Katherine Mansfield's Experiment with the Multi–personal Point of View as a Method of Characterization in "Prelude" and "At the Bay"

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Abstract

This research article focuses on Katherine Mansfield's experiment with the multi–personal point of view as a method of characterization. For the earlier literary critics, Katherine Mansfield was considered a minor author. However, her reputation has risen and she has been reconsidered as a very influential Modernist author. One reason that contributes to her reputation is her narrative technique. The aim of this study is to depict her experiment with the multi–personal point of view that she used in her two most exceptional New Zealand stories, "Prelude" and "At the Bay". In using such a technique, Mansfield had the focalization shift from one character to another and this allows the characters to give their perspectives. Consequently, Mansfield could successfully reveal what their thoughts, conflicts, attitudes, personality and secret self are and what impact they have on each other and on the reader as well. Given that the plot line in her stories does not rise much, the multi–personal point of view allows the reader to gain insight into the psychological state of her characters and to grasp the essence of life Mansfield wants to express to her reader.

Keywords: Katherine Mansfield, Multi–personal Point of View, Focalization, Characterization, "Prelude", "At the Bay"

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยชิ้นนี้ศึกษาการใช้มุมมองหรือกลวิธี รูปแบบใหม่ในการเล่าเรื่องของ แคทเธอรีน แมนส์ฟิลด์ ที่เรียกว่า มัลติเพอร์ซันนัล (multi-personal point of view) เพื่อสะท้อนลักษณะนิสัยของตัวละคร นักวิจารณ์วรรณกรรมสมัยก่อนมีความเห็นว่า แคทเธอรีน แมนส์ฟิลด์ เป็นนักเขียนที่ไม่มีความโดดเด่นมากนัก แต่ในเวลาต่อมานักเขียนผู้นี้เริ่มมีชื่อเสียงมากยิ่งขึ้น และได้รับการยกย่องว่าเป็นนักเขียนสมัยใหม่ (Modernist author) ที่มีอิทธิพลต่อวงการวรรณกรรมโดยเฉพาะเรื่องสั้นเป็นอย่างมาก สาเหตุสำคัญประการหนึ่งที่สร้างชื่อเสียงให้ แคทเธอรีน แมนส์ฟิลด์ คือ เทคนิคการเล่าเรื่อง บทความวิจัยชิ้นนี้มุ่งนำเสนอการใช้มุมมองในการเล่าเรื่องที่เรียกว่า มัลติเพอร์ซันนัล มาเป็นกลวิธีในการถ่ายทอดลักษณะนิสัยของตัวละครในเรื่องสั้น เพรลูด (“Prelude”) และแอทเดอะเบย์ (“At the Bay”) แคทเธอรีน แมนส์ฟิลด์ เล่าเรื่องโดยสลับจุดเน้นร่วมไปมาระหว่างตัวละครเพื่อเปิดโอกาสให้ตัวละครสะท้อนทัศนคติหรือความคิดของตัวละครนั้นๆ หรือทัศนคติหรือความคิดที่ตัวละครนั้นๆ มีต่อตัวละครอื่น และด้วยกลวิธีการเล่าเรื่องดังกล่าวนี้ แคทเธอรีน แมนส์ฟิลด์ จึงสามารถสะท้อนความคิด ความขัดแย้ง ทัศนคติ บุคลิกลักษณะ และความลับที่ซ่อนอยู่ภายในตัวละครได้อย่างลึกซึ้ง ตลอดจนสามารถสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงผลกระทบที่ตัวละครมีต่อกัน และต่อผู้อ่านด้วย ในเรื่องสั้นของ แคทเธอรีน แมนส์ฟิลด์ เส้นที่แสดงเรื่องหรือแนวเรื่องตั้งแต่จุดเริ่มต้น จุดกึ่งกลาง และจุดจบจะไม่สมบูรณ์เหมือนในโครงเรื่องของเรื่องสั้นยุคก่อนแต่ แคทเธอรีน แมนส์ฟิลด์ ใช้วิธีการเล่าเรื่องแบบมัลติเพอร์ซันนัล เพื่อช่วยให้ผู้อ่านเข้าถึงสภาวะภายในจิตใจของตัวละครและแก่นแท้ของชีวิตได้อย่างมีประสิทธิผลยิ่ง

คำสำคัญ: แคทเธอรีน แมนส์ฟิลด์ มุมมองแบบมัลติเพอร์ซันนัล จุดเน้นร่วม การนำเสนอลักษณะของตัวละคร เพรลูด แอทเดอะเบย์

1. Introduction

Katherine Mansfield was a prominent modernist short story writer. She was born in colonial New Zealand in 1888. She went to London where she attended Queen's College in 1903. In 1906, she returned to New Zealand and began to write short stories. By this time, she had found her passion as writer. Feeling miserable because of New Zealand's traditional lifestyle, Mansfield decided to return to London in 1908 to pursue her career as a writer. When a new avant-garde magazine *Rhythm* was established, she submitted a story to it but it was rejected because John Middleton Murry, its editor, wanted something darker. Later in 1912, Mansfield submitted "The Woman at the Store," which was about murder and mental illness and was set in the wilds of colonial New Zealand.

Compelled to go abroad, she moved to France and continued to produce many great stories. When her brother Leslie Heron Beauchamp died in 1915, she was in deep sorrow. Also during that time, she was surrounded by many great modernist writers such as D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and T.S. Eliot. In 1917, she became ill with tuberculosis. In 1920, she wrote "Bliss," which earned her a reputation as one of the great authors of the modernist movement. She continued writing until she passed away at the age of thirty-four in 1923.

