

A Stylistic Analysis of “The Garden Party”

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I analyzed “The Garden Party” in respect of the style and language used in the story. This story was written by Katherine Mansfield, a woman writer who was born in New Zealand, and she described a day in the life of an upper-class family. I have read the story a number of times and developed three research questions:

- (1) The story mainly focuses on Laura’s emotional shift, but how does the author convey it?
- (2) I have an impression that Laura is an adolescent girl. How is she characterized in the story?
- (3) The story seems to deal with lots of themes. How does the author approach these themes in the story?

When I try to approach my research questions, it would be good to observe the style and language of the story.

In Chapter I, I divided the text into two types of discourse: narrator discourse and character discourse. In addition, the former has two levels of narration: one is an omniscient narrator who narrates the story directly (pure narration) and the other is a narrator who narrates the story through Laura’s perception (represented perception). The perspective of the story is not static and I identified the shifts in the perspective by demonstrative pronouns and cohesion. The shifts of the perspective represent the stream of consciousness in Laura’s mind.

I have examined speech and thought presentation in Chapter II. The story is filled with rich use of speech and thought presentation. For example, Free Direct Speech is embedded in the narrator discourse at the end of the story in order to focus on the discourse between Laura and the dead man strongly. Direct Speech in the story represents the class distinctions between Laura and the woman in the slum because it can imply disturbingly unfamiliar features in the speech of the poor woman in the slum. I could approach the way in which Laura is characterized in the story by analyzing speech and thought presentation. Her thoughts appear in the shape of Indirect Thought when she is at home with her family, but when she is out, her thoughts appear in the

shape of Direct Thought. It implies that she is an adolescent girl and brought up with care in an upper-class family. Therefore, once she goes out and gets to the slum, she is so nervous and upset that her thoughts appear in the shape of Direct Thought. The surroundings in the slum are quite different from her world.

I have put my focus on the narrator discourse in Chapter III, I have shown that the narrator discourse is divided into two levels: Pure Narration and Represented Perception. Laura's Represented Perception reveals the way in which she perceives the world. Her Represented Perception is vivid and colorful when she is at home but it loses its vividness and becomes dull when she goes out and gets to the slum. It implies that there is a gap between the slum and her world and she feels depressed when she is in the slum.

As I have shown above, I could approach my research questions by analyzing the style and language used in the story. The author expresses Laura's emotional shift and character by applying appropriate style and language. She also conveys lots of themes like class distinctions and life and death in this relatively short story by ingenious use of the style.