

Original Paper

Analysis of the Narrative Perspective of Katherine Mansfield's “The Garden Party”

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Abstract

Katharine Mansfield is a successful female writer in the literary history of the 20th century, who marks a new period of English short stories. She uses tremendous modernistic techniques and digs deep beneath the surface of life to show the causes of human happiness and despair in her works. “The Garden Party” is one of her most famous and representative short stories. Previous studies have mostly focused on its artistic methods, themes and characters, as well as the combination of all, but there are only few studies choosing its narrative perspectives as their study topic. This paper analyzed the narrative perspective in this story, focusing on the use of nonfocalization, internal focalization and covert progression and the effects they have. It is found that the change of ways of focalization combining with covert progression in this story forms a parallel of objective description and ironic description with the plot development, adds a new group to the relationship between the former implied author and target readers, and reveals two different ways (idealistic and realistic) of understanding this story, letting readers reflect on the behaviors of the upper-middle-class people and ironically pointing out their selfish nature.

Keywords

Katherine Mansfield, “The Garden Party”, narrative perspective, nonfocalization, internal focalization, covert progression

1. Introduction

“The Garden Party” is one of the most famous and representative short stories by Katherine Mansfield, who is talented in controlling the narrative perspective and using free indirect speech in her works to create special atmosphere. The story of “The Garden Party” is not complex. Laura was the daughter of

an upper-middle class family. On an afternoon, she helped her family to prepare a garden party. When she was preparing, she heard a carter who lived nearby had passed away, and she was so shocked that she asked to cancel the garden party. However, she was stopped by her mother, Mrs. Sheridan, because she didn't think a stranger's death should bother the party. Then Laura gave up and after the party, she went to visit the carter's family, saw his body and realized something important in her life.

2. Literature Review

Since "The Garden Party" was first published in 1922, studies about this story have piled up with most of them favoring the study of topic and theme over its language and narration. As time stepped into the 21st century, angles of studies have been narrowed down, and theories adopted have become more specific and specialized, for example, linguistic structure, insight, prototypes, and narrative perspectives and so on.

2.1 Studies on Themes and Characters

Back to 1957, Warren S. Walker's study has already provoked a discussion about whether "The Garden Party" is a united and complete story. He claimed that "'The Garden Party' often leaves readers with a feeling of dissatisfaction, a vague sense that the story somehow does not realize its potential" (p. 354). He then pointed out that "the difficulty" is that "the conflict has a dual nature, only part of which is resolved effectively" (p. 354), and as to the class question raised in the story, "no hint of any answer... is to be found in the conclusion" (p. 357). Walker's view was against by Robert Murray Davis (1964) who turned to "examine the symbols and images of the story and their place in the basic pattern" (p. 61). By this means, Davis claimed that readers "can place the conflict within Laura alone" and "restore Laura to her proper place as a character with whom the reader sympathizes" (ibid), thus he can perceive the diversity and unity in this story.

These two studies confirm the debatable nature and the diversity in the themes of this story and the most obvious theme in this story is the class issue and Laura's change. Laura the main character is a young lady from an upper-middle class family, who, in a garden party, faces directly the reality of the social class through the death of the poor carter. Text's unclear attitude towards class issues leads researchers to doubt whether a conclusive solution can be found in the narration of this story. Studies have different attitudes towards this question. Wang Ye (2010) analyzes the situation in which Laura is suffering the marginalization and split of subject, and confirms that the possible way to an ideal world is to throw away the middle-class prejudice and show love to surpass the differences between the classes. However, this opinion is not supported by William Atkinson (2006), who mentions "Laura's middle-class tendency to aestheticize the unfamiliar and thereby neutralize it" (p. 54), and thus he argues that "Laura and the readers are thrust back into a fallen world characterized by hierarchy and apprehended in terms of formal order" (ibid). Sebnem Kaya (2011) also shows a pessimistic attitude toward Laura's future by scrutinizing Sheridan family's "conventional but false education" (p. 54) on Laura, which Laura cannot get rid of and keeps Laura from seeing the truth in the outside world.

What's worse, the unprepared touch with the social reality may cause Laura change into "an uncertain, inconsistent and vulnerable adult" (p. 61).

