

Description of Time and Place in “Miss Brill”, “Taking the Veil”

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Abstract:

Mansfield is one of the famous short story writers who developed this genre with her short story “Miss Brill”. In this article, compositional analysis of two stories “Miss Brill” and “Taking the Veil” is given with the description of setting.

Keywords: Time, place, short story, analysis, dark room, character description, plot.

Introduction. Miss Brill appears to resist sadness by giving life to what she sees and hears: the brilliant colors noted throughout the story (contrasted to the "little dark room" she returns to at the end), her sensitive reactions to the music, her delight in small details. By refusing to accept the role of a lonely woman, she is an actress. More importantly, she is a dramatist, actively countering sadness and self-pity, and this evokes our sympathy, even our admiration. A chief reason that we feel such pity for Miss Brill at the end of the story is the sharp contrast with the liveliness and beauty she gave to that ordinary scene in the park. Are the other characters without illusions? Are they in any way better than Miss Brill?

Analysis. Finally, it's the artful construction of the plot that leaves us feeling sympathetic toward Miss Brill. We are made to share her increasing excitement as she imagines that she is not only an observer but also a participant. No, we don't believe that the whole company will suddenly start singing and dancing, but we may feel that Miss Brill is on the verge of a more genuine kind of self-acceptance: her role in life is a minor one, but she has a role all the same. Our perspective of the scene is different from Miss Brill's, but her enthusiasm is contagious and we are led to expect something momentous when the two star players appear. The letdown is terrible. These giggling, thoughtless adolescents (themselves putting on an act for each other) have insulted her fur--the emblem of her identity. So Miss Brill has no role to play after all. In Mansfield's carefully controlled and understated conclusion, Miss Brill packs herself away in her "little, dark room." We sympathize with her not because "the truth hurts," but because she has been denied the simple truth that she does, indeed, have a role to play in life.

Miss Brill is an actor, as are the other people in the park, as we all are in social situations. And we sympathize with her at the end of the story not because she is a pitiful, curious object but because she has been laughed off the stage, and that is a fear we all have. Mansfield has managed not so much to touch our hearts in any gushing, sentimental way, but to touch our fears.

“Miss Brill” narrates one day the spinster, Miss Brill spent in the park. Sitting in the park and observing people at weekends is the only happy thing in her tedious, lonely life. That day she wore her leather scarf specially and went to the park as usual, she sat on her usual bench and observing coming and going people happily to enjoy her long-expected time. But a couple of young men abused her just for her existence. She realized suddenly that she was ugly and unwelcome. When she put her scarf back into the box, she heard something crying. —That’s her heart crying. Here the inner monologue is used to explore the character’s inner world, and the deep consciousness of the essence of life is perceived.

"Miss Brill" presents the interior monologue of a woman on a Sunday trip to the park whose pleasant illusions are shattered when reality infringes on her thoughts.

"Miss Brill" is set in the "Jardins Publiques," the French term for "public garden," or park. Miss Brill, through her name and the indication that she tutors students in English, is revealed to be a non-native of France and, thus, an outsider from the start.

Discussion. The Jardins Publiques (Public Gardens) in a French town on an early autumn Sunday afternoon is the setting for "Miss Brill." The air is still, but there is a "faint chill, like a chill from a glass of iced water before you sip," so Miss Brill is happy to have worn her fur stole. The stole, in accordance to the fashions of the times, was constructed so that its fake eyes and nose could be attached to its tail, securing it around the wearer's neck. It is the first time she has worn it in a while. When preparing for her stroll in the park, she gives it a "good brush," "[rubs] the life...

"Miss Brill" presents an afternoon in the life of a middle-aged spinster. On her usual Sunday visit to the park, she imagines that she and the people in the park are characters in a play. Contributing to her good mood is the fact that she is wearing her prized fur stole. Anticipating the conversation of two strangers who sit down next to her, Miss Brill's vivacious mood is shattered by the couple's ridicule for her and her fur. She returns to her tiny apartment and places the fur back in its box, imagining that she hears it crying.

The setting of "Miss Brill" is an important feature of the story because Miss Brill defines herself in relation to the setting. As she walks about the park, she feels more and more in tune with her setting, as she notices that all of the people at the park, including herself, are actors in a weekly play. Her sense of herself in relation to the setting changes drastically, of course, when she overhears the young couple ridiculing her. As the story opens, she is up beat and happy watching the other people in the park. After the young couple mock her, we see the sadness as she walks slowly back to her apartment, her "cupboard". Mansfield also uses allusion to reinforce the theme of the story. We first see Miss Brill's allusions to a cupboard as she describes the other elderly people in the park. She seems to sympathize with them because they are not a part of this grand play like she is. After being confronted by the young couple, Miss Brill realizes that she also lives in a "room like a cupboard". This allusion Mansfield gives to Miss Brill's room is valuable because of two reasons. She first used the term "cupboard" to describe the homes of the "funny old people" in the park every Sunday. It does not occur to Miss Brill that she is also one of these "funny old people", however, Mansfield tells the audience that she is indeed one of these "funny old people" when she describes Miss Brill's room to the reader. The use of the term "cupboard" is also important because it demonstrates the effect setting can have on the reader's opinion of the characters' true nature. The quote referring to Miss Brill's cupboard room, also gives the reader a look at the point of view that Miss Brill has. When Miss Brill is happy her room is not so bad, however, when she is depressed then her point of view is that she is like those "funny old people" that she notices in the park every Sunday. In "Miss Brill," the limited omniscient point of view allows the reader to see that Miss Brill remains unchanged when the story ends. The point of view is based strictly on what Miss Brill sees and feels, without being biased by her rose-colored view of life. Upon arriving at the park, Miss Brill begins to take in the details of her surroundings. She seems to cling to the best qualities of her surroundings - there were far more people than last Sunday, the band sounded louder and gayer, and the conductor was wearing a new coat. As she sits in her "special seat" she is disappointed that the odd man and seated next to her. She had become "quite an expert at listening as though she didn't listen". She views her eavesdropping as active participation in conversations surrounding her. Although she continues to watch the others in the crowd in awe and fascination, she views the elderly people in the crowd quite differently. She

