Jamesian and Bergsonian Stream of Consciousness in Katherine Mansfield's 'Prelude' (1918)

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پێکەوتی وەرگرتن: 7 مایس ٢٠١٩، پەسەندکردن: 26 مایس ٢٠١٩، بڵاوکردنەوە: ٢٥ کانونی یەکەم ٢٠١٩

الملخص

يتناول هذه البحث بعض الجوانب الرئيسـية لروايات كاثرين مانسـفيلد فيما يتعلق بنظريات مختارة لهنري بيرغسـون ووليام جيمس ، سـواء من حيث جمالياتها أو شـكلها العام (من حيث كيفية عمل تيار وعي جيمس في شـكله المعدّل في الرواية الحداثية) وفيما يتعلق بشـخصـيات مانسـفيلد (خاصـة فيما يتعلق بقضـايا النوع والطبقة الإجتماعية و وعي إحتمالات نمط حياة مختلفة وبديلة ؛ وأهمية الطفولة ؛ وإرتباطها بموضـوع البوهيمية). في هذه السـياقات يتم أيضًـا تحليل قصـة قصـيرة لمانسـفيلد '' المقدمة'' (١٩١٨) من خلال مجموعة من نظريات بيرغسـون المطبقة تحليليًا بالإشارة إلى مفاهيمه عن المدة والذاكرة والإندفاع الحياتي التي تم التطرق إليها في أعماله الرئيسية المختلفة ، على وجه التحديد:'' *الزمن والإرادة الحرة* '' (١٨٨٩) ، '' *المادة والذاكرة*'' (١٨٩٦) ، و'' *التطور الإبداعي*'' (١٩٠٧). تمتلك القصة نفسها جودة رجعية وحنين للماضي ، كما تلاحظ سايكات ماجومدار عن مانسفيلد "إن أفضل أعمالها ، خاصة قصصها الأواخر ، لها إطار إستعماري" تستحضر طفولتها ومراهقتها ، والتي " تتضاعف تعقيدًا بسبب تعلقها بأوروبا الحضرية ومنأها الغامض عن بلدها الأصلي'' (١٢٢).

سـوف تتركز حجتي وتتطرق إلى إسـتخدام مانسـفيلد لتيار الوعي كتقنية سـردية في كل من تعبيرات ووجهات نظر الشخصيات الفردية وأيضًا فيما يتعلق بعناصر تفاعل هذه الشخصيات مع الصوت السردي الشامل. من خلال هذا الإستخدام لتيار الوعي ، تسمح مانسفيلد للقارئ بإستكشاف كيفة تمثيل الأفكار الداخلية للشخصية الفردية في كثير من الأحيان من خلال منظور السـرد الكلي العلم الذي يتم نقله من خلال إسـلوب "الخطاب الغير المباشـر الحر" والتحولات في التركيز.

Abstract:

This paper examines some key aspects of Katherine Mansfield's fiction with regard to selected theories of Henri Bergson and William James, considered both in terms of more general aesthetics and form (in terms of specifically how James's stream of consciousness in a modified form works in modernist fiction) and in terms of Mansfield's characters (especially concerning: issues of gender and social class; consciousness of different and alternative life-style possibilities; the importance of childhood; and the relevance to them of bohemianism). In these contexts, one particular Mansfield short story, 'Prelude' (1918), is analyzed also through a range of Bergson's theories applied analytically with reference to his concepts of duration, memory and one's Élan Vital as explored in his various key works, being specifically: *Time and Free Will* (1889), *Matter and Memory* (1896), and *Creative Evolution* (1907) . The story itself possesses a retrospective and nostalgic quality, for as Saikat Majumdar observes of Mansfield "her best work, especially the late stories, have colonial settings" evoking her own childhood and adolescence, and which are "doubly complicated by her own attachments to metropolitan Europe and her ambiguous distance from her country of origin" (122).

