

## **Symbols and Techniques in Katherine Mansfield's Works :**

*The Doll's House, The Fly and The Canary*

森 圭 子

## Symbols and Techniques in Katherine Mansfield's Works: *The Doll's House, The Fly and The Canary*

Keiko MORI

### Introduction : Mansfield and Her Works

Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923), a short story novelist from New Zealand, characteristically uses ambiguous endings in her writing style. She always leads readers to anticipate what could happen next. On the contrary, the American novelist, O. Henry (1862–1910) concludes his stories clearly like a solved mystery. He does not ask readers to wonder anymore. Novels have two styles, one is a closed ending and the other is an open ending like Mansfield. Her stories cause readers to use their imaginations to follow them.

This paper looks particularly at the open endings in Mansfield's works. Maybe it is her technique to use ambiguous expressions, without stating everything, in the endings to leave readers wondering how to read. Concerning this, Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr describe her style as follows:

She also absorbed very thoroughly the condensed version of Symbolist aesthetic theory which Symons presented in his books. . . . and to a lesser extent Wilde. . . . Such a theme must be evoked, not described, if it is to be successfully conveyed in art. If we read her stories in the light of this ideal — one which she refers to repeatedly in letters and notebooks — it becomes apparent that in a Mansfield story almost every detail has a symbolic as well as a narrative function. The details, or images, are intended to work in concert to create a mood or evoke a theme which is never directly stated.<sup>(1)</sup>

Previous studies conclude that Arthur Symons (1865–1945) and Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) had a great influence on Mansfield concerning her expression in her works. It is apparent that she purposely writes symbolic expressions in her works. To explore these symbolic expressions concretely in her works, this paper looks at three works from her late 1920's writings *The Dove's Nest*. These works are *The Doll's House*, *The Fly* and *The Canary*. This paper examines the symbols in these works by reading carefully.

These three works were written by Mansfield when she was under medical treatment in Europe. She wrote them with delicate observation and plenty of imagination looking for matters and themes from daily life. They are real short stories. Many words used like poetry in the narration express the writer's inner feelings. Although she became conscious of

her coming death, she turned her thought to these works fully in a foreign country. With her cry for these works, she conveys us to the delicate feelings deep in the minds of men not described. Mansfield's works, which each reflect one part taken out of our lives, are symbolic.

The research method in the analysis of her works is as follows. To answer the deep meaning of her works, her relics are examined. She left many works, a bunch of letters and journals in her short life, because she was very good at composition in childhood. Her letters and journals are important materials to understand her mind then. Also, similar examples from many works were selected to extend the understanding by comparison and consideration. Many previous studies which are key points to reading Mansfield's works are referred to.

The composition of this paper develops as following. Chapter one is about *The Doll's House* which describes a toy lamp illuminating class distinction and bullying. The nature of the lamp is shown through the consciousness of class distinction. Chapter two is about *The Fly* which describes the delicate situation of a boss who lost his only son in the war, after he saw a fly falling into an ink pot. The subtle changing of his mind is examined. Chapter three is about *The Canary* which describes the friendship between a solitary old woman and a canary. This is Mansfield's last work. It is important to notice the beautiful song of the canary moving the old woman's sensibility. Chapter four is about Mansfield's techniques that describe her expressions in modernism, especially examining "beauty" and "stream of consciousness" in her works. The Conclusion is a summary of the results of these three works.

## Chapter 1: Happiness and Innocence in *The Doll's House*

New Zealand, located in the South Pacific, is famous for sheep, but it was a British territory a long time ago. Mansfield was born there and grew up in Karori Village in the suburb of Wellington. It was surrounded by many furze trees. There was a church made of wood, bungalows, general stores, a blacksmith and so on. It was a place with people and nature, the owls' song was heard at night. She attended the only local elementary school with her elder sisters. There were different kinds of students whose parents' jobs were various. This elementary school was the model for *The Doll's House*. The parents who belonged to high society unwillingly let their children attend the school. In the story there is the following conversation:

"Mother," said Kezia, "can't I ask the Kelveys just once?"

"Certainly not, Kezia."

"But why not?"

"Run away, Kezia ; you know quite well why not." (387-388)

This is a conversation between Kezia, who is the other self of the writer, and her mother. In this conversation, the Kelveys are quiet sisters whose parents are a washwoman mother and a missing father. In the various classes mixed in the children's world, if one must draw a line, it was drawn at the Kelveys. Kezia wanted to have the Kelveys look at the doll's house. It was a lamp that connected a rich girl and the poor sisters. The lamp was in a doll's house. What did the lamp bring to the Kelveys, especially the little sister Else? She was perfectly fascinated by it. The nature of the lamp that Kezia and Else looked at together through class distinction in the unbalanced society is important.

