out of her toque and hung it behind the door. She unhooked her worn jacket and hung that up too. Then she tied her apron and sat down to take off her boots. To take off her boots or to put them on was an agony to her, but it had been an agony for years. In fact, she was so accustomed to the pain that her face was drawn and screwed up ready for the twinge before she'd so much as untied the laces."

The woman in The Women At The Store is old and jaded:

"Certainly her eyes were blue, and what hair she had was yellow, but ugly. She was a figure of fun. Looking at her, you felt there was nothing but sticks and wires under the pinafore—her front teeth were knocked out, she had red pulpy hands, and she wore on her feet a pair of dirty Bluchers."

Ole Underwood, Stanley in Prelude, and Woodifield in The Fly are all described with the same precision and love for detail. Katherine Mansfield's loving or satirically keen observation contributes to her skill in presenting places or people and, as it happens quite often, the recounting of

1. Ibid. p.484
2. Ibid. p. 126
external details serves to create an atmosphere or to give a
cue to the personality of a character.

In *Mr Reginald Peacock's Day*, Reginald is a vain,
pompous man who feels he is a great artist and, as he sings
in the bath, he listens to the fine quality of his voice;

"and upon the word 'wedded', he burst into such
a shout of triumph that the toothglass on the
bathroom shelf trembled and even the bath tap
seemed to gush stormy applause..."¹

In *The Swing Of The Pendulum*, Viola is unable to pay
the rent and the lady threatens to throw her out. With this
she walks out and Viola is filled with disgust for: "the
smell of her...like stale cheese and damp washing."²

And the landlady leaves:

"She bounced out of the room banging the door
so that it shook and rattled as though it had
listened to the conversation and fully
sympathised with the old hag."³

Again, in *The Woman At The Store* the grim violent
atmosphere is built up as the narrator tells us:

"There is no twilight in our New Zealand days,
but a curious half-hour when everything
appears grotesque...it frightens...as though
the savage spirit of the country walked abroad
and sneered at what it saw."⁴

¹ *Ibid.* p. 385
³ *Ibid.* p. 110
In *The Singing Lesson* Miss Meadows laments, as her lover Basil jilts her:

"She tapped the music stand twice. Down came Mary on the opening chord; down came all those left hands, beating the air, and in chimed those young, mournful voices... Every note was a sigh, a sob, a groan of awful mournfulness."¹

In the end when she receives the telegram in which she gets reconciled to Basil the very words change from 'down' to 'up', as a happy Miss Meadows steps over to the piano:

"On the wings of hope, of love, of joy Miss Meadows sped back to the music hall up the aisle, up the step, over to the piano."²

The language is swift moving and suggests hope and happiness,

Katherine Mansfield had such mastery over her craft that she could convey precisely what she observed, as she wrote of the waiter in *The Little Governess*:

"His little eyes, like currants nearly popped out of his doughy cheeks."³

Again in *Violet* the scenery is described thus:

"...a wind shook and swung the trees; the scent of leaves was on the lifting air. The houses lining the avenue were small and white. Charming

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1. Ibid. p. 493
2. Ibid. p. 496
3. Ibid. p. 210
chaste-looking little houses, showing glimpses of lace and knots of ribbon, for all the world like country children in a row, about to play 'Nuts and May',"1

And in An Indiscreet Journey the narrator is confronted by the Commissariat of Police at the station during wartime. She wonders if he will let her pass. The effect of uncertainty and nervousness is created as we are told:

"I conjured up my sweetest early-morning smile and handed it with the papers. But the delicate thing fluttered against the horn spectacles and fell."2

A woman in the carriage reading a letter (in the same story) is observed:

"Slowly, slowly, she sipped a sentence."3

The very words seem to indicate the pauses. The deliberately mixed metaphor beautifully brings out the impression of her savouring the experience of reading the letter; the alliteration gives a rhythm to Katherine Mansfield's own sentence.

The description of music is to be found in several stories and in Honeymoon, once the man begins to sing:

1. Ibid. p. 134
2. Ibid. p. 184
3. Ibid. p. 184
"Nothing was heard except a thin faint voice, the memory of a voice, singing something in Spanish. It wavered, beat on, touched the high notes, fell again, seemed to implore, to entreat, to beg for something and then the tune changed and it was resigned, it bowed down, it knew it was denied."\(^1\)

This beautiful example gives a very subjective and sensitive description of the music. Each word has been carefully chosen to give the exact effect.

Then, in *Bank Holiday* the crowd which gathered was held together by the music:

"The loud, bold music holds them together in one big knot for a moment."\(^2\)

Then:

"the music breaks into bright pieces, and joins together again, and again breaks, and is dissolved, and the crowd scatters..."\(^3\)

Katherine Mansfield is excellent in capturing and presenting sounds, the sound-echoing words and expressions.

Another feature to be found in Katherine Mansfield's writing is her humour.

In *Prelude* the maid is compared to the cooked duck

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1. Ibid. p. 533
2. Ibid. p. 437
3. Ibid. p. 437
"It was hard to say which of the two, Alice or the duck, looked the better basted; they were both such a rich colour and they both had the same air of gloss and strain. But Alice was fiery red and the duck a Spanish Mahogany."