My argument will focus upon and explore Mansfield's use of stream of consciousness as a narrative technique in both the expressions and perspectives of individual characters and also with respect to elements of the interplay of these with the overarching narrative voice. Through such use of stream of consciousness, Mansfield allows her reader to explore how individual character's inner thoughts are represented very often through the prism of an omniscient narration conveyed stylistically through 'free indirect discourse' and shifts of focalization.

Introduction

William James (1842-1910) and Henri Bergson (1859-1941) have had a major impact on the formation of modernist fiction. James developed an influential term, stream of consciousness in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) which modernists took to heart, most especially in a literary context as regards modes of narration. And proving influential in a similar fashion on such writers, Bergson developed theories in the field of philosophy that were relevant to aesthetics, since they focus on a revaluation of the importance of such principles as the value of subjectivity and memory that many modernists found equally significant. It will be my contention explored below that woman writers such as Katherine Mansfield used both thinkers in a gendered fashion (by shifting the perspective radically toward that of educated women) and that these thinkers allowed such feminist writers such as Mansfield to explore issues directly connected with their avowal of new attitudes toward gender relations, espousing the concept of a new woman that they believed could lead to a more autonomous life at least intellectually, if not in socio-economic terms. These two philosophers allowed modernist feminists like Mansfield to explore issues directly connected with alternative, independent selves and engage with the question of self-organization of their own lives and identities. The relationship between James, Bergson and modern feminism was therefore due to a rich series of parallels and shared interests in consciousness and being. In their work both captured an ontological intensity that was key for Mansfield's authorial engagement, for as Aimee Gasston suggests "Writing for Mansfield was a holistic expression of every one of her heightened senses" (2013, 163).[1] And clearly, one should not forget the interrelationship between the various ideas of James and Bergson, given to some degree British audiences were already familiar with this valuing of the subject and James's stream of consciousness prepared writers to think in Bergsonian terms.

In London in 1908 Mansfield encountered a Bohemian[2] way of life which she integrated in her fiction, prioritizing the obsessions of this set, including love, sex, art, solitude, death and war. She imagined that her Bohemian life as well as the associated artistic freedom would enable her to achieve recognition as a writer as well as a woman. As she wrote in her journal (later edited by husband, Middleton Murry, after her death) that: 'I am a writer first and a woman after' (*The Journal of Katherine Mansfield* 205). Among the artists and friends she fostered as part of her informal aesthetic education were the East End painter Mark Gertler, the Scottish painter J.D. Fergusson, and the American Anne Estelle Rice. (Robinson and Wattie, *Katherine Mansfield*), and also later many of the Bloomsbury Set, including Virginia Woolf, all of which potentially influenced her artistic work. Mansfield consciously sought both artistic influences and individuals who might help her succeed aesthetically.

1 As Gasston indicates in exploring the short story writer's notebooks that it might have been via James' brother, the novelist, that Mansfield experienced the newness and openness of such a consciousness: "Elsewhere she articulates the 'sudden sweet shock' that Henry James gives her" (164).

2 In modern times the word *Bohemian* is applied to people who live unconventionally and usually have artistic lives. According to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus, Cambridge University Press, the *Bohemian* is a person who is interested in art, music and / or literature and lives in a very informal way, ignoring the usually accepted ways of behaving.

In terms of Bergsonian thought and influence, perhaps significantly, Mansfield lived in Paris from 1912 – 1913, albeit for only three months, when she became part of a group of painters, writers and theorists. In Mark Antliff's *Inventing Bergson* (1993), Antliff explores various 'artists and critics who thought of themselves as "Bergsonists"' (3). This Parisian Avant-garde, including those in Mansfield's circle, in pre-war France positioned themselves and their art in terms of both current theories and political discourse. By interconnecting such movements as Futurism, Cubism, and Fauvism, Antliff clarifies the general impact of Bergson on modernism in Europe, especially in terms of theories of living form and experience. Arguably the group's 'radicalism' and non-English expatriates fascinated Mansfield, for she thought of them as pleasant and friendly, and among them she became friends with the 'American painter Anne Estelle Rice; Rice's partner, the Scottish colourist J.D. Fergusson; and Francis Carco, a poet and novelist,' (Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Rhythm* 103) as well as John Middleton Murry. According to Gerri Kimber in *Katherine Mansfield and the View from France* (2008), Francis Carco became one of the main correspondents between Mansfield and Murry's avant-garde *Rhythm* magazine by 'sending articles from France, with a bias towards Symbolism, the arts and Post-Impressionism, the music of Debussy and Mahler and the philosophy of Bergson.' (52)