Mansfield made many literary contribution to *Rhythm.* Nakano as cited in Kaplanova (2013) stated that the objective of *Rhythm* was "to collect works from Modernists, integration of high (elitist) and low (popular) cultures, by collecting all works which somehow employ a Bergsonian sense of rhythm" (p. 11). During its entire run of 14 issues, *Rhythm* put major emphasis on radical experimentation in art and was considered as one of the most significant modernist magazines. Mansfield's experience with *Rhythm* significantly affected her writing: she emerged herself as a modernist short story

writer whose works were experimental, departing from traditional short stories mastered by earlier American short story writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville and by European short story writers such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Guy de Maupassant and Joseph Conrad. These writers, as Rohrberger (1979) put it, "write stories of exceptional merit, finely crafted and closely wrought" (p. 5).

The short story as a literary genre has gone through different stages of development. In the nineteenth century the short story had formed into an art form with unique characteristics. Edgar Allan Poe wrote a well-known review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Twice Told Tales, published in 1842. Poe (1950) attempted to define the genre in his review of Hawthorne's tales. He emphasized that what Hawthorne constructed is an art form: "A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents-he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect" (p. 450). The first stage of development refers to stories written by Hawthorne and Poe in the nineteenth century. Stories in this early mode are characterized by traditional plot line, extraordinary or supernatural surface content and traditional symbols. Hawthorne's "Maypole of the Merrymount" and "Roger Malvin's Burial" exemplify the short story of an early mode. The story follows the traditional plot line with exposition to climax and the resolution at the end.

The next stage of the development of the short story is classified as the modern mode. Before moving to this modern mode, writers with less skill and less artistic craftsmanship than Hawthorne and Poe had practiced the traditional plotted action and considered Poe's "pre-conceived design' as a formula. As a result, the short story became formulistic: there was no originality.

> But there were other writers, deficient in talent and inadequate in vision, who read Poe's dictum concerning pre-established design in rigid and formulistic terms: This together with the multiplication of journals publishing short fiction, resulted in a proliferation of stories by minor authors whose products tended to become more and more formulistic, The result was that the short story almost died. (Rohrberger, 1979, p. 5)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the short story's form underwent significant development in rejecting the formulistic stories. Major modern writers such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Joseph Conrad, and Sherwood Anderson brought the modern short story form to the highest point. Their stories departed from the traditional plot line to the plot that did not rise too much and ended without resolution. They also departed from extraordinary surface content to ordinary and everyday surface and from traditional symbols to symbols whose meanings derived from the context. Their work presents ordinary life of ordinary people in real settings. Katherine Mansfield has been considered a pioneer, a forerunner as the modernist short story writer whose works contributed greatly to the development of short story as a literary genre.

According to Pericles Lewis (2007) in *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism,* the term "modernism" became current in English shortly after the First World War: "In its broadest sense, modernism has become the label for an entire tendency in literature and the arts, sometimes indeed for a whole period in cultural history, stretching as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century and continuing at least until the middle of the twentieth" (p. XVII). Modernists moved away from traditional concepts and practice involving

both the content and the form of the presentation. Modern art and literature "are known for their rejection of traditional conventions for representing the world and constructing works of art" (p. 3). In doing so, modernists "experimented with new styles and techniques as well as subject matter that had not been treated seriously by artists and writers in previous generations" (p. 3). Among the experimental features was the concept of time: "Time becomes a dominant theme in the modernist novel, from the level of clocks and watches through that of human history to cosmological time" (p. 161). By 1914, the first World War broke out, and literature became darker with a growing sense of mistrust. Thus, the works of the modernists during this time focused on the moment of a story and began with no introduction to setting or characters, and the story reached its climax with unresolved or sudden endings.

Katherine Mansfield wrote many experimental modernist short stories. Her works demonstrated strikingly innovative narrative techniques. She published her first story in 1908 before she even read Anton Chekhov's works. Although she considered him as her mentor, "her characteristic themes and techniques were established before she came into contact with his stories" (Rohrberger, 1979, p. 6). She also did not have direct contact with James Joyce, one of the most famous modernist novelists: "Joyce was writing the stories later published in *Dubliners* at about the same time Mansfield began to write, but there is no evidence that she had any contact with him or he with her at that time" (Rohrberger, 1979 p. 6). Therefore, Mansfield's works were truly hers.

This research article attempts to explore Katherine Mansfield's experimental use of the multi–personal point of view as a means to present characterization in two of her most remarkable New Zealand short stories "Prelude" and "At the Bay."

2. Review of Literature

2.1 In Katherine Mansfield: A Critical study, Sylvia Berkman (1951) analyzed traditional elements of the short story such as theme, plot, and characters with emphasis on Mansfield's biographical accounts. Her short stories "deal with at least five different themes: loneliness and frustration; sexual maladjustment; purposeless suffering; denial of emotional fulfilment; and falseness and ostentation as well as stability in sophisticated modern life" (p. 179). *In An Introduction to Literature* by Rohrberger and Woods (1971), Mansfield's stories are considered highly skilled technical productions which depend on "atmosphere, mood, exact detail and precise and evocative phrasing to help expand the moment and give it universal significance" (p. 8). Kimber (2008) in *Katherine Mansfield: The View from France* mainly examines why Mansfield was more famous in France than in England. The book "converses new ground in Mansfieldian studies in its endeavor to establish interconnections between Mansfield's own French interconnections (literary and otherwise), and the myth-making of the French critics and translators" (p. 19). In the article "Hot Sparks and Cold Devils: Katherine Mansfield and Modernist Thermodynamics", Moffett (2014) focused on Mansfield's use of metaphors of temperature which was considered modernist technique. Mansfield's letters and book reviews "reveal a tendency to conceive of the difference between established modes of fiction and more experimental works in terms of light and heat" (p. 59). Moffett's study does not focus on Mansfield's use of narrative technique.