2.2 Studies on the Artistic Features

Recent studies on "The Garden Party" focus more on the artistic features in the story, which provide many new angles to readers.

Christine Darrohn (1998) analyzes this story by connecting it with the background in which Katherine Mansfield wrote this story, claiming it has relationship with the Great War and shows "Mansfield's painful ambivalence produced by a war that magnified the desire for radical social change even as it enacted—to a terrifying extreme—what the loss of hegemony could entail" (p. 539).

Analyzing by linguistics also shows up as an important direction. Stephen E. Severn (2009) analyzes Laura's plea for forgiveness and her reversion to silence at the end of the story by examining their linguistic structure, and he, against the opinion that this story fails to be united, concludes that the text clearly describes where Laura has been, and Laura's silence is a resistance.

Qin Yan (2017) focuses on three insights in the development of the story and reveals the psychological path of Laura's confusion, realization and reconstruction. Similarly, Zhu Jingyi (2007) focuses on the stream of consciousness and respectively analyzes the impressionistic color, psychic time and the change of narrative perspective in this story. According to Zhu, Mansfield has effectively built the image of Laura's growing up.

Mythical prototype is also a unique aspect. Laura's third insight happens when she witnesses the corpse of her neighbor. Instead of horror, Laura gains a sudden understanding of what life is. Zeng Jiaying (2010) argues that in the very end of the story, the impact from the death scene changes to a true understanding of death and life because of the innocence and virgin of Laura. And in Zhang Jianfei's (1991) analysis, the "Paradise Lost" serves as the mythical prototype of "The Garden Party". Laura's family, the garden party, the woman in the carter's house and facing the carter's corpse respectively refer to the Eden, the adult ceremony, the temptation of Satan, and the rite of passage, which reveals the power of traditional literature in Mansfield's work.

2.3 Studies on Narrative Skills

Studies from the perspective of narration have merged up with the development of narratology. In terms of the narrative perspective, Shen Dan (2018) concludes four kinds of focalization: nonfocalization, internal focalization, first-person external focalization and third-person external focalization. And by whether the narrator focuses on different characters' perception, internal focalization can be further divided into three kinds: fixed internal focalization, shifting internal focalization, and mixed internal focalization.

Besides the narrative perspective, another narrative aspect--covert progression has been explored by Shen Dan in her studies. Shen (2015) defines covert progression as the undercurrent narration that develops in parallel behind the plot development, and points out the significance of studying covert progression. "If we can find the covert progression, we will see another world that the work constructs"

(p. 27). She (2013) finds that the covert progression contributes to or overturns the plot development, with the effect of sarcasm, making the readers' response complex or revealing the theme of the story. She cuts from the angle of covert progression and analyzes three Mansfield's stories: "A Dill Pickle" (2019), "Psychology" (2015) and "The Fly" (2012), which reveals the potential of studying Mansfield's works by analyzing their covert progression.

However, there are few studies on the technique of narration analysis. Chen Hong (2003) analyzes the modern narrative art in *The Garden Party and Other Stories* from perspectives of narrative structure, narrative point of view, narrative form and language. And Zhang Xiaoge (2007) explores the innovative contribution of Mansfield to the English short story writing by analyzing her special narrative techniques including narrative perspective, narrative language and narrative structure. Duan Yuping (2019), who divides the narrative perspective in "The Garden Party" into two kinds: omniscient narration (nonfocalization) and limited point of view (fixed internal focalization), and analyzes how Mansfield alternatively uses them.

2.4 Summary

"The Garden Party" has undergone a thorough research about its themes and characters, and all the studies show Mansfield's deep concern and exploration of human happiness and despair. Compared to the themes, the study of narration is relatively lack of concern. There is still a big space for studying the narrative perspective and covert progression in this story. The connection between the effect and outcome this story achieves and Mansfield's control of the narrative perspective remains unclear. Meanwhile, Shen Dan's studies manifest the potential of exploring the covert progression in Mansfield's stories, and "The Garden Party" is still uncultivated. A more detailed organization and analysis from the angle of narrative perspective is potential to find and explain new possibilities in the understanding of the class issue and Laura's change.