However, as another indirect influence to Henri Bergson's theories, Mansfield fell in love with France and Paris in particular since her childhood as she read the books of Balzac, Merimée and Flaubert. Her keen interest in the French Symbolist and Decadent movements has been a major encouragement too, the influences of the short story tradition in France, in particular, the works of Guy de Maupassant. Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette and Charles Baudelaire, however, with their impressionistic depictions of travelling heroines who reject love and security and reclaim their suffering and solitude, offered Mansfield a particular model for writing about and for women. Mansfield was interested in conveying a new mode of expression, one which could accommodate complex characters, shifting points of view, symbols and lyricism – in a sense, a modern female subjectivity. The French culture and tradition gave her new ways of looking at her inner self towards the external physical world subjectively and consciously. As she further contents her inner feeling towards France: 'I love this place more and more. One is conscious of it as I used to be conscious of New Zealand. I mean if I went for a walk there & lay down under a pine tree & looked up at the wispy clouds through the branches I came home plus the pine tree – don't you know?' (Mansfield, *The Collected Letters*, Vol.4, 89, 28 October 1920)

William James and Stream of Consciousness

The American psychologist William James and his concept of 'stream of consciousness' motivated readers and writers to consider one's mind precisely, regarding its potential to reveal one's inner feelings, thoughts and the underpinnings of one's interactions. In this sense his concept set up the importance of the subjective over that of the traditional objective view of consciousness and to some extent prepared the ground for Bergson's subsequent importance to British writers. James was one of the prominent writers that contributed to *The English Review* (1908), edited by Ford Madox Ford, and had an impact on the British culture directly or indirectly, since the magazine dealt with issues such as working-class women, the problems of unmarried mothers and women's

suffrage. James and his novelist brother Henry, who pioneered accounts of women's inner life in his fiction, were very much a part of the milieu for an intellectual woman at the turn of the century. William James argues that consciousness 'does not appear to itself chopped up in bits,' and words like 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it adequately as it presents itself in the first instance, however, where consciousness appears to be 'a river or a stream,' that naturally flows and he calls it 'the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life' (*The Principles of Psychology*, 239).

Henri Bergson: Experiential Immediacy and Intuition

The French philosopher Henri Bergson developed theories that led artists and writers to emphasis the value of the subjective and their inner worlds. Bergson defines immediate experience and one's intuition as where intuition is seen as rational thinking at the level of the subject. He deals with the concept of intuition as opposed to intellect and his inclination if for flux over constancy, which explains why the modernist writers are most influenced by his theories that emphasize texts that are disturbed and fragmentary, rather than the seamless creation of nineteenth century realism. Bergson's major books, *Time and Free Will* (1889), *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *Creative Evolution* (1907) were widely circulated in the early modernist period.

In *Time and Free Will* intellectual reality describes the way human beings chronologically conceive 'time' by analysing the minutes and hours of an entity in relation to the external world, while intuitive reality is to perceive 'time' or as Bergson calls it 'duration' psychologically through human's consciousness. The former can be associated with quantity and the latter can be characterized by quality. Clearly, the latter, a more subjective view of time will be important for Mansfield.

Secondly associated theories of Bergson's were to be crucial for modernists such as Mansfield. The first concept is the élan vital – discussed in Bergson's *Creative Evolution* - which is an immaterial force that continually creates and expands the growth of life by dealing with the instinct of the human mind as a creative impulse. It perpetually emphasises life as something coming into existence, and Bergson insists that the élan vital requires intuition (in the sense of subjective experience) and (in a rather Romantic way) imagination, in order to create our knowledge of reality. Both intuition and Élan Vital create an alternative approach to how one might regard subjectivity, and for feminists it sets up the possibility that one should be authentic to one's own inner feelings, in opposition to the ossified social conventions of the prevailing Edwardian patriarchy.