Nakano (as cited in Kaplanova, 2013) explores Henri Bergson's influence on Katherine Mansfield in terms of his concepts of time and space. She analyzes how Mansfield's "Prelude" and "At the Bay" exemplify Bergson's influence on Mansfield. In *Modern Novelists: Six Women Novelists*, Williams (1987) focuses on Katherine Mansfield's

biographical accounts especially those concerning the relationship between Mansfield and John Middleton Murry and the analysis of Mansfield's women characters and their resentment against men. Drewery (2011) studies the aspect of liminality in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair, and Virginia Woolf who experiment with impersonal styles of writing. Regarding Mansfield, Drewery (2011) explores how Mansfield experimented with free indirect discourse to convey her protagonists' inner lives. Linda and Beryl in "Prelude" and "At the Bay", for Drewery, are depicted "negotiating these sometimes−painful assumption about their subjectivities" (p. 98), but Drewery does not provide an in−depth analysis of "Prelude" and "At the Bay" in terms of the narrative technique and characterization. The only critical study done on Mansfield's narrative technique is by Kaplanova (2013) who covers various aspects of Mansfield such as Mansfield as a Modernist, Mansfield and Chekhov's lyricism and the comparison between Mansfield and Woolf in terms of their liminal experience. In Chapter II, Kaplanova explores Mansfield's singular style, but does not focus specifically on Mansfield's narrative technique as a method of characterization. Therefore, it is this study's attempt to analyze how Mansfield experiments with the multi−personal point of view as a method of characterization in "Prelude" and "At the Bay".

2.2 Point of view

Point of view is mainly about who tells the story. It is important for the readers to know who tells the story so that they can correctly interpret and/or accurately judge the characters' actions. In literary works, the authors are not necessarily telling their own personal stories. The authors create a voice or a narrator to tell the story. There are several basic types of point of view. The first person narrator tells the story directly to the readers.

He can be a protagonist or a minor character or he can be an observer narrating actions. With the first person point of view, the readers could feel very close to the I–narrator and could witness the actions as if they were there themselves. This point of view "creates immediacy and intimacy" (Daniel & Safier, 1980, p. 81). In addition, there is the third person point of view which can be divided into three types: limited, unlimited or omniscient, and objective point of view. The third–person limited point of view is limited to only one character chosen by the author. This chosen character tells the readers what he sees, hears, thinks, and feels. This means that the readers will not be able to know what other characters see, hear, think and feel because access into the thoughts and memories of other characters is limited. On the contrary, the omniscient (all–knowing) narrator knows everything that happens in the story. His knowledge is unlimited: "Godlike, he sees into the minds of all characters, moves about observing the actions of all characters and tells us what he or she or they think and do" (Cockelreas & Logan, 1971, p. 9). In the third–person objective point of view, the narrator just simply reports factual details as if he were only a spectator of events. He does not enter the character's mind, so he cannot reveal the characters' thoughts and feeling. He only reports what can be seen or heard. Therefore, the readers have to make their own interpretation, evaluation, and judgement. DiYanni (2002) calls this type of narrator "a detached observer" (p. 72).

In Katherine Mansfield's short stories, there are various kinds of point of view that she makes use of: the first–person narrator, the omniscient narrator, and a combination of several third–person limited narrators and the omniscient narrator. In particular, Mansfield relies on the multi–personal point of view which allows her to narrate the story from her characters' perspective. The multi–personal point of view was an experimental technique by Mansfield who made it her own tool of characterization. According to Gunsteren (1990),

Mansfield "has found her method…She eliminates everything which may remind the reader of the writer's personality. All description is rendered as an impression of one of the characters, or in the form of direct speech…Peculiar to Katherine Mansfield's method is her way of letting her characters talk and think in their own characteristic language, in this way revealing their personalities" (p. 121). Rohrberger as cited in Gunsteren (1990) claims the technique to be Mansfieldian: "Most of the stories either focus through the consciousness of the central character or characters or employ the peculiar shifting viewpoint called 'multipersonal'…which in Mansfield's hands can be considered innovative to the point of standing as a Mansfield signature" (p. 121). The article "Circling the Self: the Short Story Innovations of Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf" by Feenstra (2009–2010) examines the Modernist mode of thought and perception with emphasis on the nature and the self. Such aspect is vital in the works of Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf. In addition, the article examines the structure of narrative progression. Both writers attempt to "remake traditional forms of plot advancement and find new ways of creating narrative progression" (p. 66). The article points out that Mansfield "employs a slightly different approach in her revisions to classic narrative progression. In 'At the Bay,' Mansfield presents a story told in one day through several perspectives" (p. 68). However, the article does not provide detailed analysis of the perspectives.

In "Katherine Mansfield and the Art of Fiction", Stead (1996) claims that in telling the stories, "immediacy is achieved by a combination of imaginative involvement and intellectual detachment, a combination which Frank O'Connor, for example, admires and yet is shocked by–precisely because explicit judgment is eliminated, the author will not intervene directly" (p. 164).

Mansfield used the multi−personal point of view as her special technique of narrating stories to create life in them, to make them memorable, and significantly to expand the moment of experience to cover the past and the future. The experimental point of view gives her tremendous advantages for the characterization. Her stories provide powerful and valuable insights into human condition, psychological aspects, and attitudes toward life. Mansfield is also successful in terms of role playing, which demonstrates the sense of multiplicity. Her interest in role−playing "is a recurring element in 'Prelude', as Mansfield depicted characters of varying age and gender assuming roles in relation to particular social contexts,…" (Feenstra, 2009−2010, p. 64). In most of her stories, the narrator stays outside the central character or central characters' consciousness. The shifting of point of view from one character to another gives an in−depth picture of her characters. The reader can see what the characters think, see, or feel. Sometimes she used a method of composite consciousness that makes the reader become familiar with not only her major characters but also a group of minor ones. This method of the multi−personal point of view together with the use of composite consciousness enlarges the scope of the story. In addition, the multi−personal point of view expands the stories to the historical context, to immediate and personal.

The following short stories "Prelude" and "At the Bay" are cited from the book Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield (1962).