### 1 – 1 About the Doll's House

The doll's house which was sent by old Mrs. Hay to the Burnells' children was a big toy house. *The Doll's House* begins by introducing the appearance of the doll's house. It seems like a wonderland, and it is described in the work as follows:

Red carpet covered all the floors except the kitchen; red plush chairs in the drawing-room, green in the dining-room; tables, beds with real bedclothes, a cradle, a stove, a dresser with tiny plates and one big jug. But what Kezia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully, was the lamp. It stood in the middle of the dining-room table, an exquisite little amber lamp with a white globe.<sup>(384)</sup>

This expresses the wonderful interior of the doll's house. Kezia was particularly fascinated with the exquisite little amber lamp. Only little Kezia saw the beauty of the lamp among her three sisters. She was charmed with the lamp in a moment. When she gazed at the lamp in the doll's house, it became a beautiful shining real lamp, like a magical one in her eyes. As for the lamp, Yuko Shibata describes it in the following way:

But this lamp does not light the doll's house. If you try to light the lamp, it could not light because it is a toy lamp. But the lamp never lights, forever, Kezia caught her own light instantly with her "inward eye."<sup>(1)</sup>

Next morning in school, the Burnell children tell their classmates about the doll's house at once. They arranged to ask the girls at school, two at a time, to come and look at it. The fame of the doll's house spreads in school for a while except with the Kelveys, as usual. As for this, Saralyn R. Daly states:

The rhythms of the story oscillate between pleasure and pain: joy at the minute perfection of the doll's house, snobbery among adults and imitative little girls, which accelerates twice to psychic assault on the socially outcast, scapegoated Kelvey children.<sup>(2)</sup>

Although the doll's house is a pleasant wonderful world for the children, the children's real world has an unpleasant bullying with distinctive class consciousness. Thus the writer draws two worlds, one of dreams and one of facts. What does she intend? First, the distinction in the children needs to be examined.

### 1 – 2 The Distinction in the Children

As New Zealand was a British society in those days, the class system was perhaps no problem. Class consciousness appeared with the adults publicly, so it extended to the children naturally. The society seen from the children's eyes reflects the adult's world. The Kelveys who are surrounded by lower class families, like a fatherless family, attend school wearing old clothes their mother got at labor. In the hierarchical society, the sisters who are discriminated against in school due to their parents' social situation take the unfairness of life silently. Although the school has regular rules and orders for the students, this system does not apply to the Kelveys. It seems that prejudice from their looks and drawing a line of distinction satisfy the children with self-complacency against the lesser Kelveys. The bullying scene is described in the work as follows:

“Is it true you're going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?” shrilled Lena. Dead silence. . . . “Yah, yer father's in prison!” she hissed spitefully. This was such a marvellous thing to have said that the little girls rushed away in a body, deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy.<sup>(388-389)</sup>

It is a cruel scene when Lena teases Lil saying a hail of abuse to Lil's face. The bullying of the Kelveys comes from the distinctive class consciousness in the depth of the children's minds. It is cruelty behind their hearts. With their ruthless attitudes toward the lower rank, they enjoy wounding the Kelveys deeply. The writer, taking the contradiction of society hard, describes the internal cruelty in distinction and sentiments on the Kelveys in the work. Paul Delany states in a book review:

The subject of “the Doll's House” is class prejudice: two innocents are persecuted only because they are poor. The story owes its special tone and poignancy to the circumstance that the oppression it describes is strictly psychological — that is, inflicted by emotional rather than material brutality — and that the main characters are children.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Kelveys are so poor that they are always teased by their classmates. But they do not resist at all and only endure. For the Kelveys, Kezia wants them to see the doll's house. Kezia's mind moves gradually for them. There is a similarity between Kezia and Laura who is the main character in *The Garden Party*. That is they have a deep feeling for others. Both works describe people who discriminate and are discriminated against through a child's

eyes. Laura feels the warm personalities of the workers who put up the marquee, and also feels somewhat unjust giving a party when she hears a young carter of the lower class living nearby died by accident. These two girls are not infected with the distinctive class consciousness and they come in contact with everyone equally. In these works, Kezia and Laura are the other self of the writer. Mansfield wrote a hearty story with humanity watching the distinctive class world. About this, she wrote in a letter to Richard Murry, her brother-in-law:

I can't help seeing all the evil and pain in the world: . . . But I confess I only feel that I am doing right when I am living by love. I don't mean a personal love, you know, but — the big thing. Why should one love? No reason; its just a mystery. But it is like light. I can only truly see things in its rays.<sup>(4)</sup>

Kezia breaks the rule to see the doll's house as a fantastic land for the Kelveys. She is going to challenge the class distinction. Kezia could recognize the beauty of the lamp in the doll's house with a child's mind. Her mind works sharing with everyone the splendid lamp. After a moment of hesitation, she warmly asks the Kelveys to see the doll's house. Next this paper looks at the world of the lamp.

### 1 – 3 The Effect of the Lamp

The Kelveys, who wear their curious clothes, are always together. Their appearance mainly of the little sister Else is described as follows:

Where Lil went, our Else followed. In the playground, on the road going to and from school, there was Lil marching in front and our Else holding on behind. Only when she wanted anything, or when she was out of breath, our Else gave Lil a tug, a twitch, . . .<sup>(386)</sup>

Kezia said to the Kelveys, "You can come and see our doll's house if you want to." It was their big chance to see the doll's house. But at that Lil shook her head quickly. Then Else twitched Lil's skirt. She wanted to go and see the doll's house. Kezia led them there and they were about to see it when Aunt Beryl's voice reverberated loudly. She sent the sisters away like chickens. On the way home Else said her only words with a smile. The scene is described in the work as follows:

She put out a finger and stroked her sister's quill; She smiled her rare smile. "I seen the little lamp," she said softly. Then both were silent once more.<sup>(391)</sup>

Else expressed her happy feelings even though she saw the lamp only for a moment.