3. Analysis of Narrative Perspective in "The Garden Party"

Authors choose different narrative perspectives when they are creating stories, and different perspectives lead to different effect. After analysis, it is found that Katherine Mansfield uses focalization and covert progression in her story "The Garden Party". These two perspectives work on different levels of this story but they are strongly correlative.

When talking about the ways of focalization, we want to know whether the narrator knows more than the character. The narrator can give all the information in a story, and he can also tell only what a single character has known. In this way, the narrator controls what readers can see and feel to let readers pay attention to some unique manners or habits of a character. When we analyze covert progression, we will find it is a perspective hiding behind the normal plot development, attracting people's attention by connecting the traits that the narrator has focalized, and having a hidden power of extending or overturning the plot development. Consequently, the two kinds of perspectives are related as dots and lines, and they both work effectively in "The Garden Party".

3.1 Nonfocalization and Internal Focalization in the Story

3.1.1 Nonfocalization

Nonfocalization is a narrative perspective in which the narrator knows everything in the story and does not use certain character's perspective when in narration. In this sense, the narrator is as if holding a camera, catching every meaningful scene and every action of every character, and projecting them out. Meanwhile, the audiences (readers) catch the outside images that the narrator conveys, and try to figure out what is the meaning of these images. By using nonfocalization, Mansfield offers "The Garden Party" with an equal observation and a detailed description to all the things and characters in this story. As a result, we can find the story is supported by clear environment and culture background, and vitalized by authentic actions and mental activities which successfully reveal the personalities of the characters.

The very beginning of this story is a typical example of using nonfocalization to show us the environmental background.

Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing (Mansfield, 2018, p. 216).

This is the ambient condition where an upper-middle class garden party is going to be held. The narrator's eyes are staring at the overall scene of the garden. Sky, gardener, haze, rosettes and roses are all contributing to the peaceful atmosphere in this garden, as if God has chosen this day to be the exact day of holding a garden party. All the descriptions in this part become the best annotations for the word "ideal", revealing the environment background of this garden party.

Another example is a scene of the block where the lower classes live. "The lane began, smoky and dark" (Mansfield, 2018, p. 230). This sentence sets the tone of this whole place: unpleasant and depressed. The narrator gives the sketches of women, men and children in this place with precise descriptions, for example, women "hurried by", men "hung over" and children "played in the doorway" (ibid.). Also, the shadow is "crab-like" and "moved across the window" (ibid.). All these images on the one hand reveal the disordered situation of this place, on the other hand convey an unpleasant feeling which is totally absent in the peaceful and elegant atmosphere of the garden party. We can easily find the brutal comparison between this block and the beautiful garden at the very beginning, and it is the precise and concise observation and description of the different environments that lead us to think about the huge difference between the classes.

Besides revealing environment and culture background, the use of nonfocalization also manifests different characteristics. As the main character, Laura's personality is the core of this story. Using nonfocalization, Mansfield catches the image of an adorable girl and carefully designs her actions to match her lively and innocent heart. For example, when her mother let her arrange the marquee, she

“flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 216); when she was asked to come back to answer the phone, she “skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch” (ibid.). Laura was always a lively girl running here and there. And when Laura met the men carrying staves, she was shy and nervous, “blushed and tried to look severe”, “copying her mother’s voice” and “stammered like a little girl” (ibid., p. 217); when she had a conversation with those men and got rid of her unease, she “took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing” (ibid., p. 219), and wanted to show her happiness. The precise choice of words successfully creates a picture of Laura. Although these narrations contribute little to the plot, they keep telling the reader: this is Laura, and this girl is lively and special.

At the same time, we can find a classic image of an upper-middle class adult, Mrs. Sheridan, Laura’s mother. When Laura told her mother that “a man has been killed”, her mother “interrupted her”, wishing it “not in the garden” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 226). And after getting the negative answer, she “signed with relief and took off the big hat and held it on her knees” (ibid.). The camera of nonfocalization takes exactly the self-concerned and merciless image of Mrs. Sheridan, who concerns only the garden party and the pride to hold a successful party. In Mrs. Sheridan’s conversation with Laura, we can find she “refused to take Laura seriously” (ibid.), so as the attitude that she takes to the poor carter. Characters cannot tell their own appearance, and of course cannot pay attention to what he or she is unconcerned about, including some unique manners or habits, and these things are all what the camera of nonfocalization can catch, so it is very helpful when the narrator is trying to create every authentic and accessible character.