Mansfield's 'Prelude' and Bergsonian Intensities of the Self

'Prelude' incorporates memories of childhood and considers the psychological state of mind of various members of the Burnell family. The structure might be regarded as like a cobweb in that it contains various viewpoints, although none of the characters appear to be more important than any other. While action and events are seen through their different perceptions, not all characters are represented in free indirect discourse, which very largely applies to Linda, the aunt, Beryl, and a young child, Kezia.[3] The fiction could also be regarded as narrating various stages of female gender

3 There is also a novella titled *Kezia* by Kevin Boon that focuses on Mansfield's childhood life using Kezia's as a symbol to discuss Mansfield. It is set on a ship taking the 14 year-old Mansfield to England in 1903 to attend school.

and the different generational experiences of women's life, including the early childhood of Lottie and Kezia, the young motherhood of Linda and the old age of Mrs Fairfield. Mansfield incorporates consciously the continuities and discontinuities of female experience and solidarity or lack of solidarity among such women.

Bergson's *Matter and Memory* discusses using the idea of image memory to bridge mind and matter. Bergson introduces 'images' by arguing that one's memory does not belong to her or his body, and that each body or even emotional reaction should be regarded as 'an image'. What is crucial here though is that the subjective mind works through image memories. In 'Prelude', which opens in media res and according to Gasston in which Mansfield recreates 'her [childhood] Karori residence, Chesney Wold' (2014, 37), the character's consciousness articulates itself through an intense emotional reaction on the stressful occasion of moving home. The perspective shifts from the intensity of the overarching situation, to that of the younger children and a more objective description of them:

Hold-alls, bags and boxes were piled upon the floor. "These are absolute necessities that I will not let out of my sight for one instant," said Linda Burnell, her voice trembling with fatigue and excitement.

Lottie and Kezia stood on the patch of lawn just inside the gate all ready for the fray in their coats with brass anchor buttons and little round caps with battleship ribbons. Hand in hand, they stared with round solemn eyes, first at the absolute necessities and then at their mother. ('Prelude', 80)

The varied contrasts between the objective, material necessities in transition, the inconvenient presence of the children and pregnant Linda's imperfect motherhood are all implicit, as is the intense emotional state of all of the characters. Temporarily left behind, Kezia experiences the intensity of the empty house, which resonates with her own sense of implied abandonment:

Kezia wandered back to their own house. Slowly she walked up the back steps, and through the scullery into the kitchen. Nothing was left in it but a lump of gritty yellow soap in one corner of the kitchen window-sill and a piece of flannel stained with a blue bag in another […] The Venetian blind was pulled down but not drawn close. Long pencil rays of sunlight shone through and the wavy shadow of a bush outside danced on the gold lines. Now it was still, now it began to flutter again, and now it came almost as far as her feet. Zoom! Zoom! A blue-bottle knocked against the ceiling; the carpet-tacks had little bits of red fluff sticking to them. ('Prelude', 81)

Kezia describes the last moments in the city-based house her family is about to leave so as to live a remote country suburb. Her wandering allows her to observe the minutiae, offering almost microscopic details, focusing via an imagist, almost quasi-poetic perception. The remnants of the

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The book is a mix of fact and fiction; it give a full picture of Mansfield growing up in Thorndon, moving to Karori, of her at Wellington Girls' College, New Zealand and of her relationships with family members and the city. Mansfield is portrayed as a solitary young girl with a clear imagination. Sometimes, she had a strained relationship with her parents, but she was closer to her grandmother.

carpet, the intensity of the animated light and darkness convey variously a sadness and fascination on the child's part, and the impact of the environment on her consciousness, very much contrasting the frantic mood of the departed mother. As Gasston suggests 'the domestic interior provided a richly complex setting for the contemplation of a renegotiated subject-object relationship' (2014, 38), and in 'Prelude' Mansfield contrasts two such settings with subtly different nuances, a sense of loss in the first, more constraint in the second.