In The Sister Of The Baroness Katherine Mansfield makes fun of young people, clearly indicating that they are rather absurd, through the extravagance of their expressions. Thus, there is the conversation between the student from Bonn and the Sister of the Baroness:

"What small hands you have", said the student from Bonn, "They are like white lilies lying in the pool of your black dress." Her high born reply was what interested me. Sympathetic murmur only.

"May I hold one?"

I heard two sighs — presumed he held — he had rifled those dark waters of a noble blossom.

"Look at my great fingers beside yours",

"But they are beautifully kept," said the sister of the Baroness shyly. The minx! Was love then a question of manicure?

The very choice of smiles and words is very apt, creating a mock-heroic air about the whole thing.

1. Ibid. p. 254
2. Ibid. p. 49
In *Something Childish But Natural* we are told that Henry was a great fellow for books, and this is further emphasised as the writer mentions:

"...by his nice choice of phrase when discussing them with one or another book seller you would have thought that he had taken his pap with a tome propped before his nurse's bosom."¹

There is wit to be found in descriptions such as that of a large Johnny cake which looks "like an advertisement for somebody's baking powder."

A lady in *Raina Turia* stands out among the artificial palms thus:

"...her white neck and powdered face topped with masses of gleaming orange hair...like an over-ripe fungus bursting from a thick, black stem."²

Katherine Mansfield's stories are very rich in similes. She was a keen observer and there is nothing abstract about her work. Her similes evoke a vivid image in the reader's mind all derived from a writer who always wanted to be correct. A few examples would illustrate this quality:

In *The Tiredness Of Rosabel* when Rosabel faces the stairs — four flights — she feels that:

2. *Ibid.* p. 159
"it was very like bicycling up a steep hill but there was not the satisfaction of flying down the other side..."\(^1\)

_Frau Fischer_ tells the narrator in _Frau Fischer_ that:

"sea-captains are subject to terrible temptations, and they are as inflammable as tenor singers."\(^2\)

A notice tied on a stag's head in a hotel-room is described in _A Modern Soul_: "It graced him like a red and white dinner bib for days."

In _Violet_ the sound of water is described:

"The water sounded like a half-forgotten tune, half shy, half laughing."\(^3\)

And there are nurses sitting in the park minding the babies:

"On stone benches nurse-maids in white clogs and stiffy white caps chattered and wagged their heads like a company of cockatees..."\(^4\)

The sound of a train travelling in the night in _An Indiscreet Journey_ is described thus: "like a big beast shuffling in its sleep."

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1. Ibid. p. 4
2. Ibid. p. 55
3. Ibid. p. 157
4. Ibid. p. 155
And again, sentences fly away "like little narrow ribbons."

The flower, clematis, is described in Prelude as surprised-looking:

"Each flower was the size of a small saucer with a centre like an astonished eye fringed in black."

The Aloe which plays a major part in Prelude as Mrs Fairfield and Linda look at it:

"seemed to ride upon it (the grassy bank) like a ship with the ears lifted."

Leech in his Style in Fiction, shows how a linguistic analysis and literary appreciation can be interrelated, and illuminated, through the linguistic study of literary style. He takes "stylistics" to be the study of language in the service of literary ends and has given certain categories for a method of analysis, among which we have not only grammatical categories, /lexical categories, but also figures of speech and cohesion and context.

As Katherine Mansfield's stories are rich in metaphors, alliteration and rhythm, which give the effect of poetry and yet manage to retain a prose quality, we can select some features for analysis and try to illuminate her style.

1. Ibid. p. 256
2. Ibid. p. 257
Katherine Mansfield has an easy conversational approach and her sentences seem to flow out in a smooth pattern. She wrote her short stories with the same concentration as one might write lyrical poetry, and was able to communicate to the reader the feeling of human situations.

Katherine Mansfield exhibits a poet's skill both in her ready perception of analogy and her sensitiveness to the sound of language. As she was highly self-critical as an artist, she took great care to see that the language fitted the context of sense and sound in the larger context of the paragraph. As in a lyrical poem, her sentences have a rhythmic quality to them.

Some examples of alliteration may be noticed:

The "sky was slate colour, and the sounds of the lark reminded me of slate pencils scraping over its surface."¹

"...silence spinning its soft endless web."²

"...fought fearfully for the prizes."³

"...And lying in her cane chair Linda felt so light. She felt like a leaf."⁴

"The Sea seemed to sound differently..."⁵

The pairings of like-sounding words are also found, which have an emotively reinforcing effect, such as:

1. Ibid. P. 124
2. Ibid. P. 235
3. Ibid. P. 272
4. Ibid. P. 278
5. Ibid. P. 274
"Rescuing and restoring"¹

"haze of heat"²

"small, serene"³

"bright, blind"⁴

Then again, certain sound effects (onomatopoeic) are also created, and the sounds of life are almost spelt out. There are innumerable examples in her stories:

"Bang, Whack ! Whack ! Bang."⁵
(the broom fell upon wretched rugs and carpets).