3. "Prelude"

In "Prelude", Mansfield masterfully worked on her point of view so that she could reveal the truths about her characters. For Mansfield, plot was secondary since she emphasized more the exploration of her characters' inner lives. At the beginning of "Prelude," she started with a composite consciousness to enlarge the scope and to introduce

the characters to the readers although they had not met her characters yet. The Burnell family was about to move from the house in the town to the new house in the country. Isabel, Linda, and the grandmother filled all the seats together with all necessary things as Linda said "These are absolute necessities that I will not let out of my sight for one instant" ("Prelude", p. 11). There was no room for Kezia and Lottie. As we heard Linda saying, "We shall simply have to leave them. That is all. We shall simply have to cast them off" ("Prelude", p. 11), The point of view shifted back to the pictures of Kezia and Lottie and their feeling: "Kezia bit her lip, but Lottie, carefully finding her handkerchief first, set up a wail" ("Prelude", p. 12). That Isabel, the eldest sister, sat proudly immediately established her as a typical eldest sister of authority. That the grandmother was busy arranging things when the cart was moving also establishes her as a woman of order and neatness. Then the narrator shifts to focus on the Josephs family and through the Josephs, the reader is apprised of the fact that the Burnells were superior to the Josephs in terms of social status. The way Mrs. Samuel Josephs talked showed that she was not educated. Mrs. Josephs told Linda and the grandmother that she could take care of Kezia and Lottie until the Storeman came to pick them up: "Why not leave the chudren with be for the afterdoon, Brs. Burnell? They could go on the dray with the storeban when he comes in the eveding. Those things on the path have to go, dod't they?" ("Prelude", p. 11). Mrs. Josephs' boys were rough: one of them pretended to ask if Kezia and Lottie wanted strawberries and cream or bread and dripping. Lottie not knowing that it was the trick answered politely:

> Strawberries and cream please," said she.
> "Ah–h–h–h." How they all laughed and beat the table with their teaspoons. Wasn't that a take–in! Wasn't it now! Didn't he fox her! Good old Stan!
> "Ma! She thought it was real. ("Prelude", p. 13)

One major aspect of "Prelude" is women's lives and their role within the family where men were the rule makers, the sole providers. Mansfield, with deep concern for the women's positions in her stories, portrayed her female characters trapped in marriages full of burdens and expectations. Thus, these women underwent plight and pain throughout the stories. Linda, the central character in "Prelude", was the mistress of the wealthy family. Her complex character was revealed through Mansfield's use of the multi–personal point of view. The readers learnt of the relationship with her children, the marital relationship with her husband, Stanley, and her psychological state. On the surface, Linda seemed to be happy and contented because her husband was a successful businessman of high social status, who provided everything for his family and who loved her passionately. However, deep down inside she was not happy: she remained ambivalent about her life tainted by the inner conflicts. Aihong (2012) analyzed Linda's problem:

> Linda's unhappiness derives primarily from the role imposed on her by marriage. She is supposed to shoulder responsibility of a careful mother, an obedient wife, and a hard–working housewife. The problem lies in the fact that Linda hates her role as a woman and intends to forsake it and escape from it. (pp. 101–102)

Linda was uninterested in her own children: she was not energetic nor as enthusiastic as the mother. The reader could be aware of her lack of interest at the beginning of the story when she fantasized about leaving Kezia and Lottie, the youngest daughter, behind:

> We shall simply have to cast them off,' said Linda Burnell. A strange little laugh flew from her lips; she leaned back against the buttoned leather cushions and shut her eyes, her lips trembling with laughter. ("Prelude", p. 11)

When Kezia and Lottie arrived at the new house in the evening, it was the grandmother who went out to look for them. When they entered the dining room, the reader could see Linda "in a long cane chair, with her feet on a hassock and a plaid over her knees, lay before a crackling fire" ("Prelude", p. 19). She did not seem to be interested in the children's whereabouts: " 'Are those the children?' But Linda did not really care; she did not even open her eyes to see" ("Prelude", p. 19). In section V, the focalization shifted to Linda, and the reader could gain insight into her inner thoughts and feelings. Her life seemed to be meaningless. She even thought about leaving the family, but she could not pinpoint exactly where she would go or whether she had "a place" to go: "Looking at them she wished that she was going away from this house, too. And she saw herself driving away from them all in a little, buggy, driving away from everybody and not even waving" ("Prelude", p. 25). Because in reality Linda realized she had no choice in life, she often dreamt of escape which could not be fulfilled. However, they "embody her rebellion and resistance against the dominance of the patriarchal society represented by Stanley as the rule maker and center of authority" ("Prelude", p. 54). Such an absurd life she found, so she waited for someone to come, something to happen, something to set her free probably: "Only she seemed to be listening with her wide open watchful eyes, waiting for someone to come who just did not come, watching for something to happen that just did not happen" ("Prelude", p. 28).

In Section XI, the focalization shifted to Linda again, and the reader learned more about her endless pain and fate because of Stanley's excessive love and passion that kept haunting and tormenting her:

> For all her love and respect and admiration she hated him. And how tender he always was after times like those, how submissive, how thoughtful. He would do anything for her; he longed to serve her…("Prelude", p. 54)

Linda in "Prelude" could not find an escape from the absurd life. She had to accept her destiny: "I shall go on having children and Stanley will go on making money and the children…("Prelude", p. 54).

Gunsteren (as cited in Kaplanova, 2013) described Linda's acceptance: "What she insinuates is that she should finally conform to the expected norm, to abandon her 'solitary, spiritual life" (p. 63).