Else also caught the inward light of the lamp in the doll's house instantly. Kezia and Else had some momentary mysterious power. There is a similarity between them. According to Plato (427 ? -347 ? B.C.), the spirit of humans has the capacity for catching beauty immediately.<sup>(5)</sup> These two girls have much tender sensibility for beauty. The lamp is significant for them to feel that beauty is beauty. The children who found the beauty of the lamp were only Kezia and Else in this work. What is the difference between these two girls and the others? When they saw the lamp their sensibility for beauty was stirred naturally. In other words, they have the ability to find out the original real thing. The lamp in the doll's house which fascinated these two girls is a symbol of happiness. Generally, what is the meaning of the lamp? It is described in the following way:

The flame of the oil lamp represents life, spiritual light, wisdom and immortality. The lamp connects the genie in *The Thousand and One Nights*. The genie who lives in the lamp listens to the wish for people to free him. Thus Aladdin's lamp is not only the symbol of happiness but also magic.<sup>(6)</sup>

By examining the origin of the lamp and understanding the deep meaning of the lamp, the core of the story can be approached. Both Kezia and Else are sympathy with the shining light of the lamp and see eternal beauty. It is invisible and only in the mind. Concerning the lamp, Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr describe state:

The lamp, symbol of light and in its toy form symbol of childish awakening, is the central reality. . . . The little lamp is not only light but art, the central reality amidst the material splendours of the doll's house. It shines out to Kezia and reaches across the gulf between the young Burnell princess and owlish little Else.<sup>(7)</sup>

In the moment little Else sees the lamp in the doll's house, she realizes the different world full of distinction and prejudice. There is no sadness and unhappiness at all, it connects to something happy and inspires her with courage. Beauty in a moment brings the feeling of happiness to her. The lamp brings an important meaning to her. As she accepts the present class distinction, she will live steadily in the future. The lamp gives hope to Else.

## Chapter 2 : Tragedy and Destiny in *The Fly*

As the tempest of the war (WWI 1914-1918) involved all of Europe, Mansfield lost many friends and her only brother in the war. Her brother Leslie's death changed her view of life, and it was a cruelty of destiny that could not be avoided. She wrote in memory of Leslie the following journal entry:

*Brother*. I think I have known for a long time that life was over for me, but I never realized it or acknowledged it until my brother died. . . . The present and the future mean nothing to me.<sup>(1)</sup>

Six years later, the story was complete and her dead brother and the writer are seen off and on in the work. *The Fly* which contains her feelings in her later years is a work that asks about the fate of life against war.

The setting of this story is the boss's room. Two old men talk friendly, one is a lively and active boss and the other is an old man who had a stroke. The story begins from the weak old man's conversation without special intention.

## 2 – 1 Two Old Men's Conversation

Old Mr. Woodfield, who is allowed to go out once a week, spends a pleasant time with his friend. Although he is not allowed to drink, he has a glass of whiskey with his boss. The boss feels pity for him. As the whiskey spreads out in the old man's brain as a stimulant, he remembers something. The whiskey works effectively. He says:

"I thought you'd like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They're quite near each other, it seems."<sup>(414)</sup>

At this moment the boss's attitude seems to be strange. He keeps good conditions and goes on wheels, so at all points he is better than Woodfield until then. To the boss's surprise, the old man refreshes himself with a shot of whiskey. After he leaves for home, the boss cannot do anything for a while. The boss's situation as one who is fully satisfied up to now changes due to the old man. About this, Paulette Michel-Michot explains:

Though he may not be aware of it, the boss is not only proud of his new acquisitions but he imposes his crushing superiority (wealth and health) on his friend:<sup>(2)</sup>

The boss remembered the shocking past because of the old man.

## 2 – 2 The Boss's Recollection

His only son who died in the war comes and goes in the boss's mind. How was the relationship between the son and the boss? The son was described as follows:

Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other mean-



ing. . . . And that promise had been so near being fulfilled. The boy had been in the office learning the ropes for a year before the war.<sup>(416)</sup>

This scene shows the father's dream to entrust his business to his son nearly came true. The son was a bright and hopeful star for the boss, but he was killed cruelly in the war. It was as if the boss had been pushed into the bottom of an abyss, falling from hope to despair.

Since then six years passed. The old man only talks to him about their sons' graves. Why is the boss so disturbed? Although the boss understands that his son died and will never come back, he does not want to accept his son's death somewhere in his mind. About this C.A. Hankin states:

He is not a total hypocrite in telling himself that his own life had been sustained by the thought of his son's carrying on where he left off: in a sense the boy's continuing life had been an assurance of his own continuance.<sup>(3)</sup>

Nevertheless, his son could not exist forever for the boss, and the talk of his grave reminded him about his son's dead body smelling the stench of death. It is one reason for him not to visit Belgium. Concerning this, Michio Nishidai says:

The boss avoided talking about his son because he became holy in his mind. But the boss seemed to be told that his son was one of the remains of thousands and ten thousands who lined the Belgium cemetery. He felt defiled and the contempt.<sup>(4)</sup>

This is the expression of the boss's feeling. An unexpected talk by the old man gives him a shock, and he keeps indoors to the memory of his son. The tears have always flowed down his cheeks, but this time no drops of tears flow. The boss is disturbed by his dry eyes. In fact no tears run from his eyes. He wonders why he cannot weep at all. Six years have passed since he lost his son. Maybe the time has come. The boss is confused and impatient.

### 2 – 3 The Fly's Appearance

While the boss cannot compose his thoughts, a fly struggles and falls into the inkpot accidentally. The fly desperately tries to crawl up. The boss picks up a pen, picks the fly out of the ink, and shakes it onto a piece of blotting-paper. The soaked fly continues to drop ink from its wings and tiny legs over and over again. The fly's actions are described skillfully:

Then the front legs waved, took hold, and, pulling its small, sodden body up, it began

the immense task of cleaning the ink from its wings. Over and under, over and under, went a leg along a wing as the stone goes over and under the scythe. Then there was a pause, while the fly, seeming to stand on the tips of its toes, tried to expand first one wing and then the other.<sup>(417)</sup>

The fly that is ready for life again recovered, little by little. The boss feels the fly's powerful vitality and keeps watching it trying hard to live. Then he drops some ink on the fly like playing a trick. Although he admires the fly's courage, he drops the ink on it three times. Consequently the fly stops moving at last.