There are some parallels between the struggle Mansfield herself faced between her public role and those private experiences which are the results of qualitative time that Bergson describes and the types of situations in which her characters find themselves. However, of course Mansfield's characters are seldom direct autobiographical equivalents for Mansfield's own life. For instance, Linda Burnell; the mother in 'Prelude' perhaps has some similarities with Mansfield's own relationship with Murray (her husband), but Linda has not rejected her husband when she tired of him, instead only dreams about such a possibility. Even given her neglect of her children, Linda offers an example of a woman who fails to take up the kinds of choices suggested by her own inner life, unlike Mansfield. Both Mansfield and her character, Linda develop possibility of an alternative, feminist life which chimes with Bergson's emphasis on the élan vital and the importance of the inner subjective self and its desires. Arguably, Linda's intuitive sense represents subjective thought in Bergsonian terms, with her on the cusp of changing from one view of the world to another: on the one hand she loves her husband since he is the 'soul of truth and decency,' ('Prelude' 115) yet on the other hand, she hates him and associates him with a dog, one of the animals her daughter hates just like the mother:

If only he wouldn't jump at her so, and bark so loudly, and watch her with such eager, loving eyes. He was too strong for her; she had always hated things that rush at her, from a child. There were times he was frightening-really frightening. When she just had not screamed at the top of her voice: "You are killing me." ('Prelude', 115)

Here Mansfield's omniscient narrator describes Linda's husband as infantile and her aversion stems from her sense of freedom that counters the social habit of a patriarchal world that he expects. Perhaps, underlying this is her desire for other sexual relations beyond her marriage. Linda is arguably a woman with hidden bohemian fantasies. As Gasston argues Mansfield introduces 'the uncanny (and its accompanying state of attunement, *angst*) to habitual perception so that it is disrupted, so that things can be seen anew' (2014, 44). Linda has become conscious of her élan vital in a partly feminist fashion and fights back against her husband's 'strong' and conventional presence. In parallel, Mansfield did not live a conventional married life with her husband, John Middleton Murry[4] and, according to Claire Tomalin, she called married life with him 'child love'. They had child-like future hopes which led Mansfield to think of a divorce, but the real problem was lack of sexual fulfillment, which suggests how Mansfield's understanding of 'élan vital' perhaps is close to the Lawrentian idea of an affirmative, sexual life force. However, in contrast, although Linda is propelled by a developing sense of herself, in feminist and Bergsonian terms, she does not take the opportunity offered by Mansfield's feminist attitude, which sees a bohemian life

4 John Middleton Murry (1889 – 1957) was an English writer and editor of a few magazines such as the literary *Rhythm* (1911 – 1913) that later named as *The Blue Review*, *The Signature* (1914) with D. H. Lawrence and *The Adelphi* (1923) that named as *The New Adelphi* (1927 - 1930).

as more self-determining and independent than looking after her 'dog' or child-like husband who needs to be fostered continuously and fails to provide her any sexual excitement.

'Prelude' is also written in an experimental form with discontinuities and rhythms that recall musical forms. At first, it was titled 'The Aloe' but then the change of the story from 'The Aloe' to 'Prelude' is interesting, as the former title may symbolise the process of human's life as in birth, sexuality and death. Andrew Gurr discusses that the 'aloe' symbol in 'Prelude' is not intended to reproduce a memory of a particular plant but to suggest 'the daunting fears and pains of a lifetime, lived for a brief moment of flowering.' (*Katherine Mansfield*, 205) At heart such suffering or negativity engages with Mansfield's intuitive life, her own subjective experiences. As the time of composition she was thinking about her dead brother, so the story might be considered an act of mourning, a disguised elegy. In her process of writing she focuses intently on his memory, as if restored to life. In her *Journal* on February 14, 1916 in a section entitled as 'A Great Mystery' she comments:[5]