When the narrator shifted to Stanley, his characteristics and attitudes were presented to the reader. Mansfield showed her ability to create the male world, their relationship with females and their emotional conflict. Through the multi−personal point of view, Stanley was portrayed as a type of businessman who had strong ambition and dedication to build his family and raised the standard to the highest peak. He also represented a male chauvinist and an egocentric and authority figure. At home, everyone had to serve him because he was the provider of the family. His world was one of business, work, and money. He loved things in order, in process, but he was the one who gave order. Undoubtedly, whenever he left home for the office, everyone felt free and happy without any kind of pressure or control. Linda "did not rest again until the final slam of the front door told her that Stanley was really gone" ("Prelude", p. 26). Whenever he came back home, the readers can imply from Linda's greeting "Hullo! Are you home again"? ("Prelude", p. 36). Despite being an authority figure, a

perfectionist, Stanley, through his consciousness, actually seemed to be an insecure and panicky person. He loved to plan everything in advance only to make sure nothing went wrong: "He began to plan what he would do with his Saturday afternoons and his Sundays" ("Prelude", p. 36). He even wanted to be admired by his family as he imagined he was talking to Linda on Sunday afternoon:

> The rest of the day he'd loaf about with Linda…Now they were walking about the garden; she was on his arm, and he was explaining to her at length what he intended doing at the office the week following. He heard her saying: 'My dear, I think that is most wise…' ("Prelude", p. 36)

Upon arriving home from work, he would feel anxious about what might happen to his family: "A sort of panic overtook Burnell whenever he approached near home. Before he was well inside the gate, he would shout to anyone within sight: 'Is everything all right?' And then he did not believe until he heard Linda say: 'Hullo! Are you home again?'" ("Prelude", p. 36)

It would always be Linda who kept reassuring him that he was not fat:

> "My dear, don't worry. You'll never be fat. You are far too energetic."
> "Yes, yes, I supposed that's true," said he, comforted for the hundredth time, and taking a pearl penknife out of his pocket he began to pare his nails. ("Prelude", p. 26)

Beryl Fairfield, Linda's younger sister, is another complex character. Mansfield made use of the multi−personal point of view as a means to present Beryl's character. Beryl brought the reader into her

consciousness, making the reader aware of her thought and feelings. Adolescence's pleasure and pain was explored in her character. Beryl was getting older and still she did not have a suitor. This can be seen as her fear—a fear to be old as her mother. Her anxiety and frustration were seen in her song and her fantasy. Beryl's song is a love song, but even in the song, there was no sense of fulfillment. The isolated lovers only pressed hands:

> Nature has gone to her rest, love,
> See, we are alone.
> Give me your hand to press, love,
> Lightly within my own. ("Prelude", p. 39)

Like Linda, Beryl engaged in day-dreaming and thoughts. For Beryl, it was desire for romantic love. By moving away from the town to the country, Beryl was aware that there were fewer chances for her to find a respectable man. A beautiful and charming woman, Beryl was like a princess waiting for a prince who would love her, protect her, and provide happiness to her:

> Oh, she was restless, restless. There was a mirror over the mantel. She leant her arms along and looked at her pale shadow in it. How beautiful she looked, but there was nobody to see, nobody. ("Prelude", p. 40)

In Section XII, the focalization shifted to Beryl again. In the imaginary letter she was writing to Nan Pym, the reader could learn of her isolation:

> We have got neighbors, but they are only farmers… It's pretty certain nobody will ever come out from town to see us…Such is life. It's a sad ending for poor little B. ("Prelude", pp. 55-56)

She also underwent a moment of self observation, criticizing her false self. She claimed that her false self, not her true self, wrote that letter: "It was her other self who had written the letter. It not only bored, it rather disgusted her real self ("Prelude", p. 57). Through her consciousness, the reader was aware of her secret self: "'Oh,'" she cried, 'I am so miserable—so frightfully miserable. I know that I'm silly and spiteful and vain; I'm always acting a part. I'm never my real self for a moment'" ("Prelude", p. 59).

Beryl kept revealing the presence of her secret self through which she saw herself doing something her true self would disapprove such as flirting with visitors: "…standing under the lamp if a man came to dinner, so that he should see the light on her hair, pouting and pretending to be a little girl when she was asked to play the guitar" ("Prelude", p. 59) or even with Stanley, her brother−in−law: "Only last night when he was reading the paper her false self had stood beside him and leaned against his shoulder on purpose. Hadn't she put her hand over his, pointing out something so that he should see how white her hand was beside his brown one" ("Prelude", p. 59). Beryl's struggle with the false self was then interrupted by Kezia's appearance, causing her to get back to the real world.

Children are also the prime focus in Mansfield's stories. Through Mansfield's narrative techniques, the children's consciousnesses were effectively transmitted, and through their consciousness, the reader learnt of their thoughts and feeling when experiencing their own world and the adult world. In "Prelude", the children of the Burnell family became alive, with Kezia as a central character. The children's language and their perspective are different from those of the adult characters. The young characters such as Isabel, Kezia, Lottie, Pip, and Rag spoke the language of childhood and acted or reacted to various situations that made them representatives of childhood, of joy and fear derived

from their adventurous and discovering minds. Isabel and Pip, the eldest, acted as figures of authority to the younger ones. Kezia was portrayed as a girl moving to become more mature and dealing with the knowledge of life and death either consciously or unconsciously; Lottie, the youngest, sought help or cried for help because she still lacked skills of games. Lottie's language was very childlike and real.

Mansfield's modernist revelation of the inner life and psychology of the children characters was successful. In section II, when the narrator shifted to Kezia, the reader saw her wandering through the empty house. While exploring the house and the garden, the reader followed every step she made and knew more about her thought and feeling about the emptiness of the place, her innocence, and her fear:

> With the dark crept the wind snuffling and howling. The windows of the empty house shook, a creaking came from the walls and floors, a piece of loose iron on the roof banged forlornly. Kezia was suddenly quite, quite still, with wide open eyes and knees pressed together she was frightened…But IT was just behind her, waiting at the door, at the head of the stairs, at the bottom of the stairs, hiding in the passage, ready to dart out at the back door. ("Prelude", p. 15).

When Kezia explored the new house's garden, through her consciousness, the reader could see how she gradually became more mature and smarter when she observed several paths some of which were not safe enough to take:

> She did not believe that she would ever not get lost in this garden…On one side they all led into a tangle of tall dark trees and strange bushes with flat velvet leaves and feathery cream flowers that buzzed with flies when you shook them–this was the frightening

> side and no garden at all. The little paths here were wet and clayey with tree roots spanned across them like the marks of big fowls, feet ("Prelude", p. 32).