Why does the boss drop the ink again and again on the fly he once helped? Is he playing a trick, or is he irritated that he cannot weep for his dead son? It is clear for him to toy with the instinct of the fly trying to live. It is a sort of inner atrocity in his mind. Just then his mind turns strongly against the weak. In her journals, Mansfield writes about the fly:

And God looked upon the fly fallen into the jug of milk and saw that it was good. And the smallest Cherubim and Seraphim of all, who delight in misfortune, struck their silver harps and shrilled: "How is the fly fallen, fallen!"<sup>(5)</sup>

The writer wrote that God and the angels were very pleased at watching a fly drop into an ink pot by misfortune. It seems to be related to William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) *King Lear*. The Earl of Gloucester and Edgar say:

As flies to wanton boys are we to th'gods ;  
They kill us for their sport.<sup>(6)</sup>  
O gods ! Who is't can say "I am at the worst"?  
I am worse than e'er I was!  
. . . And worse I may be yet.<sup>(7)</sup>

Overlapping King Lear, who died in agony, and the boss who lost his only son, Mansfield described *The Fly* as tragedy. She hinted at the sayings in *King Lear*, because Shakespeare often comes out in her letters and journals.

The death of all three occurred unnaturally. She describes in contrast that the boss feels grief at the death of his son but kills the fly for fun in each scene. She intended to draw fate into the work. Fate falls suddenly regardless of men's will. The moment of death means life is frail. Thus there is fate which we cannot avoid. About fate, Sylvia Berkman explains:

There is no note of pathos or anguish in this story, but a relentless grim depiction of the caprices of destiny.<sup>(8)</sup>

Berkman affirms that this story is about the caprice of destiny. The dream that parent and child drew together collapsed horribly before it could be fulfilled. How stern fate is! Caprice brings a result that is in the lap of the gods. *The Fly* can be read from various viewpoints. Reading the end of the work, the boss's son died in the war like a fly. His son was a victim who died directly from the war, but how is his father who is left alone? He lives under a sorrow that will not heal in his life. The father left behind by the son is a victim as well as him. It is unclear that the boss's treatment of the fly fallen into the ink pot is a trick or is just irritation at not shedding tears. The boss's behavior is not clear, but it is a fact that he dropped ink on the fly three times. He gradually realizes that the motionless fly looked like his dead son. His son was killed in the war without a reason. But this fly. . . at that moment, with surprise, he noticed that he treated the fly cruelly. Describing the situation of father who lost his son, Yoshiho Satake says:

. . . in point of losing the son, the boss is also a victim of the war. It is expressed calmly that he puts on a show to vanish his languid state. The description of a wish to become a social winner and the principal in victims means that the victim has the factor turning to the person who caused the troubles as well. It seems that Mansfield would fix her eyes on this sharply.<sup>(9)</sup>

Before the boss knows it, he became an attacker from a victim in this situation. This is described in the work as follows:

"Bring me some fresh blotting-paper," he said sternly, "and look sharp about it." And while the old dog padded away he fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was . . . He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember.<sup>(418)</sup>

The boss returned to his daily life to forget all this time saying, "Bring me some fresh blotting-paper." But where is the paper to absorb the accumulating thoughts in his mind? The boss who had lost his son lived a pretended tender life. Wiping away cold sweat, he thought deeply of the day's events, two reverses of situations. His son was just a hope for the boss, but he does not exist in the world anymore. Black despair was all that was left to the boss.

### Chapter 3 : Eternity and Purification in *The Canary*

Mansfield was not long for this world, so she wrote this story as entrusting the canary with herself. *The Canary* was a swan song for her that a swan sang at her mortal hour. She wrote her thoughts in those days to her friend a painter, Dorothy Brett:

Oh my story wont go fast enough. Its got stuck. I must have it finished and done with in 10 days time. Never shall I commit myself again to a stated time. Its hellish. (sic).<sup>(1)</sup>

The narrator in this story is an old woman. *The Canary* is her monologue. This work expresses the description of an old woman's psychology in her inner world with remembrances of the canary. The scenes in present and past come and go. This is Mansfield's trial work using a novel technique, moving before and backward at will. Concerning this, Ian A. Gordon describes in his book as follows:

The technique of the stories of Katherine Mansfield's maturity lies partly in their construction and partly in her lyrical use of language. Straightforward chronological narration is seldom favoured, rather an alternation of time present and time past (and sometimes time future), with scenes juxtaposed to heighten the emotional effect.<sup>(2)</sup>

Gordon evaluates her mature techniques highly. The changes in time are one of the important points in this work.

### 3 – 1 A Nail and a Cage

A big nail is left alone in the front door of the boarding house which the old woman manages. There had been a canary singing beautifully in a cage before. The old woman begins to speak her mind softly recollecting happy days with the canary.