"Sssh came from the eggs. They were in a pan."⁶

"H-e-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-ee shrieked the train."⁷

"Splish-splosh, splish-splosh"⁸(water)

"...Heard a man clatter on the cobble and the jing jang of pails he carried. And now Hoo-hor-hor! Hoo-Ho-hoe!"⁹ as he worked the pump.

There is a use of the device of repetition, sometimes more than once, to intensify the effect and there are several examples of this in her stories:

"Soon we were passing the vegetable gardens, passing behind houses, passing the servants beating the carpets."¹⁰

1. Ibid. p. 279
2. Ibid. p. 281
3. Ibid. p. 299
4. Ibid. p. 298
5. Ibid. p. 154
6. Ibid. p. 186
7. Ibid. p. 208
8. Ibid. p. 266
9. Ibid. p. 324
10. Ibid. p. 184
"It ached, ached."¹

"What have I done, what have I done."²

"Indeed she was bored, bored."³

"How mournful, how mournful."⁴

Katherine Mansfield's sentences make one feel as if her impressions are tumbling out as fast as she can get them on paper. We see that she achieves an economy and rapidity of movement (but economy is a relative term). She often repeats an adjective or an adverb or preposition to achieve balance or emphasis:

"The world is cruel, terribly cruel."⁵

She also gives the impression of wanting to refine on the first formulation or to give a fuller picture of the phenomenon through slightly differing expressions, one after another. Though she does not write the convoluted sentences of the Henry James type, she still seems to be concerned to convey a phenomenon in its fullness through this device. The advantage in this case is that the language flows on instead of turning upon itself and slowing down the movement. For example:

1. Ibid. p. 430
2. Ibid. p. 489
3. Ibid. p. 295
4. Ibid. p. 429
5. Ibid. p. 395
"Something boisterous, reckless, full of fire, full of passion was tossed in the air."¹ (about the tune played by the musicians).

"Stanley gave a kick, a lunge and struck out."²

"Girls of all ages...hurried, skipped, fluttered by;"³

"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."⁴

"Every note was a sigh, a sob, a groan of awful mournfulness."⁵

As pointed out earlier, Katherine Mansfield found one of her favourite types of sentence construction where the language almost moves along with the movement of the characters. For example:

"A figure...cleared the stile, rushed through the tussock grass, into the hollow, staggered up the sandy hillock, and raced for dear life over the big porous stones, over the cold wet pebbles, on to the hard sand that gleamed like oil."⁶

1. Ibid. p. 582  
2. Ibid. p. 266  
3. Ibid. p. 491  
4. Ibid. p. 564  
5. Ibid. p. 493  
6. Ibid. p. 266
"...so she had walked away back through the orchard, up the grassy slope, along the path by the lace bark tree and so into the spread tangled garden."¹

"Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch."²

"The iron gates were open. They dashed through and up the drive, and round the island, stopping at the exact middle of the verandah."³

As we can see, she has made frequent use of prepositions to build up a graphic picture.

A few inversions are found in her stories to create a dramatic effect but they don’t seem deliberate:

"Away we jolted, and rattled like three little dice that life had decided to have a fling with."⁴

"There was a cold bitter taste in the air, and the new-lighted lamps looked sad. Sad were the lights in the houses opposite."⁵

"...And away they bowled, past waltzing lamp-posts and houses and fences and trees."⁶

1. Ibid. p. 238
2. Ibid. p. 336
3. Ibid. p. 234
4. Ibid. p. 367
5. Ibid. p. 586
6. Ibid. p. 512
Katherine Mansfield often gives a quick series of
images, saving the necessity of having a number of sentences
and thus slowing down the speed or tempo:

"Hide it somewhere...she glanced all around
the room...there was nowhere safe from
them. Except the top of the cupboard...but
even standing on a chair she could not
throw so high...it fell back on top of her
every time...the horrid hateful thing."1

We can see that the loose parenthetical construction,
with its staccato effect, conveys the agitation or even panic
very effectively.

And again, agitation is expressed in the following
example:

"Do you suppose that when you asked me to pin
your flowers into your evening gown...when you
let me come into your bedroom when Victor was
out while you did your hair...when you pretended
to be a baby and let me feed you with grapes...
when you have run to me and searched in all my
pockets for a cigarette...knowing perfectly well
where they were kept...going through every pocket
just the same...I knowing too...I keeping up the
farse...do you suppose that now you have finally
lighted your bonfire you are going to find it a
peaceful and pleasant thing...you are going to
prevent the whole house from burning."2

1. Ibid. p. 33
2. Ibid. p. 122
We may notice here both the aptness of such a construction as well as its similarity to certain "memory" descriptions as in Lamb's _Old China._

There are many such paragraphs in the story, _A Blaze._

Often a picture is built up with the use of dashes as in _The Tiredness of Rosabel_:

"The fire had been lighted in her boudoir, the curtains drawn; there was a great pile of letters waiting her -- invitations for the opera, dinners, balls, a weekend on the river, a motor tour -- she glanced through them listlessly as she went upstairs to dress."¹