Kezia's attitude toward life and death presents her childlike character. She begged Pat to put the head back on the duck even though the duck was dead: "But Kezia suddenly rushed at Pat and flung her arms round his legs and butted her head as hard as she could against his knees. "Put head back! Put head back!' she screamed" ("Prelude", p. 46). Kezia was facing the cruelty of the world.

"Prelude" presents a community of women. Section x is about Alice, the family's maid. Through Mansfield's use of the multi-personal point of view, the readers become aware of the existing conflict between Beryl who is sophisticated and wealthy and Alice who is coarse and poor. When Beryl gave an order to Alice, the reader could detect her arrogant tone:

> And don't forget to put little doylies under the plates—will you? You did yesterday, you know, and the tea looked so ugly and common…Really, I think 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? ("Prelude", p. 49)

Also, through Alice's consciousness, the reader learnt of her psychological state. She was bitter and frustrated because of Beryl's attitude toward her:

> Oh, Alice was wild. She wasn't one to mind being told, but there was something in the way Miss Beryl had of speaking to her that she couldn't stand. Oh, that she couldn't. It made her curl up inside, as you might say, and she fair trembled. But what Alice really

> hated Miss Beryl for was that she made her feel low. She talked to Alice in a special voice as though she wasn't quite all there. ("Prelude", p. 49)

4. "At the Bay"

"At the Bay," another remarkable New Zealand story, is a sequel to "Prelude." The story presents a full picture of Mansfield's concept of "self" portrayed through her characters. According to McMahon (2013), "At the Bay" is "full of different representations and understandings of 'self', but gives the reader a greater sense of resolution on the subject than her other stories" (p. 70). Mansfield's use of the multi-personal point of view has significantly contributed to the characterization. Focalization shifts from the perspectives of the narrator to another character and to another character. Feenstra (2009-2010) stated: "By deftly moving between several characters' minds, each of which displays its own psychological changes, the story achieves a sense of momentum that also manages to support Mansfield's exploration of the nature of the self" (p. 69). Through her characters, Mansfield could present different aspects of self-identity. Feenstra (2009-2010) summed up Mansfield's effective exploration of the nature of the self in "At the Bay":

> The juxtaposition of different psyches of varying age and gender allows Mansfield to establish a parallel between the sometimes oxymoronic juxtaposition of different aspects of self-identity within a single person. Cumulatively, therefore, the narrative technique in 'At the Bay' reflects Mansfield's radical new approach to presenting the self in fiction, rejecting the established modes of representation and striving towards something new. (p. 69)

In section II of the story, Mansfield depicted Stanley's psychological state: "Mansfield introduces us to the impatient, highly−strung character of Stanley Burnell who takes everyday life as a challenge to be conquered and pinned down by action" (McMahon, 2013, p. 25). At the beginning of the section, the use of the multi−personal point of view effectively reveals a tension between the two male characters Stanley and Jonathan and establishes in the reader's mind their conflict or difference, thus allowing the reader to gain insight into their thoughts and attitudes. The reader sees Stanley wading out exulting and comes to understand what is in his mind when the narrator shifts to him: "First man in as usual! He'd beaten them all again. And he swooped down to souse his head and neck" ("At the Bay", p. 208). However suddenly his proud moment was interrupted by Jonathan: "Hail, brother! All hail, thou Mighty One!" ("At the Bay", p. 208).

Through Stanley's consciousness, the reader could easily be informed of his negative attitudes toward or even contempt for Jonathan:

> What was the matter with the man? This mania for conversation irritated Stanley beyond words. And it was always the same−always some piffle about a dream he'd had, or some cranky idea he'd got hold of, or some rot he'd been reading… 'I dreamt I was hanging over a terrifically high cliff, shouting to someone below.' You would be! Thought Stanley. He could stick no more of it. He stopped splashing. 'Look here, Trout,' he said, 'I'm in rather a hurry this morning.' ("At the Bay", p. 208)

In Section III, the reader could see more of Stanley's nature of the self. In the morning before going to work, he was upset because he could not find his stick and his family did not seem to pay attention to him. It was a hectic moment for Stanley who loved to have everything under control:

> Stanley dashed into the bedroom where Linda was lying, 'Most extraordinary thing. I can't keep a single possession to myself. They've made away with my stick, now!' ("At the Bay", p. 212)

Through his frustration, the reader realized his attitude concerning his role as the sole provider of the family:

> The heartlessness of woman! The way they took it for granted it was your job to slave away for them while they didn't even take the trouble to see that your walking−stick wasn't lost. ("At the Bay", p. 212)

However, on his way back home, the reader saw him feeling guilty about his behavior: "I can't imagine how I can have done such a thing. My confounded temper, of course" ("At the Bay", p. 240).

Then, as if for the sake of fairness, focalization shifted to Jonathan whose perspective reflected his attitude toward Stanley who was not the kind of person Jonathan would respect:

> There was something pathetic in his determination to make a job of everything. You couldn't help feeling he'd be caught out one day, and then what an almighty cropper he'd come! ("At the Bay", p. 209)

The reader also learnt more of Jonathan himself−−the way he lived and looked at his life:

> At that moment an immense wave lifted Jonathan, rode past him, and broke along the beach with a joyful sound. What a beauty! And now there came another. That way the way to live−carelessly, recklessly, spending oneself. He got on to his feet and began to wade towards the shore,… To take things easy, not to

> fight against the ebb and flow of life, but to give way to it–that was what was needed. (At the Bay, p. 209)