Dear brother, as I jot these notes, I am speaking to you. […] [A]s I write these words and talk of getting down to the New Zealand atmosphere, I see you opposite to me, I see your thoughtful, seeing eyes. […] Each time I take up my pen *you* are with me. You are mine. You are my playfellow, my brother, and we shall range all over our country together. It is with you that I see, and that is why I see so clearly. That is a great mystery. My brother, I have doubted these last few days.[…] You are more vividly with me now this moment than if you were alive and I were writing to you a short distance away. (*Journal*, 45)

Significantly, Mansfield refers dually to her dead brother first as a vital presence, and second, as a recovered child and as a playmate – which may explain why she reflects this in the complex relationship between childhood and adulthood in the story. In it she conjures up throughout a Romantic image like Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1805) of a childhood spent in nature.

According to Bergson 'In concrete perception memory intervenes, and the subjectivity of sensible qualities is due precisely to the fact that our consciousness, which begins by being only memory, prolongs a plurality of moments into each other, contacting them into a single intuition.' (*Matter and Memory* 292) So Mansfield's only memory intrusion in 'Prelude' is her 'single intuition' of Leslie (her brother) derived from shared experiences in childhood within what is in effect shared qualitative time. As Antliff states 'In the art and art theory of the Bergsonian avant-garde, qualitative time is likewise rooted in organic or mythic metaphors' (173). Therefore, there is a contrast between Mansfield's attempts to find qualitative time and authentic memories that bring solace while mourning her brother's death, she fears the way in which quantitative time and abstract memory would diminish her emotional attachment to her brother. For her the past is coterminous with the present, intensely so, as her notebook indicates above. Patricia Rae discusses in 'Introduction: Modernist Mourning'. how widespread and important melancholia was in a complex manner to the modernists in terms of content but also in terms of the creation of form

5 In the same *Journal* in February 1916, Mansfield wrote 'The Aloe' because she was impacted by her lost brother. The certainty in her mind that '[i]t is simply fascinates me, and I know that it is what you [her brother] wish me to write' (*Journal*, 94) brings reassurance of artistic purpose, and clarity of vision within an emotionally difficult decision.

(*Modernism and Mourning* 2007) 'The modernist elegist refuses to transcend or find redemption in loss and to move to new objects of devotion. He or she does not rise above sorrow, but becomes immersed in it' (14). For Freud melancholia ends when the subject reattaches itself to a new object and to some extent this ends the grief for the lost person, so Mansfield could be regarded as aesthetically resisting this process. (*Mourning and Melancholia* 2001)

The story's narrative technique deploys a third person omniscient narration but as will be arguing, Mansfield makes extensive use of stream of consciousness as indirect interior monologue, as in the following passage:

Kezia liked to stand so before the window. She liked the feeling of the cold shining glass against her hot palms, and she liked to watch the funny white tops that came on her fingers when she pressed them hard against the pane. As she stood there, the day flickered out and dark came. With the dark crept the wind snuffling and howling. […] She wanted to call Lottie and to go on calling all the while she ran downstairs and out of the house. But IT was just behind her, waiting at the door, at the head of the stairs, at the bottom of the stairs, hid in the passage, ready to dart out at the back door. ('Prelude' 82)

Mansfield portrays Kezia's last check through the house and while she is in her father's and mother's room, in front of the window, she experiences past and present memories simultaneously. The flickering suggests a candle, a domestic image of the past, the transition from light to dark indicating the interplay and proximity of past and present, of memories. One encounters Kezia's 'pure memory', her recollection unencumbered by extraneous external elements, which records and restores her intuitive conscious experiences of leaving the house, while the secondary memories of social aspects of the past pertain to other characters. Her fear is conveyed by the impressions that impact upon the child, the world a threatening place potentially, the unknown lurking hidden, protected by the dark.

Mansfield attempts to juxtapose the life of the Burnell's family before and after World War One, indirectly inter-relating both their childhood and adulthood memories. Bergson makes a great play on the relationship between subjective time including the past as well as the present, with the past in the present. Few men feature in Mansfield's story, certainly none of the same social class as the protagonists (apart from the husband). In this sense, the story exemplifies the consequences of World War One in society and for women in particular, expressing their intuitive thoughts through memories, images and symbols of a world where men seem absent and for Mansfield there may have been an autobiographical element.