The dashes express Edna's uncertainty in _Something Childish But Natural_, and her thoughts rush out:

"Oh I do hate hurting you so. Everytime you ask me to let --- let you hold my hand or --- or kiss me I could kill myself for not doing it --- for not letting you---It's not that I'm frightened of you --- its not that --- its only a feeling ... somehow, I feel if once, we did that --- you know --- held each others hands and kissed it would be all changed --- and I feel we wouldn't be free like we are --- we'd be doing something secret."²

The dashes are also used for suggesting confusion:

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¹. Ibid. p. 7
². Ibid. p. 174
"I'm --- I'm most awfully sorry ... I'm sure I gave you a fright, and just now I was staring at you --- but that's only an awful fault of mine; I'm a terrible starker! If you'd like me to explain --- how I got in here --- not about the staring, of course", he gave a little laugh --- "I will."!

There are dashes in The Swing Of The Pendulum, in fact in --- many paragraphs, which seem to indicate the pauses in Viola's train of thought, without giving a positive break to them.

The sentences are generally short and the longer sentences give the effect of being a series of short ones as they are separated either by semicolons, or commas or put together with parenthetical marks separating them or connected by 'and'. One almost feels the rapid brush strokes of an artist building up a picture before the reader.

In Carnation, M. Hugo's voice is described thus:

"He would begin, softly and calmly, and then gradually his voice would swell and vibrate and gather itself together, then it would be pleading and imploring and entreating, and then rising, rising, triumphant, until it burst into light, as it were, and then --- gradually again, it ebbed, it grew soft and warm and calm and died down into nothingness."²

1. Ibid. p. 167
2. Ibid. p. 323
Again, in *The Man Without A Temperament*, the warm day is described thus:

"The Sun was still high. Every leaf, every flower in the garden lay open, motionless, as if exhausted, and a sweet, rich, rank smell filled the quivering air, out of the thick, fleshy leaves of a cactus there rose an aloe stem loaded with pale flowers that looked as though they had been cut out of butter; light flashed upon the lifted spears of the palms; over a bed of scarlet waxen flowers some black insects "zoom-zoomed", a great gaudy creeper, orange splashed with jet, sprawled against a wall."

Adjectives are frequent in her sentences, and they refer to physical, that is, visual, tactile and gustatory, auditory attributes; and great emphasis is laid on colour. The following are a few examples of this quality:

"Everything about her was sweet, pale, like honey. You would not have been surprised to see a bee caught in the tangles of that yellow hair."  

"Then the sun pushed by a heavy fold of grey cloud and spread a warm yellow light over everything."

The colour red seems to run throughout the story, *Ole Underwood*, and is almost a reminder of the violence present from the beginning to the end.

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1. Ibid. p. 417
2. Ibid. p. 491
3. Ibid. p. 97
In the next two examples, we can understand how consciously Katherine Mansfield chose her words so that a living picture seems to rise before our eyes.

*(Jar of Hyacinths)* "It stood on the table exuding a sickly perfume from its plump petals. There were even rich buds unfolding, and the leaves shone like oil."¹

"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 could feel the silky, sticky petals, the stem, the hairy like gooseberry skin, the rough leaf and the tight glazed bud."²

Then again, in *The Tiredness of Rosabel* we have the following lines:

"There was a sickening smell of warm humanity—-it seemed to be coming out of everybody in the bus."³

There is an anticipatory structure to many of her sentences:

"While the water was heating, Ma Parker began sweeping the floor."⁴

"But hurry as they might, by the time they had reached the tarred palings of the boys playground, the bell had begun to jangle."⁵

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1. Ibid. p. 110
2. Ibid. p. 234
3. Ibid. p. 3
4. Ibid. p. 486
5. Ibid. p. 572
Another feature which is frequent is that of (Omission of Elements) "Ellipsis", and a few of her stories are built around it, such as The Canary, as also the The Lady's Maid and the story Two Tuppenny Ones Please, in which the reader has to imagine the questions asked of the friend.

As there is only one story of this kind, Katherine Mansfield might have been trying out a different and unusual way of experimenting:

"...who are they?"
"...Brother and Sister."\(^1\)

"She saw again his slim hands counting the money into hers... Rosabel suddenly pushed the hair back from her face, her forehead was hot... If these slim hands could rest one moment... the luck of that girl!"\(^2\)

In many of Katherine Mansfield's stories the opening paragraph is very effective. It not only introduces the theme but also sets the mood and tone and atmosphere of the story.

The Woman At The Store opens on a hot day and suggests the bleakness and violence which is to be introduced:

"All that day the heat was terrible. The wind blew close to the ground; it rooted among the tussock grass, slithered along

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1. Ibid. p. 219
2. Ibid. p. 6
the road, so that the white pumice dust spiraled in our faces, settled and sifted over us and was like a dry-skin itching for growth on our bodies...Hundreds of larks shrilled; the sky was slate colour and the sound of the lark reminded me of slate pencils scraping over its surface. There was nothing to be seen but wave after wave of manuka grass, patched with purple orchids and manuka bushes covered with thick spider webs.\(^1\)

In the passage above, the sounds are repeated in order to intensify the experience of the heat, the dryness and, the dust.