Jonathan's characteristics are also revealed through Linda's perspective when they met while Linda was walking up and down the grass in the garden. What the reader learnt of Janathan through Linda's consciousness reconfirms what kind of person Jonathan was. Jonathan is another of Mansfield's male characters who represents her view of the failure of men in a way different from Raoul Duquette in "Je Ne Parle Pas Francais." He always came up with good ideas but nothing had ever come out of them. He just let his life flow and did not have enough courage to break that barrier in his life. Compared to Stanley, Jonathan was a loser. He could not achieve success in establishing a business or security in money or in providing his family with better life (the Trout always ran out of things and had to borrow from the Burnell). That was why at the moment of their encountering in section II, both were disturbed. Stanley went back to the house feeling his morning was spoiled whereas Jonathan did not have fun swimming anymore. Linda's consciousness helps further unfold Jonathan's true character when the narrator shifted to him:

> What was the matter with Jonathan? He had no ambition; she supposed that was it. And yet one felt he was gifted, exceptional… He was always full of new ideas, schemes, plans. But nothing came of it all. The new fire blazed in Jonathan; you almost heard it roaring softly as he explained, described and dilated on the new things; but a moment later it had fallen in and there was nothing but ashes, and Jonathan went about with a look like hunger in his black eyes. ("At the Bay", pp. 237–238)

Jonathan himself must have realized his own weaknesses as he told Linda directly:

> 'It seems to me just as imbecile, just as infernal, to have to go to the office on Monday,' said Jonathan, 'as it always has done and always will do… Tell me, what is the difference between my life and that of an ordinary prisoner? The only difference I can see is that I put myself in jail and nobody's ever going to let me out… But as it is, I'm like an insect that's flown into a room of its own accord. I dash against the walls, dash against the windows, flop against the ceiling, do everything on God's earth, in fact, except fly out again. ("At the Bay", p. 237)

Like "Prelude," "At the Bay" is presented through several perspectives. In sections V and VI, focalization shifts to Beryl, Linda's single younger sister, Mrs. Harry Kember, Linda, and Linda's baby boy. Feenstra (2009–2010) observed the discourse: "Free indirect discourse is repeatedly used to internalize the narrative within these various characters, many of whom then experience active trains of thought which propel the narration until a new or returning characters take over" (p. 66)

Like in "Prelude", Linda still remained distant from her children. However, the reader could learn more of her psychological state reflecting her "self". In section VI, her dreamstate pushed her far from the real world where she longed to escape. Achiri (2014) discussed Linda's transcending state: "Linda in 'At the bay' departs worldly interactions in favor of more self–satisfying actions. To persuade the reader of the transcendental nature of her 'self', Mansfield employs many literary tools" (p. 99). Woods as cited in Achiri (2014) explained what Mansfield did as a modernist writer. Mansfield:

> breaks away from the conventions of the 19th century fiction by dispensing with the independent voice of the narrator and by reducing the plot to a minimum. Her focus on the inner world rather than on the action and much of the narration is located within the mind of her characters. (p. 99)

In her dreamscape, when being alone in the garden she moved to another time and space. She saw herself "leaning against her father's knee" ("At the Bay", p. 221). Through her perspectives, the reader learns about Linda's secret self, her alienation from the real world that tortured her. As Achiri (2014) stated, Linda "chooses alienation, the world outside and inside home is not worth enjoying. She prefers to stay lonely at home according to Stevenson as cited in Achiri 'to sustain a fuller sense of a self, freed from the object world'" (p. 100). Both Linda and her father dreamed "to sail up a river in China" (At the Bay, p. 221). Still, both Linda and the reader knew that was the unfulfilled dream.

With Manfield's consistent mastercraft, the reader learns from Linda of her realization concerning Stanley and her baby boy. In "Prelude," she looked for escape, a place to go. She told the reader about Stanley: "For all her love and respect and admiration she hated him" ("Prelude", p. 54). In "At the Bay" there was a significant development in Linda as the character. Linda gained more understanding of her life and came to realize her feeling for Stanley and his weakness:

> Well, she was married to him. And what was more she loved him. Not the Stanley whom everyone saw, not the everyday one; but a timid, sensitive, innocent Stanley who knelt down every night to say his prayers, and longed to be good…He could not be disloyal; he could not tell a lie…

> And it was always Stanley who was in the thick of the danger. Her whole time was spent in rescuing him, and restoring him, and calming him down, and listening to his story. And what was left of her time was spent in the dread of having children. ("At the Bay", p. 222)

Linda has always thought about childbearing as a heavy burden falling upon her. Her newborn son may be considered another burden in her life: "She was broken, made weak, her courage was gone through child−bearing…As to the boy−well, thank Heaven, mother had taken him;…" ("At the Bay", p. 223). However, her consciousness was interrupted by the boy: "and suddenly his face dimpled; it broke into a wide, toothless smile, a perfect beam, no less" (At the Bay, p. 223). As Mead (2012) explained about the interruption: "Linda exudes a new emotion: she is 'astonished at the confidence of this little creature'" (p. 35). Linda's conversation with her baby boy is a very significant moment in which she comes to realize her true feelings. It is her immediate solution in life—the life that has been haunting her about childbearing and her lack of love for her children:

> "I'm here!' that happy smile seemed to say. 'Why don't you like me?'
> There was something so quaint, so unexpected about that smile that Linda smiled herself. But she checked herself and said to the boy coldly, "I don't like babies.'..
> 'Why do you keep on smiling?' she said severely. 'If you knew what I was thinking about you wouldn't.'
> But he only squeezed up his eyes, slyly, and rolled his head on the pillow. He didn't believe a word she said.
> 'We know all about that!' smiled the boy. ("At the Bay", p. 223)

Softened by the baby's heart−melting smile, Linda's sudden realization brought tears to her. It was a moment of pure love. She found the beauty in life and from that point onward the reader hopes that she may change to be like Mrs. Fairchild whose love and care are admirable:

> Linda was so astonished at the confidence of this little creature…Ah no, be sincere. That was not what she felt; it was something far different, it was something so new, so…The tears danced in her eyes; she breathed in a small whisper to the boy, 'Hallo, my funny!' ("At the Bay", p. 223)

Mead (2012) stated about Linda's moment: "The undeniable optimism here transcends 'At the Bay's plot. Linda is a tragic character in these New Zealand stories, and in many instances, her descent into madness seems inevitable. Her one other motherly interaction—a fantastica vision of the aloe with Kezia from "Prelude"—is replaced here with energy and human connection" (p. 36).