calls them "odd, silent and nearly all old...and they looked as though they had just come from dark little rooms or even - even cupboards". Trying to keep her mid of the elderly people, Miss Brill convinces herself of her importance in this grand play and that "no doubt, somebody would have noticed is she hadn't been there". When the young couple seated beside her begin to talk, Miss Brill listens intently to their conversation. It is then that she hears them talk of her the way she has been viewing the other elderly people throughout the afternoon. "Why does she come here at all - who wants her"? The omniscient point of view allows the reader to view this conversation as it actually occurred, not as Miss Brill would have no doubt changed it in her mind. When she returns home "to her room like a cupboard" without getting her usual slice of honey cake, we see that she scene at the park has affected her. Yet , she is not changed by it. When she puts away the fur, "she thinks she hears something crying". As a defense mechanism, she attributes her grief and pain to the fur, making it possible to carry on in her fantasy world. Mansfield's "Miss Brill" is an excellent example of how a reader can gain an understanding of a character through characterization. The reader is allowed to understand and interpret the story utilizing their own methods. Mansfield uses the literary methods of symbolism, setting, and points of view to enable the reader to understand the story and this get the greater meaning.

Katherine Mansfield's memories of her birthplace and first home on Tinakori Road inspired the internationally recognised writer to recreate her experiences in some of her most famous short stories. The restored house now provides valuable insight to a large part of her writing.

The interior of the five-bedroom house was also modestly decorated in a style influenced by the Chinese designs popular in New Zealand at that time. It was described by Mansfield as 'horrid little piggy house' and Harold Beauchamp moved his family to a more prestigious house in Karori in 1893 when Mansfield was five years old.

In Europe, 24 years later, Katherine Mansfield captured the memory of that move in one of her most famous stories, 'Prelude', a shorter version of her longest work, 'The Aloe'. As Kezia, Mansfield recalls the details of the emptied house. The house was again used as a setting in Mansfield's short story 'A Birthday'.

Writing an analysis of a piece of fiction can be a mystifying process. First, literary analyses rely on the assumption that stories must mean something. How does a story mean something? Isn't a story just an arrangement of characters and events? And if the author wanted to convey a meaning, wouldn't he or she be much better off writing an essay just telling us what he or she meant?

Having faced with a lot of questions and problems in interpreting stories of English literature during our classes I chose the theme on analysing Katherine Mansfield's short stories and defines setting and its role in the short story.

Katherine Mansfield's short stories are mostly written under the modernist literature movement. This involves certain characteristics such as the individual perspective, that is, not being objective but subjective, showing the breakdown of social norms and cultural conventions, relativism, introspection, to follow experiences that replace the plot which has no relevance, the dependence on poetic image as an essential to describe. In this period, at the beginning of the 20th century, writers broke with all traditions and conventions in the writing.

One of the stories from one of her latest short story collections "The Dove's Nest", which she wrote shortly after her first hemorrhage, is called "Taking the Veil".

"Taking the Veil" is one of the last few stories written by Katherine Mansfield (1888 to 1923-New Zealand). Her husband, John Middleton Murry, included it in a collection of her stories he published in 1923, *The Dove's Nest and Other Stories*.

Perhaps even Edna did not look quite as unhappy as she felt. It is not easy to look tragic at eighteen, when you are extremely pretty, with the cheeks and lips and shining eyes of perfect health. Above all, when you are wearing a French blue frock and your new spring hat trimmed with cornflowers.

The night before Edna and her boyfriend Jimmy had been at the theatre. Edna took one look at an actor in the play and she was in love! The feeling was not at all pleasant to her and in fact it cast her into despair. Jimmy and Edna had known they would be married since age ten but now Edna has lost all interest in this idea. I really do not want to say a lot more about this story. To me it is just brilliant. Mansfield takes what at first seems like an overly melodramatic typical teenage cliché and turns it into beautiful story about the true meaning of love.

It gives the perspective of a character whose story is told in the 3rd person entirely through the young woman's unspoken thoughts and memories. The heroine of the story, 18-year-old Edna suddenly became very unhappy. She thought she loved Jimmy, her boyfriend she knew since her childhood and moreover they had been engaged for a year, but last night she went to the theatre and fell in love with an actor. She realized that if she did not marry Jimmy she would marry nobody because it would be very odd. Of course the only thing left for her to do is to take the veil. Then she realized as she vividly pictured this future of her, asperity and hardships and then a death in the odor of sanctity that she really did love Jimmy after all.

Conclusion. In this story we can observe the very characteristic of Mansfield's style - its objective, impersonal quality. The author doesn't comment upon her personage, she lets us judge for ourselves on her speech, and, of course, on petty details which Mansfield masterly gives in abundance.

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