Mr and Mrs Dovy is a story in which the opening lines introduce us to the apprehensive hero:

"Of course he knew...no man better...that he hadn't a ghost of a chance, he hadn't an earthly. The very idea of such a thing was preposterous.\(^2\)

And the child in The Little Girl, who is frightened of her father, who seems so big to her...

"To the little girl he was a figure to be feared and avoided. Every morning before going to business he came into the nursery and gave her a perfumatory kiss to which she responded with, 'Goodbye, father'.\(^3\)

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1. Ibid. p. 124
2. Ibid. p. 497
3. Ibid. p. 138
Again the opening lines in *Taking The Veil* introduce us to Edna's desparation and unhappiness:

"It seemed impossible that anyone should be unhappy on such a beautiful morning. Nobody was, decided Edna, except herself."¹

In *The Singing Lesson* Miss Meadows is upset, and we are aware of it from the very beginning of the story:

"With despair...cold, sharp despair...buried deep in her heart like a wicked knife, Miss Meadows, in cap and gown and carrying a little baton, trod the cold corridors that led to the music hall."²

The first paragraph and the last in *The Child Who Was Tired*, are linked together with the theme in the middle. In the first paragraph:

"She was just beginning to walk along a little white road with tall black trees on either side, a little road that led to nowhere, and where nobody walked at all..."³

In the last paragraph:

"She heaved a long sigh, then fell back on to the floor, and was walking along a little white road with tall black trees on either side, a little road, that led to nowhere, and where nobody walked at all..."⁴

¹ Ibid. p. 592
² Ibid. p. 491
³ Ibid. p. 91
⁴ Ibid. p. 99
It is an appropriately bleak opening for a story of loneliness, and the last paragraph echoes it, as if the lonely girl has been caught in a circle, suggesting that the end was implicit in the beginning.

And, in The Canary:

"...you see that big nail to the right of the front door? I can scarcely look at it even now and yet I could not bear to take it out. I should like to think it was there always even after my time...I feel he is not quite forgotten."¹

The reader knows that the woman is lamenting the loss of the bird and more is to follow along the same lines.

We may also note that the titles of many of Katherine Mansfield's stories are names of persons or refer to persons such as:


Then, there are titles connected with the theme such as: Life Of Ma Parker, Mr Reginald Peacock's Day, The Doll's House, The Man Without A Temperament, The Daughters Of The Late Colonel, The Wind Blows Bliss, The Child Who Was Tired and Her First Ball.

¹. Ibid. p. 682
In purely linguistic terms, we may say that her diction belongs to the middle level, as does her sentence structure, but she has a sure sense of the flow of language. The sentences glide effortlessly on, and one is not often conscious of balanced antithetical sentences of the sort that sound sharply epigrammatic.

Each reading of her stories gives them a greater depth. Her New Zealand stories are connected and they illuminate each other, like the lyrics of a poet.

In her First Ball we may notice the somewhat old-fashioned, pompously elegant style given to the fat old man. We can also notice the contrast with the talk of the girls.

In The Women At The Store the dialogue is colloquial (natural) and in the "Children" stories especially, we find the words used are very apt. Kesia's liking for the lamp is expressed in the following sentence:

"But what Kesia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully was the lamp."¹

Katherine Mansfield's stories have occasional New Zealand colloquialism, when workmen or small children are the speakers

"Say, cross my heart straight-dinkum, the little girl said it. Fred, the storeman

¹. Ibid. p. 57
is wished in the night—— Everybody knew the storeman, 'Night, Fred,' "Night O', he shouted.”

Katherine Mansfield often uses the word paddock, which in English usage is connected with horses and hunting, whereas Katherine Mansfield simply meant a grassy meadow where children play around. The "creek", in Prelude, is a small stream and not part of the sea, and when she writes of the bush-covered hills, in At The Bay, she actually means that they are covered by a heavy forest.

Ian Gordon has observed that Katherine Mansfield's stories:

"have all the unity and shapeliness and the concentrated diction of implied emotion that characterizes the well wrought lyric." ¹

**DIALOGUE:**

We have already noticed Katherine Mansfield's skill in presenting her characters' motives or temperament or state of mind through the medium of speech in the chapter, "Character and Characterisation."

Dialogue is a revealing indicator of characters in any story and Katherine Mansfield has taken special care to give

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her characters their own distinctive speech — a device which conveys to perfection the characteristics of every individual.

We can give a few examples of Katherine Mansfield's contribution towards fictional speech types and we can see the realistic effect which is created. The dialogue given to each individual can be easily distinguished from that of another.

In *Something Childish But Very Natural* the young lovers meet each other for the first time in the train and they have a conversation which is very typical. "It's so silly", he said, "not knowing your name." She put back a big piece of hair that had fallen on her shoulder, and he saw how her hand in the grey glove was shaking. Then he noticed that she was sitting very stiffly with her knees pressed together — and he was, too — both of them trying not to tremble so. She said,

"My name is Edna."
"And mine is Henry."