By nonfocalization, Mansfield not only tells what characters did, but also tells what they thought. For example, what did Laura think when she told her mother the death message and she wanted to cancel the party? Now the thoughts in Laura’s mind are observed and picked out. When she heard her mother’s reply, she was “astonished” that her mother “refused to take her seriously” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 226). Although she said yes, she “felt it was all wrong” (ibid.). And when her mother was angry with her, she thought “Is mother right?” “Am I being extravagant?” (ibid., p. 227), feeling confused. In this way, Laura’s inside world is manifested together with the actual world.

3.1.2 Internal Focalization

When using internal focalization, the narrator focuses on one or more characters’ feelings and views, using their eyes to observe the story world and experience it. In this situation, the narrator knows no more than the character, and he becomes the character who he focuses on when in narration. For example, the initial words of this story are “And after all...” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 216). They convey a feeling of relief, showing a “satisfied expectation that the first requirement for an exceptional day has been fulfilled” (Sorkin, 1978, p. 439). This relieved and satisfied emotion is clearly coming from Laura. The narrator simply uses three words and they uncover the excited and expecting heart of Laura as if she is waiting beside the window just to make sure the weather is appropriate.

Another example is when Laura looked at the karaka-trees as she thought about the advice to arrange

the marquees against them:

Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee? (Mansfield, 2018, p. 218)

Here instead of directly describing how the karaka-trees are, Mansfield puts herself on the position of Laura and picks out the words that Laura will say, for example “lovely” “gleaming” and “splendor”. Those words indicate Laura’s personal feelings, as if Laura is indeed expressing herself in this way. Meanwhile, the question “Must they be hidden by a marquee?” functions similarly. We can see Laura’s pitiful face behind this question, as she thinks marquees may block the beauty of the trees. It can be found here that the narrator has changed from the one who knows everything and always makes objective observations to Laura who thinks the trees are peaceful and beautiful. This technique brings the readers closer to the real stream of consciousness of Laura.

3.1.3 The Shifting of Narrative Perspectives

In the narration of this story, the use of nonfocalization and internal focalization is usually interwoven. A manifest clue is the change of the narrators. When the writer uses nonfocalization, the narrator is the all-knowing observer telling all the details of the story; while using internal focalization, the narrator is the character who is focalized. Mansfield shows a talented skill in balancing the two ways and shifting from one to another with the needs of narration.

One of the techniques Mansfield adopts is the use of free indirect speech, by which she can control the shifting of narrative perspectives.

If we look at the whole part in which Laura meets the four workers helping to make the marquee, we can find Laura’s thoughts are always bursting out without any indication. When she sees a worker’s friendly smile, two exclamations just come out of the blue: “How very nice workmen were!” and “What a beautiful morning!” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 217) Laura is touched by the friendliness she feels and in her heart a pure likeness and gratitude emerge, then Mansfield just sees through Laura and transfers her feeling into tangible words, which hit the readers’ heart as if Laura’s voice is actually coming from their own mind. Similarly, “How many men that she knew would have done such a thing” and “Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were” (ibid., p. 218) are also direct manifestations of Laura’s unique mental activities. These sentences are representative examples for free indirect speech, which reveal the innocent, kind and friendly inner world of Laura, and explain from Laura’s perspective why she wants to make friends with those workers.

We can also take the following part as an example:

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. “Huh,” she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. [...] But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase, in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. [...] She could have

kissed it (Mansfield, 2018, pp. 219-220).

This part reveals the happy and light mood of Laura, who is so fascinated by the coming garden party. The underline part adapts free indirect speech. These two sentences speak out loudly what Laura really thinks. We can find here that although these two sentences are surrounded by external descriptions, they stand out because of the strong emotion carried by the exclamation and question marks. To the readers, the image of Laura stands out—she is exclaiming the lively air and the beautiful day in her big house, and it is the garden party that lets her have the time to really immerse herself in joy. Meanwhile, this feeling is demonstrated and echoed by the last sentence “She could have kissed it”, thus reaching the summit. These two free indirect speeches bring readers to the light heart of Laura and help them see the sight through her eyes. They vitalize the whole part, as if the nonfocalization narrator also gets motivated by Laura’s mood and starts dancing with the wind.