One day, a canary in a small cage came to the lonely old woman. Her life changed completely from that day and there began pleasant days between them. She had a nice time listening to the dreamy melody of the canary. Even though she heard that the young boarders spoke evil of a scarecrow and had an awful dream, the canary was always with her. She was comforted by the beautiful song of the canary. She describes the wonderful song of the canary as follows:

. . . You cannot imagine how wonderfully he sang. It was not like the singing of the other canaries. And that isn't just my fancy. Often, from the window, I used to see people stop at the gate to listen, or they would lean over the fence by the mock-orange for quite a long time—carried away.<sup>(418-419)</sup>

She tells eagerly about the songs of the canary which fascinated the passing people. It leads her not to tell everything. The canary's beautiful songs enter into the spirit of the old woman's daily life thoroughly. Without notice, the solitary woman bonds to the canary firmly.

What is the relationship between them? The relation of the boardinghouse and the cage is examined first. The old woman, who takes care of three young boarders, is restricted to

the house. The canary keeps in its cage. They have no contact with anything outside their territory. So it seems that their connection is strong. The tiny canary which has never flown in the sky is a cage bird. They join together instinctively because they both know only closed surroundings. The writer who was under medical treatment while writing this work was the same. Writing this story in a bed, Mansfield heard the beautiful songs of canaries nearby. She wrote in a letter to Dorothy Brett as follows:

My canaries opposite are of course in a perfect fever. They sing, flutter, swing and make love.<sup>(3)</sup>

The writer who was attracted to canaries replaced herself with canaries and wrote *The Canary* on behalf of the old woman. Concerning this, Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr describe as follows:

The meaning of 'The Canary' largely resides, as in all the stories, in symbolism and purposeful organisation of the text. The canary is a symbol of the artist, as is evident from the story itself, without reference to the many uses of the image in letters and journals. The canary is described in this way:<sup>(4)</sup>

Then the canary flies away into the distance, but the nail in the front door expresses the old woman's longing for him. She must get over her grief and loneliness. The canary's beautiful songs continue to exist in her mind. He is eternal for her. Therefore the nail is left with her many feelings as if the canary were there. The nail left there represents not only the death of the canary, but evidence that the canary existed. It is also the empty cage. She has not looked at or removed the big nail there yet. This scene is described as follows:

. . . You see that big nail to the right of the front door? I can scarcely look at it even now and yet I could not bear to take it out. I should like to think it was there always even after my time.<sup>(418)</sup>

### 3 – 2 Loneliness and Joy

Recollecting the canary, the old woman can hear his beautiful song in her mind. His song healed her lonely life fully. The unexpected appearance of the canary brought great comfort to her monotonous life. His songs made her happy. She could understand his sweet melody from beginning to end imperceptibly. The old woman was unified with the canary.

As a similar work, *Miss Brill* is given. A woman who leads a lonely and common daily life, like the old woman in *The Canary*, is impressed by wonderful music in the park. Miss Brill enjoys hearing others' conversations and looking about people sitting on the bench

every Sunday. It is her only pleasure. She also likes music performed before her eyes. While she listens to splendid music, she feels accompaniment together without notice. Music and cheers are a fantastic world which brings up something from the bottom of her heart. About her joy, Saralyn R. Daly states as follows:

No distancing of emotion is allowed as the reader follows her train of thought and feeling. She has smiled, albeit tearfully and sentimentally, at the notion of a communion in song in the park.<sup>(5)</sup>

What is the joy which two solitary old women felt together? It is pure joy shaking human sensibility. It is also a culture away from daily life and beyond reasons. The canary's sweet songs and the wonderful music make them happy. Their feelings of happiness connect with religious glory.

The beautiful sound of music is the same as the lamp in *The Doll's House*. The beauty of the lamp as something everlasting took root in the two girls. Therefore, the old woman and Miss Brill were lonely, and they were sensitive to music producing a beautiful sound and joy in beauty. The song of the canary, similar to music, has deep beauty without limit which gives real joy to them.

### 3 – 3 The Soul and Desire

The happy days that the old woman and the canary spent together were frail. The canary's death left her hollow because he was the strength of her mind. When she could not bear her past memories of the canary, she calmed herself down by sharpening a knife on a whetstone.

How is the relationship between them again? This time it is examined as a master and a pet. She keeps the boardinghouse, but the young boarders do not need her except for meals. So she comforts herself by loving the canary. After she finishes a lot of housework, she spends precious time with him. The scene is described as follows:

Then I hung him on the nail outside while I got my three young men their breakfasts, and I never brought him in until we had the house to ourselves again. Then, when the washing-up was done, it was quite a little entertainment.<sup>(420)</sup>

They begin the time of joyful entertainment by themselves. She lives with the canary everyday like this, and her attitude toward him changes gradually. She turns to seek for something other than comfort and joy from him. It seems that the thought which does not satisfy her mind turns to a desire moving to the canary. At first she sees the canary as a bird, but it changes to something else within her delicate inner mind. Her eyes watching the canary rest on it as a person not a bird. Before she knows it, it is her lover. On the

other hand, how about the canary? He is innocent living in the cage nicely. He is also a creature cheering and healing the old woman as a pet. Although he was born as a bird, he had never flown in the great blue sky and had never seen the ocean and forests. His world was the confining cage only. But he did his part fully. Retracing her precious days with the canary, the old woman speaks her present feelings in the work as follow:

. . . All the same, without being morbid, and giving way to — to memories and so on, I must confess that there does seem to me something sad in life. It is hard to say what it is. I don't mean the sorrow that we all know, like illness and poverty and death. No, it is something different. It is there, deep down, deep down, part of one, like one's breathing. . . . But isn't it extraordinary that under his sweet, joyful little singing it was just this — sadness? — Ah, what is it? — that I heard.<sup>(422)</sup>

She says that there is something sad in life. It is not direct sadness like illness, poverty and death. It is in the depth of the heart as breathing. It is sadness by birth not expressed in words. It is sadness without reasons and exists there to one's dying day. She says perhaps the canary has sadness like this under his beautiful songs. If there was sadness to his dying day, it is moving that he sang a song with sorrows. Concerning the final speech, Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr state as follows:

In this final speech punctuation and cadence are adjusted with perfect finesse to achieve an effect of poetic intensity while retaining the comparatively simple vocabulary of the woman speaker.<sup>(6)</sup>

In the last scenes of her last work, she confesses remembering the canary that there is something sad in life to her dying day. She will live from now on accepting the death of the canary with a feeling of gratitude. The beautiful song of the canary was the real soul of joy to eternity for her.