Another character whose inner self was portrayed through the multi−personal point of view is Beryl. Both Linda and Beryl did not have a fulfilled life. In "Prelude," Beryl revealed her sense of isolation in her imaginary letter to "Nan." She complained that moving from the city to the country was unfortunate as she asserted that "it's a sad ending for poor little B" ("Prelude", p. 56). Like "Prelude", "At the Bay" demonstrated the character presentation through Mansfield's unique narrative technique:

> "Narrative progression is achieved through the internal changes experienced by individual characters as well as by cycling through the consciousness of several different individuals…Free indirect discourse is repeatedly used to internalize the narrative within these

> various characters, many of whom then experience active trains of thought which propel the narration until a new or returning character takes over. (Feenstra, 2009–2010, p. 69)

Frustrated at her inability to find a life and a lover, Beryl's play acting allowed her to escape her disappointing life. Instead of being with her family at the beach, she chose to bathe with Mrs. Harry Kember although she knew that her mother disapproved of Mrs. Kember. By having the focalization shift to Mrs Kember, Mansfield revealed Mrs. Kember's character, and the depiction could clarify why Mrs. Fairfield disapproved of Mrs. Kember: "The women at the bay thought she was very, very fast. Her lack of vanity, her slang, the way she treated men as though she was one of them…True, she had no children, and her husband…How can he have married her? How can he, how can he? It must have been money, of course, but even then!" ("At the Bay", p. 218). In section XII, Beryl indulged herself in fantasies about a lover: "But in spite of herself, Beryl saw so plainly two people standing in the middle of her room. Her arms were round his neck; he held her. And now he whispered, 'My beauty, my little beauty!' She jumped off her bed, ran over to the window and kneeled on the window–seat, with her elbows on the sill" ("At the Bay", p. 241). She talked to the sad bush and thought about her sad life: "It is lonely living by oneself. Of course, there are relations, friends, heaps of them; but that's not what she means. She wants someone who will find Beryl they none of them know, who will expect her to be that Beryl always. She wants a lover" ("At the Bay", p. 242). At the end of the story, Beryl experienced a shocking moment which in turn allowed her to come to realize about her true self. In the final scene, during her play acting, she saw somebody: "a man, leave the road, step along the paddock beside their palings as if he was coming straight towards her. Her heart beat. Who was it? Who could it be?" ("At the Bay", p. 243).

The voice kept talking to her, urging her to come along. When Beryl reached the gate, she became terrified because the man was there before her: "She was; now she was here she was terrified, and it seemed to her everything was different. The moonlight stared and glittered; the shadows were like bars of iron. Her hand was taken" ("At the Bay", p. 244). The man turned out to be Harry Kember, Mrs. Kember's young and handsome husband. He kept asking her to come along, but Beryl refused to do so, feeling a sense of horror and danger symbolized by the pit of darkness beneath the fuchsia bush:

> His smile was something she'd never seen before. Was he drunk? That bright, blind, terrifying smile froze her with horror. What was she doing? How had she got there? The stern garden asked her as the gate pushed open, and quick as a cat Harry Kember came through and snatched her to him.
> 'Cold little devil! Cold little devil!' said the hateful voice.
> But Beryl was strong. She slipped, ducked, wrenched free.
> 'You are vile, vile,' said she.
> 'Then why in God's name did you come?' stammered Harry Kember ("At the Bay", p. 244).

For Beryl, it was a horrible moment, a nightmare that was real. The reader is kept wondering whether Beryl's mindset would change. Hopefully, Beryl could come to understand herself and the difference between the dream world and the real world which for Beryl was filled with danger and bitterness.

In addition to Beryl, Kezia is one of the children focalizors whose perspective reveals much of her character. In "At the Bay", the conversation she had with her grandmother about life and death reflects

how Kezia looked at the world. As Kaplanova (2013) stated, Mansfield "offers an alternative view on reality through her children focalizors, one that is fresher, original, more innocent than ours" (p. 74). Kezia was curious about death, and she demanded that her grandmother not die:

> Kezia lay still thinking this over. She didn't want to die. It meant she would have to leave here, leave everywhere, forever, leave–leave her grandma. She rolled over quickly.
> 'Grandma,' she said in a startled voice.
> 'What, my pet!'
> 'You're not to die.' Kezia was very decided. ("At the Bay", p. 227)

Kezia wanted her grandmother to promise her not to die, hoping that if that was true, she then did not have to die as well. As Mead (2012) stated, "the scope of this fear is a rather grown–up notion, as if not comprehending it, which the grandmother's avoidance of Kezia's pleading also suggests" (p. 25).

5. Conclusion

Katherine Mansfield's experiment with the multi–personal point of view by which she portrays her characters has won her great admiration among readers as a very influential Modernist writer. Her characters in "Prelude" and "At the Bay" are psychologically complex. To vividly depict these characters, Mansfield uses the multi–personal point of view as a method of characterization so that the reader can gain access to their consciousness and points of view. These characters represent a wide variety of complex human attitudes, each character struggling and fighting both in the outer social dimension world and the interior psychological world to survive in a society which imposes upon them

responsibilities and obligations to which they respond with restlessness and a sense of loss. The reader can witness Linda's and Beryl's unfulfilled lives and secret selves as well as Stanley's strengths and weaknesses, Jonathan's flaws and failures, the grandmother's calmness, and Kezia's innocence and the pain of growing up. The reader also witnesses their moments of realization that make them hope that they might be able to fully develop emotionally. Therefore, there is no doubt that Mansfield's short stories show great ingenuity.

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