Here we can summarize how Mansfield uses the narrative perspectives and how they take effect. When using nonfocalization, there is a narrator who knows everything in this story, and the narrator always tells more than the characters in the story and offers the story with objective observations and descriptions. When using internal focalization, there is a narrator who knows as much as the characters in the story, and the narrator becomes the character who he is focalizing in the narration. In this story, Mansfield uses nonfocalization to describe the environment or characters’ appearance and behaviors in detail, and uses internal focalization to focus on certain character’s inner world and express it.

Mansfield is talented in shifting the narrative perspective and one of her techniques is free indirect speech. This technique allows Mansfield to swiftly change the narrator as the narration requires. The shifting of narrative perspective vitalizes the narration. When Mansfield changes the perspective from nonfocalization to internal focalization, readers are attracted by the sudden appearance of the characters’ consciousness and naturally follow their lead to see what they see. In this way, Mansfield creates a world that is supported by the objective observations and vitalized by the personal emotion of the characters, making it easy to get into their inner world.

3.2 The Covert Progression in the Story

Covert progression is a new concept defined by Shen Dan as “the powerful hidden dynamic paralleling the plot development throughout the text” (2019, p. 81). The two narrative dynamics, covert progression and plot development, either complement or subvert each other in various ways. The covert progression plays a very important role in conveying the thematic and aesthetic significance of the text, inviting readers to respond to the text in a different or even opposite way.

By analyzing the relationship between the covert progression and the plot development in “The Garden Party”, it is found that the covert progression has the ironic effect in revealing the truth in the upper-middle class family, and its function and effect in complicating the implied author and target reader of this story is also found out.

3.2.1 The Ironic Covert Progression

The very beginning of this story portrays a peaceful and beautiful picture of a garden where a delicate party is going to be held. However, throughout the story, we know the garden party is not happy all along. The conflict between the classes makes the harmonious garden turbulent, and Laura witnesses everything. Laura's experience is the plot development of this story, but meanwhile, there is a covert progression leading the readers to the reason of tension and turbulence—the upper-middle class' enjoyment and indifference.

At the beginning of the story, Mrs. Sheridan asked her children to put up the marquees, “but Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 216). Here Mansfield uses a word “possibly” to emphasize the impossibility for Meg, Laura's sister, to help and then she gives the reason: Meg was relaxing. The word “possibly” contains a strong ironic effect, indicating Meg's attitude: my own routines are always important than setting up some marquees. However, when Mrs. Sheridan called Laura, she “flew, still holding her piece of bread-and butter”, because she “loved having to arrange things” (ibid.). This comparison on the one hand shows Laura's lively personality, on the other hand focuses on Meg's inherence to enjoyment, letting readers reflect on the life attitude of the middle class.

Then, Laura met the four men coming to put up the marquees. In this part, Mansfield keeps using free indirect speech to speak out Laura's heart. For example, “How nice they were! And what a beautiful morning” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 217), “how extraordinarily nice workmen were” (ibid., p. 218). These sentences reveal that Laura does not have prejudice on the workmen, and she loves showing affinity to them. This part extends Laura's comparison with Meg and other children, and drops one thing that needs to be further discussed. When a workman used bang slap as a metaphor, Laura “wondered for a moment whether it was quite respectful” (ibid., p. 217). Since Laura “quite followed him” (ibid., p. 219), this little doubt of hers could have been dropped off, but Mansfield leaves it here, and brings a question to readers: is this a right “upbringing”?

The next part comes up with Mrs. Sheridan and her flowers. This is the first conflict between Laura and her mother. Laura thought she could arrange everything, but her mother stepped in with a great number of flowers. And the reason for Mrs. Sheridan to buy such a number of flowers was that she saw them in the shop window and she just wanted to have them, moreover the garden party could be the best excuse for them. Here the characteristic of Mrs. Sheridan begins to emerge. She is powerful, capricious and prone to enjoyment. During the narration, readers are following Laura and Laura was asked and allowed by Mrs. Sheridan to arrange the garden party. At this time, Mrs. Sheridan's behavior is not easy to be accepted and naturally becomes the object to be thought over, and her behavior also points to the life of middle-class people and has the ironic effect.