#### Chapter 4 : The Technique of Mansfield

*The Doll's House*, *The Fly* and *The Canary* in her late writing *The Dove's Nest* were written from 1921 to 1922. When she finished the last work, her condition grew rapidly worse. She speaks her mind in a letter to Dorothy Brett as follows:

Work I can't at all for the present. Even reading is very difficult. . . . In my heart I am far more desperate about my illness and about *Life* than I ever show you.<sup>(1)</sup>

Thus Mansfield ceased writing in 1922, which was at the climax of Modernism in England. Authors of the same generation with her were published one after another, James

Joyce's (1882–1941) *Ulysses*, Virginia Woolf's (1882–1941) *Jakob's Room* and Thomas Stearns Eliot's (1888–1965) *The Wasteland*. Modernism was a reformational movement in the early 20th century searching literature, art and philosophy and so on for the new against the traditional style. On Modernism, Denis Brown states as follows:

Modernism in literature was a movement that radically probed the nature of selfhood and problematised the means whereby 'self' could be expressed. This phenomenon may be most easily evidenced in terms of key instances:<sup>(2)</sup>

New expressions were made by breaking the traditional wall cultivated in British literature until then. It is a way represented in the stream of consciousness technique. Mansfield who lived in the Modernism era wrote modern works by turns describing moments of beauty in daily life. She expressed especially a portion of beauty especially from the stream of consciousness.

#### 4 – 1 The Representation of a Moment of Beauty

Catching a moment of beauty in Mansfield's works is addressed here. She wrote about the situation of feeling a moment of beauty to Dorothy Brett in a long letter as follows:

Beauty triumphs over ugliness in Life. Thats what I feel. And that marvellous triumph is what I long to express. The poor man cries and the tears glitter in his beard and that is so beautiful one could bow down. Why? Nobody can say. . . . Life is, all at one and the same time, far more mysterious and far simpler than we know.<sup>(3)</sup>

The writer who finds beauty at once in common daily life accepts worth in every life, keeping an eye on the simple people warmly. A moment of beauty is described in *The Doll's House* and *The Garden Party*. There is a scene in which Kezia and Else in *The Doll's House* feel the moment of the brilliant lamp in their childish minds. She hints at the message in the lamp as an important image without words. In *The Garden Party*, there is a scene in which Laura facing the dead for the first time realizes death releases people from suffering and everything in life. It is described as follows:

He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy . . . happy. . . . All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.<sup>(261)</sup>

Laura, an innocent girl, felt a peaceful and satisfied death of the working class' neighbor beyond his brief span of life. She accepted life and death as they really were. About this scene, C. A. Hankin states as follows:



For there is a scene in which Katherine Mansfield has granted us, too, a reprieve ; has assuaged both our guilt about social inequalities and our haunting anxiety about death.<sup>(4)</sup>

Death is not terrible and ugly but is the pure world, superior to all even more to Laura. The figure of the young man resting in peace is like a beautiful picture. This is Mansfield's aesthetic, to describe the moment of beauty disappearing from the inevitable fact to watch life and death. In *The Fly*, the fine movement of the fly helped from the ink pot is described as it shakes ink from its wings skillfully. Concerning eternal beauty, Elizabeth Bowen states as follows:

The stories are more than moments, instants, gleams: she has given them touches of eternity.<sup>(5)</sup>

Like this, a moment of beauty is described in the work. What is it? For example, expressing with stream of consciousness how to drag on the paper horizontally, it is at rest at a spot. The place where stream of consciousness and the rest of time cross vertically is a moment of beauty. It is caught by her instinctively. It is perceived from stream of consciousness. About beauty and aesthetic, it is described in *Aesthetic Key Word* as follows:

Sensitive beauty is appreciated with great worth because it has mysterious function. . . . The effect of beauty is regarded as a spiritual comfort conveying from high sense of the faculty of sight and hearing.<sup>(6)</sup>

Mansfield's beauty is so immeasurable to have no words. Her beauty, which is caught in the moment, is pure to look at everything equally. After catching beauty, she describes it in the work well. Mansfield's works have a visual world like a picture and an auditory world like expressing with sounds. *The Canary* and *Miss Brill* are described with the beautiful song of the canary and the joy of music. A joyful scene of music in *Miss Brill* is as follows:

The tune lifted, lifted, the light shone ; and it seemed to Miss Brill that in another moment all of them, all the whole company, would begin singing. The young ones, the laughing ones who were moving together, they would begin, and the men's voices, very resolute and brave, would join them. And then she too, she too, . . . And Miss Brill's eyes filled with tears and she looked smiling at all the other members of the company.<sup>(334-335)</sup>

About the beautiful song of the canary, Mansfield wrote a letter to Dorothy Brett as follows:

. . . Words cannot express the beauty of that high shrill little song rising out of the very stones. It seems one cannot escape Beauty — it is everywhere.<sup>(7)</sup>

She says that beauty is everywhere. Where does her sense of beauty come from? There are often mentions of P. B. Shelley (1792–1822) and J. Keats (1795–1821) in the letters to her husband, Murry. She wrote as follows:

Shelley and Keats I get more and more *attached* to. Nay, to all 'poetry'. I have such a passion for it and I feel such an understanding of it. It's a great part of my life.<sup>(8)</sup>

The Romantic poets' thoughts had effects on her idea of beauty. These effects express her deep feelings for flowers, animals, passing people and so on, which she looks at without intention in daily life. Her great work *At the Bay* which is set in New Zealand contains descriptions of sight and hearing besides smell. It is a curious work as if the smell of seaweed wafts between the sea and waves and imitation sounds like a lisp. She wrote remembrances of her childhood days reviving the good old people in nature. The writer expresses heartily her happiness in New Zealand in her journal as follows:

I can't say how thankful I am to have been born in N. Z., to know Wellington as I do, and to have it to range about in.<sup>(9)</sup>

She described her self-experience in *At the Bay*, *The Doll's House* and *The Fly*. About the writer, Ian A. Gordon states as follows:

Katherine Mansfield to a degree almost unparalleled in English fiction put her own experiences into her stories.<sup>(10)</sup>

#### 4 – 2 Modernism and Stream of Consciousness

*At the Bay* which is the sequel to *Prelude* was written by using a novel technique of the time in 1921. It is not a story in a stream of time from dawn till midnight. The work, consisting of twelve chapters, can be read contracting life as a single year. Mansfield used this technique only one time. Other works that used this technique besides her are Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922 and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* in 1925. Woolf's other work, *The Waves*, which describes a life in the scenery of the sea was published in 1930, but Mansfield wrote *At the Bay* already ten years earlier. Joyce and Woolf wrote their works using a stream of consciousness a few years later than her. In spite of this, she was not noticed as much as them. Why? Concerning this, S. J. Kaplan explains as follows:

Through her critical writings as well as her brilliant innovation in fiction, she influ-

enced, reflected, and conveyed modernist aesthetic principles. . . . Mansfield's contribution to the development of modern fiction have been largely taken for granted. Her innovations in the short-fiction genre (especially the "plotless" story, the incorporation of the "stream of consciousness" into the content of fiction, and emphasis on the psychological "moment") preceded Virginia Woolf's use of them, and they have been absorbed and assimilated—often unconsciously—by writers and readers of the short story.<sup>(11)</sup>

There are a few reasons her work was not noticed. Because she uses this technique only *At the Bay*, which is a short story, not a novel, and she was short-lived. But she contributed to the development of modern fiction. While Woolf was her contemporary and associated with her, how did she notice Mansfield? About this, Miki Masaki states as follows:

Virginia Woolf who was a representative of the British Modernism movement in the early twentieth century admitted that Mansfield, who was known for her lyric short stories, was her only rival in contemporary women writers.<sup>(12)</sup>

Furthermore she describes the modern expressions in Mansfield's works as follows:

She was clearly a pioneer in Modernism Literature because of her technique. That is, fragmentary composition, absence of a reliable almighty narrator, a character's inner and outer life, a viewpoint moving freely from person to person or a description of a character's mind and actions not explained but shown.<sup>(13)</sup>

How did Mansfield recognize Modernism by herself? She wrote a letter to her husband a year after WWI was finished:

I can only think in terms like 'a change of heart'. I can't imagine how after the war these men can pick up the old threads as tho' it never had been. Speaking to *you* I'd say we have died and live again. How can that be the same life? . . . Its as though, even while we live again we face death. But *through Life*: thats the point. We see death in life as we see death in a flower that is fresh unfolded. Our hymn is to the flower's beauty - we would make that beauty immortal because we *know*.<sup>(14)</sup>

This letter shows her modernist situation. Mansfield' technique for catching a moment of beauty starts to fix her eyes on various people's appearances in daily life. The writer watches everything carefully working sight, hearing and smell into the five senses. And she stopped sight for a moment in a stream of consciousness. Within a moment she catches the beauty which exists in everyday life.

## Conclusion :

This paper looks at three of Katherine Mansfield's works to examine her themes and writing technique.

*The Doll's House* set in New Zealand revives her childhood memories in the story. Mansfield, who grew up there, reflects on the discriminatory society of that time with her childish pure mind. The beautiful lamp in the doll's house and the distinction beyond expression connect two little girls. Although the light has no form, the lamp's light has some mysterious power. The two girls who read the nature of the lamp instantly have the same sense of value. It is reflected in their eyes with a hopeful light. The lamp is a symbol of innocent hope for the two girls.

*The Fly* is a work resting on the tragic experience of her brother's death in the war. The boss who lost his only son in the war has old wounds in his mind without healing. He feels wretched, after he plays with a fly that has fallen into the ink accidentally. The appearance of the motionless fly is his son in battle. The death of the fly shows him another meaning. His son's death is truth in the lap of the gods. But the boss cannot accept or purify it still. He has the fate of sorrow. The fly is a symbol of despair of nothingness for the boss.

*The Canary* describes the warm contact of an old woman and a canary, while the writer who was under medical treatment was fascinated by the beautiful songs of canaries. The song of the canary brings joy to the lonely old woman and invites her into a sweet musical world. After the frail life of the canary ends, the beautiful song remains in her mind. The canary is a symbol of pure wish to the old woman forever.