In the pause they took possession of each other's names and turned them over and put them away, a shade less frightened after that.

"I want to ask you something else now", said Henry. He looked at Edna, his head a little on one side.
"How old are you?"
"Over sixteen," she said, "and you?"
"I'm nearly eighteen..."

"Isn't it hot?" She said suddenly, and pulled off her grey gloves and put her hands to her cheeks and kept them there. Their eyes were not frightened — they looked at each other with a sort of desperate calmness. If only their bodies would not tremble so stupidly! still half hidden by her hair, Edna said:

"Have you ever been in love before?"
"No, Never! Have you?"
"Oh, never in all my life." She shook her head.
"I never even thought it possible."

In Elisa we have a casual conversation among the guests invited to a party given by Bertha, and the dialogue runs this way:

"I met her at the Alpha show — the wierdest 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 lice with Michael Oat."

"The man who wrote Love In False Teeth "

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1. The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.
   Alfred A. Knopf (London 1934) p. 169

2. Ibid. p. 345
"He wants to write a play for me. One act. One man. Decides to commit suicide. Gives all the reasons why he should and why he shouldn't. And just as he has made up his mind either to do it or not to do it — curtain. Not half a bad idea."

"What's he going to call it — Stomach Trouble?"

"I think I've come across the same idea in a little French review, quite unknown in England."

Rosemary, in *A Cup Of Tea* is used to a life of security and luxury where she is loved and cared for by her husband and when she brings home the poor girl for a cup of tea, their mental condition can easily be distinguished:

"I'm very sorry, madam, but I'm going to faint.
I shall go off, madam, if I don't have something."

"Good heavens, how thoughtless I am! Rosemary rushed to the bell."

"Tea! Tea at once! And some brandy immediately!"

The maid was gone again, but the girl almost cried out, "No, I don't want no brandy. I never drink brandy. I'ts a cup of tea I want, madam." And she burst into tears. It was a terrible and fascinating moment and rosemary knelt beside her chair.

"Don't cry, poor little thing", she said.
"Don't cry."

And she gave the other her lace handkerchief, she really
was touched beyond words. She put her arm round those thin,
birdlike shoulders.

Now at last the other forgot to be shy, forgot
everything except that they were both women, and gasped out:

"I can't go on no longer like this. I can't
bear it. I shall do away with myself. I
can't bear no more."

"You shan't have to. I'll look after you.
Don't cry any more. Don't you see what a
good thing it was that you met me? We'll
have tea and you'll tell me everything. And
I shall arrange something. I promise. Do
stop crying. It's so exhausting, please!"

In Prelude Beryl feels the maid Alice is a fool of a
girl and the feeling of class consciousness is aptly evoked
as she orders Alice to make the tea:

"Oh, Alice", said Miss Beryl.

"There's one extra to tea, so heat a plate of
yesterday's scenes, please. And put on the
Victoria Sandwich as well as the coffee cake.
And don't forget to put little Doyleys under
the plates --- will you? You did yesterday,
you know, and the tea looked so ugly and common.
And, Alice, don't put that dreadful old pink
and green cosy on the afternoon teapot again.
That is only for the mornings. Really, I think

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it ought to be kept for the kitchen—it's so shabby and quite smelly. Put on the Japanese one. You quite understand, don't you."  

The conversation carried on by the children in At The Bay inside the wash house, reveals a typical scene of children at play and the tone is very appropriate:

"You can't be a bee, Kesia. A bee's not an animal. It's a ninseck."

"Oh, but I do want to be a bee, frightfully", wailed Kesia...a tiny bee, all yellow-furry, with striped legs. She drew her legs up under her and leaned over the table. She felt she was a bee. "A ninseck must be an animal", she said stoutly. "It makes a noise. It's not like a fish."

"I'm a bull, I'm a bull!" cried Pip and he gave such a tremendous bellow—how did he make that noise?—that Lettie looked quite alarmed. "I'll be a sheep" said little Rags. "A whole lot of sheep went past this morning."

"How do you know?"

"Dad heard them, Baa!"

He sounded like the little lamb that trots behind and seems to wait to be carried.

"Cock-a-doodle-do!" shrilled Isabel. With her red cheeks and bright eyes she looked like a rooster.

1. Ibid. p. 253
"What'll I be? Lottie asked everybody, and she sat there smiling, waiting for them to decide for her. It had to be an easy one.

"Be a donkey, Lottie". It was Kenia's suggestion.
"Hoo-haw! You can't forget that."¹

The list of examples is endless. It is sufficient to say that Katherine Mansfield had the ability to render realistically the characteristics of conversational language.

Dialogue was as important to her as description and action.

We may thus conclude that Katherine Mansfield's mastery over language cannot be denied. She made a definite effort to evolve a style which remained prose, and yet she introduced alliteration, assonance and rhyme (all phonological schemes) in it to bring a cadence to her sentences. Her words and the structures operate effectively, and the language is worthy of attention along with other narrative devices such as characterization and plotmaking.