The irony extends with Jose and the piano. When Jose sang “This life is Weary”, as she said, she wanted to check whether the piano sounded good, but we can see here as she continued to sing, her concern to the piano changed to the focus on herself. Jose became a performer. A good performer sinks

into the melody and creates an atmosphere for others to sink in, but Jose is a performer who just wants everyone to praise her. She can make a mournful and enigmatical face but she does not feel so, and she can sing a tearful “Goodbye” in a brilliant smile. Mansfield intensifies the comparison between the sad song and the happy singer by writing down the lyrics as well as the way Jose plays it. The lyrics are melancholy but Jose is happy, and the happiness brings the scene with a strong irony. The separation between the song and the performer reveals the indifference of people in the middle class. They are all about enjoying themselves and they show no feelings to “the weary life”.

The second conflict between Laura and her mother is more severe when Laura tried to convince her mother to cancel the garden party. When Mrs. Sheridan was told by Laura that someone died, she was nervous because she thought if the man died in the garden, the party would be influenced. And as Laura emphasized the dead man was their near neighbor, Mrs. Sheridan took it as a normal accident, and she felt confused about the life condition of the dead man: “It’s only by accident we’ve heard of it. If someone had died there normally—and I can’t understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 226). Then finally Mrs. Sheridan lost her patience and insisted that those poor people be not worth sacrificing or even spoiling everyone’s mood. These three parts express the same thoughts of Mrs. Sheridan. She does not think people are equal. She believes she herself has a social circle which will never touch the circle where people living in poky little holes belong to, and her class should never sacrifice because of people of lower classes.

After the party was over, Laura and her parents sat down and started talking about the party affairs and the dead carter. Mrs. Sheridan is hypocritical in the whole garden party. She said “I’m exhausted” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 228), but it was she who left the party to her children and barely did anything except for ordering a lot of flowers. At the beginning she wanted her children to treat her as an honored guest. Although she complained about why children gave parties every year, she was the one who enjoyed every party and feared there was any problem influencing the party. As a result, when Mrs. Sheridan said “these parties” (ibid.) twice in row, what she really wanted to point out was “it’s been very successful”, and she was satisfied with this party.

This hypocritical style continued when she talked about the dead carter again. Mrs. Sheridan thought about giving the poor family some comfort, so she let Laura bring them a basket with the food left in the party. Then she let Laura give them the arum lilies because “people of that class are so impressed by arum lilies” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 229). However, having noticed the flowers might break Laura’s lace frock, she just let Laura bring the basket. Finally, when Laura was about to leave, she said to Laura “don’t on any account—” and stopped.

From here we know Mrs. Sheridan is not sympathetic to the poor carter’s family. She just feels, as a higher, richer and happier class, that it is the righteous thing to show some mercy to those who live poorly and not decently. The last sentence that she didn’t finish is clearly a warning. She did not want Laura to get interfered with the lower classes a lot, and she herself had good reason— “better not push such ideas into the child’s head” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 230). These typical features of upper-middle class

are what Mansfield wants to criticize. In this part when Jose pointed out the possibility that lilies might break Laura's dress, Mansfield describes Jose as "practical". To Mrs. Sheridan, Jose was practical because she noticed the profit of her class. As a result, "practical" is also a word containing some ironic tone, pointing to the class that takes its own profit as the most important thing.

As Laura left her house and came to the carter's, the covert progression under the plot development of the upper-middle class garden party was stopped. Mansfield uses many techniques to depict the characters in the upper-middle class family and all these techniques are pointing to the real attitude of the people in such a class—they are only concerned about the profit of their own and are indifferent to the classes lower than them. In the whole story, Mansfield does not criticize this directly, but we can feel a flow of irony in it. This kind of irony is hidden under the narration and manifests itself only if we jump out of the plot development and depiction of the character and connect them with a larger context—the cover progression. Mansfield is skilled in finding out the features of the upper-middle class, and she uses the narrator who observes and describes to match those features to the behaviors of those people. We can easily find additional words in her depiction, but none of them is redundant. It is like a story teller who love arranging words to add his personal judgments to a story, but he never wants others to realize them easily, but in this way, he makes the story lively and easy to be explored.