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The plot-less outline of the story suggests the emphasis on subjective experience of Bergson's qualitative time where time follows a pattern determined by the idiosyncratic structure of duration as experienced impressionistically by individual. The story rejects any the classical form of exposition, rather incorporating rising action, climax, falling action, and finally progression to a conclusion.[6] Mansfield's fiction prioritizes immediacy, without preamble or exposition. No context is provided as 'Prelude' opens:

6 The story does not follow the traditional plot structure, but it is controlled by the feminine voices and influences, concluding the unification of balanced emotional centres, and all the narrative voices together express women's

THERE was not an inch of room for Lottie and Kezia in the buggy. When Pat swung them on top of the luggage they wobbled; the grandmother's lap was full and Linda Burnell could not possibly have held a lump of a child on hers for any distance. Isabel, very superior, was perched beside the new handy-man on the driver's seat. ('Prelude' 56)

In almost dramatic fashion, the narrative engages the reader, in the shifting consciousness of major character at different times, involving the reader in the visceral reactions of these characters, offering hints as to hidden personal characteristics and responsibilities. One glimpses Linda's daughter, Isabel's sense of superiority and Linda's almost neurotic stewardship of her family. Moment to moment inner thoughts emerge from Mansfield's stream of consciousness, integrated into her innovative use of omniscient narration and her extensive focalisation of s thoughts through a third person narration.

Mansfield concentrates her stream of consciousness via narrative focalisation[7] – where an omniscient narrator takes on a character's point of view – and contextualizes the particular environment by the use of colloquial and exaggerated phrases, hence 'inch of room' to indicate very limited space. Mansfield seeks to evoke what Bergson calls: 'that particular assemblage of circumstances which is due to the particular position of the body in time and space' (Matter and Memory, 226). For example, Linda Burnell is the first implicit vital and dominant character, the initial principal focalizer for variously her husband, her daughters, her unmarried sister and her mother. While the centre of consciousness shifts fluidly from one character to another, the reader faces not abrupt or fundamental or noticeable change, although ironically the reader experiences the narrative through multi-personal viewpoints

Accordingly Mansfield employed innovative narrative techniques to convey complex, often contradictory themes, structures and individuals through a mesh of intersecting interior monologues and shifting perspectives. As elsewhere in her fiction, using a miscellany of thoughts, children react to adults; they explore the world often uncertainly; and lonely or alienated women are confronted by a hostile world. Such interactions inhere in a series of apparently nondescript everyday thoughts and interactions, yet they are suffused with meaning and significance. For example, here in 'Prelude' Mansfield introduced both Kezia and Lottie to the external world of male adults as the working class storeman, and how they witnessed the night-life along with the other men who knew the storeman:

perceptions against the patriarchal oppression. As Julia Kristeva argues in 'Women's Time' *In New Maladies of the Soul* (1993) women live in a personal time that is distinguished by fluidity and non-linearity and is opposed to the public time of patriarchal society.

7 Focalization is originally termed by the French theorist, Gerard Genette that is expressed by the subjective perception. It is also related to 'free indirect discourse' or 'free indirect speech' or 'free indirect style' that is about the third person narration along with the essence of first-person direct speech. For example, Mansfield use of first person narrative, without using 'he said or she said' describes free indirect speech. Other examples are James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920). However, free indirect discourse can also be when the narration sounds like the way a character speaks. (Narrative Discourse Revisited by Gerard Genette, 1983) trans., by Jane E. Lewin (1988) Cornell University Press, United States of America.

‘There comes the Picton boat,’ said the storeman, pointing to a little steamer all hung with bright beads.