Mansfield's technique in writing short stories is examined for beauty and stream of consciousness. Her work, which is often compared to an impressionist painting, has intuition and imagination largely conveying from the narrator to the reader.

## Work

Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Stories* (Penguin Classics, 2007)

## Notes

### Introduction

- (1) Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, *Katherine Mansfield* (The Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 22.

### Chapter 1

- (1) Yuko Shibata, A Study of Katherine Mansfield's 'The Doll's House': A Humanism View (*Chuo Gakuin University Human Nature Series*, 2003), p. 37.
- (2) Saralyn R. Daly, *Katherine Mansfield* (Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1994), p. 93.
- (3) Paul Delany, Short and Simple Annals of the Poor: Katherine Mansfield's "The Doll's House" (A Journal for the Comparative Study of Literature and Ideas, 1976), p. 8.
- (4) *The Collected Letters Of Katherine Mansfield Volume 3*, ed. Vincent O' Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 231-232.
- (5) Alain, *About Plato 11*, tr. Shinichi Mori (Chikuma Shobo, 1997), pp. 63-64.

- (6) Miranda Blues & Midford, *The Illustrated Books of Sign & Symbols* (Sanseido, 1997), p. 97.
- (7) Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, op. cit., p. 128.

## Chapter 2

- (1) *Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. C. K. Stead (Penguin Books, 1977), p. 62.
- (2) Paulette Michel-Michot, Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly": An attempt to capture the boss (Journal artical, 1974), p. 86.
- (3) C. A. Hankin, *Katherine Mansfield and her Confessional Stories* (St. Martin's Press, 1983), p.244.
- (4) Michio Nishidai, Katherine Mansfield's last—About "The Fly" and "The Canary" (*The Albion* 18, 1972), p. 57.
- (5) *Journals of Mansfield*, ed. J. M. Murry, tr. Ginsaku Osawa (Bunka Shobo Hakubunsha, 1997), p. 207.
- (6) W. Shakespeare, *King Lear* (A Norton Critical Edition, 2008), p. 76.
- (7) *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- (8) Sylvia Berkman, *Katherine Mansfield a Critical Study* (Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 137-138.
- (9) Yoshiho Satake, Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly" and Great War (*English Literature Thought* 77, 2004), p. 62.

## Chapter 3

- (1) *The Collected Letters Of Katherine Mansfield Volume 5*, op. cit., p. 212.
- (2) Ian A. Gordon, *Katherine Mansfield* (University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 109.
- (3) *The Collected Letters Of Katherine Mansfield Volume 5*, op. cit., p. 117.
- (4) Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, op. cit., p. 133.
- (5) Saralyn R. Daly, op. cit., p. 82.
- (6) Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, op. cit., p. 134.

## Chapter 4

- (1) *The Collected Letters Of Katherine Mansfield Volume 5*, op. cit., pp. 300-301.
- (2) Dennis Brown, *The Modernist Self in Twentieth-Century English Literature* (The Macmillan Press, 1989), p. 1.
- (3) *The Collected Letters Of Katherine Mansfield Volume 5*, op. cit., p. 96.
- (4) C. A. Hankin, op. cit., p. 241.
- (5) Elizabeth Bowen, *34 Short Stories Katherine Mansfield* (Collins Clear-Type Press, 1957), p. 26.
- (6) W. Henckmann and K. Lotter, *Aesthetic of Key Word* (Keiso Shobo, 2001), p. 200.
- (7) *The Collected Letters Of Katherine Mansfield Volume 5*, op. cit., p. 76.
- (8) *The Collected Letters Of Katherine Mansfield Volume 2*, ed. Vincent O' Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 83.
- (9) *Katherine Mansfield Letters and Journals*, op. cit., p. 252.
- (10) Ian A. Gordon, op. cit., p. 95.
- (11) Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist* (Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 2-3.
- (12) Miki Masaki, Silence in 'Women and Fiction' —Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield— (*Kansai University Of Welfare Sciences Annals* 8, 2004), p. 129.
- (13) Miki Masaki, The Divided Self Katherine Mansfield's Modernism Theme (*The Journal Of the Literary Association Of Kwansei Gakuin University*, 1995), p. 48.
- (14) *The Collected Letters Of Katherine Mansfield Volume 3*, op. cit., p. 97.

## References

- (1) Chise Ibuki, *Mansfield* (Kenkyusha, 1966).
- (2) Kazuyoshi Shimizu and Toshitsugu Suzuki, *World War I and English Literature* (Sekai Shisosha, 2000).
- (3) Masami Nakao and Kazuhisa Takahashi, *English Literature* (the University of the Air in Broadcasting Promotion, 2003).
- (4) Patricia Hampl, Relics of Saint Katherine (*American Scholar, Summer*; 70(3), 2001).
- (5) Rachel McAlpine, *Mansfield's Study Introduction*, tr. Ginsaku Osawa (Bunka Shobo Hakubunsha, 1996).
- (6) S. K. Langer, *Philosophy in A New Key*, tr. Masato Yano, others (Iwanami Gendai Soshu, 1960).
- (7) Tadashi Oda, *Katherine Mansfield's Imaginational World Image Study* (Apollon Sha, 1979).
- (8) Yasuko Mikami, *Searching for A Paradise: Study of Katherine Mansfield* (Kobundo Shuppansha, 1989).
- (9) *Katherine Mansfield*, ed. John Spiers (The Harvester Press, 1986).
- (10) *The Letters of Mansfield*, tr. Fukuo Hashimoto (Yashio Syuppansha, 1977).