3.2.2 The Function of Covert Progression in Narration

1) The relationship with the plot development

According to Shen Dan (2019), there are two kinds of relationship between covert progression and plot development: complement or overturn. In this story, the plot development is that Laura renews her understanding of life in a connection with a poor family other than her class, while the covert progression leads to an irony on the people in upper-middle class who are just concerned about their own profits and the enjoyment, and show no sympathy to people from classes lower than them. They are complementary.

First, the covert progression offers the story with a depiction parallel to the plot development. In this story, Mansfield does not directly criticize the people of upper-middle class, on the contrary, she hides them under the plot development, and uses an objective tone when she describes them in the story. This parallel is defined by Shen Dan (2019) as a parallel of objective description and ironic description. In Wang Ye's (2010) study, he takes the description of the upper-middle class as realistic and objective, whose aim is to reveal the conflicts between the classes. However, we can learn from the covert progression that Mansfield hides her sarcasms and lets the readers find the truth in the upper-middle class' life. If Mansfield had revealed her attitude in the story by verbal irony or situational irony, it would have broken the atmosphere created by focusing on the innocent heart of Laura's, and to some extent reduced the objectivity in the plot development. Consequently, the covert progression can provide the plot development with a hidden ironic tone and let readers reflect back on the characters and the situations.

The ironic tone in covert progression is defined by Shen Dan (2019) as non-ironic because it is

concealed. In the story, words coincide with the meaning which they carry, and the behaviors of characters are also consistent, but in some parts readers can feel the ironic attitude of the writer. Irony here is mixed into the context. We cannot find the irony if we only consider the language or behavior of a character, but if we connect the character with the surrounding context, we can realize how the irony functions. For example, Meg's relaxing is very normal and no one in the story is opposed to her. But when we see Laura flying away to welcome the workmen and consider the context of upper-middle class' indifference, we can realize the irony on Meg and her behavior. As a result, when we study the covert progression, we have to carefully analyze the context, and in this way the plot development and the covert progression are tightened together.

2) Dual implied author and dual target reader

As Shen Dan (2019) concludes, there should be two implied authors and two kinds of target readers in a story where covert progression has been found. In this story, one implied author "writes" the plot development, telling the story and focusing on the growing-up of Laura and the possible way to build up the bridge connecting classes. Its target readers understand its chasing and expect that the respect and love manifested by Laura can become the key to an ideal world. Another implied author sees the self-enjoyment and indifference in the people of the upper-middle class, and its target readers follow its lead and find the truth in the upper-middle class. The two groups of implied authors and target readers are opposing to each other to some extent.

To the corresponding author and readers of the covert progression, it is easy to reach a pessimistic conclusion. Life starts at the end of art. If we think a step further, what will happen after Laura comes back to her garden from the carter's house? For Laura, it is not an easy thing to always run from her house and to play with the lower classes because of her upbringing and family environment, and for the classes, there is no practical way to solve their conflict. From the analysis of the covert progression in this story, we realize that although people of the upper-middle class do not hate or are not antagonistic to the lower classes, they are indifferent to them. Those people share a self-sealing circle and satisfy themselves only with other people in the same circle or above them. We cannot convince Mrs. Sheridan to "love" or "respect" people like the carter because she only thinks that his death is an accident and there is no need to feel sorry or make sacrifice for him. She is emotionally unrelated to people from the lower classes. Although this is the truth of the upper-middle class and Mansfield satirizes it in this story, it can only be a realistic fact for a long time. The truth from the covert progression will hinder the formation of the ideal world.

However, to the corresponding author and readers of the plot development, Laura's growing-up is significant, and it symbolizes the hope for a united world where class boundary is eliminated. Mansfield successfully catches the moment when Laura grows up:

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He

was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. 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 (Mansfield, 2018, p. 232).