But when they reached the top of the hill and began to go down the other side the harbour disappeared, and although they were still in the town they were quite lost. Other carts rattled past. Everybody knew the storeman. (Mansfield 393)

Later in the fiction, the stream of consciousness identifies Linda as having two different personalities or selves, one traditional and the other dreaming of respectable marriage, which enables the reader to challenge the traditional attitude of the period toward gender representation. There is evidence to suggest that Linda’s second self is a gendered bohemian inner self that would seek independence. When Stanley, Linda’s husband, lights a candle, after she asks him to, the narrative’s intense focalisation demonstrates shows Linda’s unarticulated, finally seemingly hysterical thoughts about him:

It had never been so plain to her as it was as this moment. There were all her feelings for him, sharp and defined, one as true as the other. And there was this other, this hatred, just as real as the rest. She could have done her feelings up in little packets and given them to Stanley. She longed to hand him that last one, for a surprise. She could see his eyes as he opened that. . . .

She hugged her folded arms and began to laugh silently. How absurd life was laughable, simply laughable. And why this mania of hers to keep alive at all? Was a mania, she thought, mocking and laughing. (‘Prelude’ 115)

Her focalisation is made emphatic through Mansfield’s simultaneous use of free indirect discourse: the narrator merges into Linda’s consciousness, expressed through an indirect interior monologue. It seems as if the narrator is virtually effaced, the passage being framed as if by the character. Linda’s multiple facets define her personal insecurity for not being able to decide as a woman what she should do.

This is a variation of stream of consciousness, in which one hears a character’s thoughts and feelings as well as spoken dialogue with limited explicit intercession of a narrative voice; although paradoxically in formal sense it still exists within an omniscient narrative. An instance of poetic language (in Bergsonian terms ‘aesthetic perception’) can be seen in Aunt Beryl’s interior monologue when she sings and admires her-self by the fire in the dinning-room:

‘If I were outside the window and looked in and saw myself I really would be rather struck,’ thought she. Still more softly she played the accompaniment-not singing now but listening.

. . . . . ’The first time that I ever saw you, little girl-oh, you had no idea that you were not alone-you were sitting with your little feet upon a hassock, playing the guitar. God, I can never forget. . . . ‘Beryl flung up her head and began to sing again:

Even the moon is aweary . . . (‘Prelude’ 103)

The narrative style and structure above consists of multiple viewpoints since the character’s centre of consciousness changes from direct, reported thought to indirect speech. Beryl imagines herself from the perspective of a male admirer, as an object of sexual desire, projecting ironically her desire as an unmarried woman wishing a marriage like her sister’s, which evokes a double consciousness that might be termed a narcissist day dream or reverie.

Metaphorical language and fluidity are also clear artistic influences found in Mansfield's writing style with a direct and indirect influence to Bergson and James's thoughts despite her subjugated position as woman who were often patronized during her lifetimes mainly as a white colonial settler from New Zealand. However, to begin with, Mansfield avoids what many modernists regarded as the monotonous nineteenth century conventions, by using the voice of a narrator located fluidly in the minds of her characters. Her stories are mostly focused on the complexity of human relationships and moments of disruption, ones that at least implicitly interrogate the traditional social and cultural roles of men.

Conclusion

Therefore, the above extracts from Mansfield's 'Prelude' as analysed demonstrate her utilisation of her stream of consciousness technique that shows a new fluid creative writing and the representation of her characters' from a gendered perspective. Also it shows that women like men can express themselves aesthetically in fiction precisely by challenging their externally constituted patriarchal frameworks, using inner experiences to discover previously suppressed their inner selves. In effect, such women were shifting from 'The Angel in the House' stereotype to a more independent individual, or new woman, and doing so by escaping man-made social constructs that hinders women and their self-identity in almost every aspect of life, an Edwardian legacy of Victorianism that persisted. Therefore, the connection between the way a woman lives her actual life in the feminist mode and its formal relationship to stream of consciousness as an exploration of the Bergsonian élan vital, are central preoccupations for Mansfield's fiction. Without James's 'stream of consciousness' and the way this was developed by writers as a technique, Bergson's ideas might not have proved so attractive to modernists and feminists alike, although Mansfield represent a particular example of a gendered Bergsonian reading of subjectivity as well as a modernist feminist.

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