¹ Ibid. p. 287
Very early morning. The sun was not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay was hidden under a white sea-mist. The big bush-covered hills at the back were smothered. You could not see where they ended and the paddocks and bungalows began. The sandy road was gone and the paddocks and bungalows the other side of it; there were no white dunes covered with reddish grass beyond them; there was nothing to mark which was beach and where was the sea. A heavy dew had fallen. The grass was blue. Big drops hung on the bushes and just did not fall; the silvery, fluffy toi-toi was limp on its long stalks, and all the marigolds and the pinks in the bungalow gardens were bowed to the earth with wetness. Drenched were the cold fuchsias, round pearls of dew lay on the flat nasturtium leaves. It looked as though the sea had beaten up softly in the darkness, as though one immense wave had come rippling, rippling how far? Perhaps if you had waked up in the middle of the night you might have seen a big fish flicking in at the window and gone again...
We have already noted Katherine Mansfield's skillful use of language for the purposes of description, narration and dialogue. But in order to get a clearer idea of the artistic skill underlying her choice of language, we may take a paragraph for analysis. Leech and Short in "Style in Fiction" have taken the opening passage from three texts — a short story by Conrad, Lawrence and Henry James, in order to show their most significant "style markers."¹

Following that model, they have shown how one is amply repaid when one gives to prose the close attention that is usually given only to poetry. We might take the opening passage from *At The Bay* and attempt an analysis in order to find the main characteristics.

The narrator presents a setting, and the landscape is unfolded before the reader in all its particularity. We can easily reconstruct the scene in our minds. Each detail is etched before us.

It is an early morning scene and the sun has yet to rise. There are several *concrete nouns*: Sun, bay, Sea, hills, paddocks, bungalows, road, dunes, grass and beach, which make the description more direct and refer to different points of

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focus. (Concrete nouns). There are few abstract nouns.
Adjectives are frequent, and often bring a visual impression
of colour: white sea, sandy road, white dunes, reddish grass, the
glass was blue, silvery, fluffy toi-toi. The words, drowned,
bowled, limp, fallen, hung, lay all unite to give an impression
of lethargy and indicate either physical condition or posture.
They are not 'dynamic', in the sense that they are not
description of action. There are several prepositions of place
and direction such as on, to and of. The frequent use of
negatives, 'not yet risen', 'could not see', 'no white dunes,
'nothing to mark', 'just did not fall', all lay emphasis on the
fact that the sun hasn't risen and there is darkness and
wetness everywhere. The marigolds and pinks, despite their
brilliance, are bowed down because of the weight of the dew.
It is the sun which will bring warmth and awakening to
everything.

The vocabulary is simple and homely and this makes
Katherine Mansfield's style more accessible to the reader and
the word smothered, coming after hidden, gives an impression of
the scene being enveloped or even crushed by the mist.

An interesting aspect of the description is that through
this partly negative approach in the first half of the passage,
she is able to include items which are not available to be seen
at the moment but are part of the scene. Memory notes what the
eye cannot see, and so we are able, with the author, to visualize the scene when daylight reveals the details now hidden from view.

The repetition of the words rippling, rippling, seems to echo the sound of the waves, the very movement of each wave.

There are expressions which imply similitude such as pearls of dew, the hills at the back were smothered; it looked as though the sea had beaten up softly in the darkness, as though one immense wave had come rippling, rippling.

We get an impression that the writer is seeking for the right description of the scene for as though is mentioned twice along with rippling, rippling. This has a reinforcing effect.

There are eleven sentences of which two are short ones, linked together with semi-colons, that is, the fifth sentence "The sandy road.......was the sea" and the eighth, "Big drops hung on the bushes.......earth with wetness." The smallest sentence has three words and the longest has thirty-nine words each with its own appropriateness to what is being said.

Sentence ten, "It looked as though the sea.......come rippling, rippling--how far?" ends with a question mark and before that we have a dash, indicative of a pause.

The narrator having addressed sentence four, "You could not see.......and bungalows began" to you (the reader) once
again brings in a personal and familiar tone by stating, "perhaps if you had waked up in the middle of the night you might have seen...."

The first sentence "Very early morning" around which the rest of the passage is built up comprises of only three words. It is, in fact, a phrase and not a real sentence. But it effectively introduces the subject of the passage. The passage does not end on a full stop and the reader is almost expected to pause and imagine such a moment. We may notice also, in passing, the emphasis given by the ninth sentence which begins with the verb, "Drenched were the cold fuchsias..." We are invited to share this hour when the sun hasn't risen.

Katherine Mansfield gives us an account of a visual world, and strives to describe for the reader such an experience. Throughout the passage we are able to detect Katherine Mansfield's eye for detail and her accuracy in her choice of words.
Sentence Analysis

According to Leech and Short, we may compare language to a code. Language may be regarded as a system by means of which meanings in the speaker's mind can be translated into sounds (encoding) or conversely for translating sounds into meanings (decoding). It is syntax which acts as a medium between structure of meaning and structure of sound.