This long paragraph extends the very moment when Laura sees the body, and gives readers a strong emotional shock. This is described by Hubert Zapf as a deceleration of the narrative pace, and Laura is able to “link the two opposing worlds in her ‘transcendent’ experience” (Zapf, 1985, p. 44). By analyzing this part, we can find how Mansfield reveals the transcendent mental growing-up and plants the seeds for the hope. “There lay a young man, fast asleep” is a nonfocalization narration, but then, Mansfield uses “soundly”, “deeply” and “far, far away” to have the tendency to change to internal focalization. Then “Oh, so remote, so peaceful” shows the internal feeling of Laura, and “Never wake him again” is also a personal wish of Laura. After that the nonfocalization narrator describes his head and eyes, then again, the narration changes to Laura’s perspective. She started thinking about whether her own life is the only way of living, and she got the answer— “he was far from all those things”, “happy...happy” and “I’m content”. Interestingly here “I’m content” seems to be from the perspective of the dead body, but it also comes from Laura because we know a body cannot think. Laura here is, as if using internal focalization, speaking for the soul of the carter and herself. Witnessing death is a breakthrough to Laura, because she sees what life really is, and she starts to know that her life in that garden is not the only normal way. Mansfield successfully conveys the idea of love and respect through Laura’s eyes. Normally when people see a body lying on a table, they will feel scary or feel sorry for the death, but Laura here is staring at an angle who is about to ascend.

This part makes Laura’s growing up solid, and the next part of Laura meeting Laurie on her way home makes Laura’s feeling authentic. Laura hugged Laurie tightly and sobbed, “isn’t life...” (Mansfield, 2018, p. 233) without finishing the complete question, and Laurie answered back “isn’t it darling” (ibid.). Laura understood something but she couldn’t explain. This is a real experience for everyone who starts to know something new. Here Mansfield, as if she cut a part from everyone’s life and let Laura and Laurie play it out, changes the invisible understanding to a touchable reaction and solidifies it with the beautiful scene.

To the target readers of the plot development, everyone in this world will grow up, and a person’s growing-up is the change of his or her entire world. Together with the growing-up there is a kind of power making one realistically change his or her own life. That power probably is the pillar of the ideal world.

Covert progression adds a new group to the former implied-author-and-target-reader relationship. They have their own understanding of the story and their understanding may be complementary or controversial to each other. The world of this story is in this way further explored.

4. Conclusion

This paper explored the narrative perspective in Katherine Mansfield's short story "The Garden Party". This story has been studied from the aspect of theme for a long period of time and studies have covered from class, prototype, growing-up and so on. However, there are still few studies on its narrative perspective, especially the covert progression in this story. It is worth exploring its narrative perspective and analyzing how Mansfield creates this unique world.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the analysis:

First, "The Garden Party" completes a harsh satire on the upper-middle class' ingrained self-enjoyment and indifference to the lower classes by a mixed use of narrative perspectives. By analyzing the ways of focalization, we know the environment and catch personalities. The comparison of the garden and the poor block reveals the brutal reality of class differences. Classic upper-middle class in this story, for example Mrs. Sheridan, is very self-concerned and hypocritical, and our main character Laura has special traits concerning her upbringing: loving, caring, innocent, and friendly, and does not have a prejudice on the class differences. By looking at the covert progression, we catch the ironic tone of Mansfield on the upper-middle class, and we see how every member except Laura in this family behaves in a selfish and indifferent way. Mansfield does not use any explicit technique to criticize or satirize. She just hides it under the plot and shows a normal picture of a garden party, but readers hear her tone.

Second, it is a hard, even impossible task to eliminate the class boundary and build a united new world, but still, hope exists in everyone's heart because everyone can grow up like Laura, who sees the reality but still has the power and will to love and accept. Because a new corresponding pair of implied author and target readers shows up with the uncovering of the covert progression, a new, even opposite understanding comes in the picture. If we only look at the plot development, we can easily get a refreshing conclusion that if everyone cares about others like Laura, things will all turn good. But when we follow the hidden satire and think about the unchangeable situation in class issues, we can be more realistic, and this will help Laura and everyone in the world grow up.

This paper still has some limitations. This paper talks mainly about the most obvious themes: class boundary and growing-up. However, narrative perspective has connections with all the possible themes and it may produce more creative analysis. Then, it is worth comparing Mansfield's other works with "The Garden Party" to find out Mansfield's writing habits. This will be helpful to decide whether her unique writing technique always shows a tendency to a certain kind of feeling.

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