We may now examine the communicative effects of Katherine Mansfield's style along three levels of organisation in language: semantics (meaning), and the levels of syntax and phonology (sound pattern — rhythm, alliteration and the like) — graphology, that is, the syntactic form of a sentence rendered either in speech or in writing. We see that there is an auditory effect in prose writing as in poetry — the reader can almost hear the novel and can react to the unspoken situation, and this characteristic may be seen in most of Katherine Mansfield's stories.

Leech and Short have taken an ordinary seven-word sentence from Katherine Mansfield's A Cup Of Tea in order to show how it is possible to focus on the stylistic value of a piece of language by comparing the given sentence with possible unwritten alternatives: "What might have been written but wasn't." We can thus see how a particular sentence can

be more effective than another in prose style. They have chosen for such a demonstration the sentence, "The discreet door shut with a click", and shown how it is more apt in the context than any other that may have been written in its place. We may consider two or three other examples here from Katherine Mansfield's work, which show her sense of language.

In *The Fly*, the Boss picks the fly out of the inkpot and shakes it on to a piece of blotting paper. The courageous fly succeeds in cleaning itself and one can imagine its joy now that it has escaped.

1. "The horrible danger was over, it had escaped, it was ready for life again."

   The other possible alternatives could be the following sentences.

2. "Having escaped the horrible danger, it was ready for life again."

3. It had escaped the horrible danger and was ready for life again.

4. It was ready for life again, having escaped the horrible danger.

The first sentence is much more emphatic. For one thing, it is a series of short sentences rather than one sentence; for another, the repeated "it" emphasises the situation. The other formulations appear loose and weak by contrast, with their participial phrases and subordinate
clauses. The fact that the three parts of the sentence really mean much the same thing – the danger was over, it had escaped, it could begin to live again – further emphasises the relief felt by the fly. The figure of speech which is called "explanatio" is a device often used by orators, and gives a fullness to the utterance.

Such a series can also be "incremental" instead of merely being "parallel". The description, also from The Fly, about the Boss's state of mind is of this nature. "He wanted; he intended, he had arranged to weep..." Though the emphasis gained by the repeated "he" is the same in both cases, the different bits do not mean exactly the same thing here. "Intended" is stronger than "wanted", showing that a decision has been made about the desire; and "had arranged" goes a step further to suggest that the intention had already been formulated into some sort of plan. At the end comes the operative "to weep", finally revealing what it was that the man had wanted and intended and arranged to do. It comes effectively as a surprise since it is held in suspense till the end.

The whole picture of a man who is unable to respond with tears to a situation, and is determined to do the right thing by at least simulating grief through a conscious and deliberate attempt, is brought out excellently. Phonologically, semantically and syntactically we see how effective this sentence is in the context.
We may now take another sentence from the story Life of Ma Parker and see how there could have been other possible alternatives on the semantic, syntactic and phonological levels, but the sentence would not then have had the force of the one actually used by the writer.

Ma Parker is a lonely woman whom life has not treated very kindly and, at the end of the story, she is heart-broken. She, who had never had a "proper cry," couldn't wait any more and wonders where she could hide and keep to herself.

1. "Ma Parker stood, looking up and down."

We may consider other variants of this sentence such as:

2. Looking up and down, Ma Parker stood there.
3. Ma Parker stood there wondering.
4. She stood there staring up and down the road.
5. She stood still looking up and down the road.
6. Standing still, Ma Parker looked around her.

The five sentences above may be equivalent in some sense to what the author has used and yet in the original sentence, "Ma Parker stood, looking up and down", we see that the comma after "Ma Parker stood" makes a difference to the reader's processing of the sentence. The reader's attention is divided into two parts. We see the character standing

1. The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.
   Alfred A. Knopf (New York, 1954)
apart in a crowd as it were; she pauses, realizes her desperate situation and then moves on. She feels that life has to continue. The punctuation here, which is part of the graphological narration, though a minor part of style, enables this sentence to have a greater impact.

Phonologically (sound pattern) the words "up and down" give a certain rhythm to the sentence. Life too has its ups and downs, happiness and tragedy. The words "up and down" have a sense of undulating movement.

We have already seen earlier that Katherine Mansfield paid special attention to the sound pattern in her sentences. We may see that, if these sentences had been written differently, the rhythmic effect would have been lost. For example:

1. "It was strange that even the sea seemed to sound differently when all those leaping laughing figures ran into the waves."

The alliteration is marked but does not register as a deliberate, artificial device. The alternative could be:

2. The sea sounded differently when the laughing figures leapt and ran into the waves."

In The Voyage, as the ship leaves the jetty, Katherine Mansfield writes:
1. "Silently the dark wharf began to slip, to slide, to edge away."

The alternatives could be, for example:

2. The dark wharf began to edge away silently, sliding.
3. Slipping and edging away, the dark wharf began to slide.

Such an analysis enable us to see how admirably Katherine Mansfield had perfected her own individual style. Every sentence may not have been fashioned with painful care, but years of scrupulous attention to how language functions — to "getting it just right" in meaning and sound — have given her a fine sense of appropriateness of style for every kind of situation.