

INTERPRETATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES IN "MISS BRILL" BY
KATHERINE MANSFIELD.

Gaffarova S.G

Master student of English Literature Department at the Asian International University

Scientific supervisor: **Kilicheva M.R**

Associate Professor of English Literature Department

ANNOTATION

This article provides a detailed psychological analysis of the protagonist, Miss Brill, from Katherine Mansfield's short story "Miss Brill." The paper focuses on the psychological states of loneliness, social disconnection, self-deception, and eventual emotional collapse, illustrating how these themes are central to Miss Brill's character development. The analysis uses literary techniques such as symbolism, imagery, irony, and psychological concepts to explore how Miss Brill constructs and eventually faces the harsh reality of her isolation. Through her weekly park visits, Miss Brill creates a fantasy of connection, perceiving herself as an important participant in the lives of those around her. However, the story's climax—when Miss Brill overhears a young couple mock her—forces her to confront the painful truth of her invisibility and social irrelevance. The article applies psychological frameworks, including Carl Rogers' self-concept and Freud's defense mechanisms, to explain Miss Brill's emotional coping strategies and her eventual withdrawal from reality. The fur stole, a key symbol in the story, mirrors Miss Brill's emotional state and represents her vulnerability and deepening isolation. In conclusion, the article highlights how Mansfield's portrayal of Miss Brill addresses broader themes of aging, identity, and the human need for connection in an indifferent world.

Keywords: Loneliness, social disconnection, self-deception, perception of reality, psychological fragmentation, inner conflict, social observation, alienation

ANNOTATSIYA:

Ushbu maqola, Katherine Mansfieldning "Miss Brill" qisqa hikoyasidagi asosiy qahramon Miss Brillning psixologik tahliliga bag'ishlangan. Maqolada, Miss Brillning xarakter rivojlanishida markaziy o'rin tutuvchi yolg'izlik, ijtimoiy uzilish, o'zini aldash va nihoyat, emotsional qulash kabi psixologik holatlar tahlil qilinadi. Tahlil, Miss Brill qanday qilib o'zining yolg'izlik haqiqatini qabul qilib, oxir-oqibat bu holatni yuzaga chiqaradigan og'riqli realizmga duch kelishini ko'rsatish uchun simbolizm, tasvirlar, kinoya va psixologik konseptlarni o'z ichiga oladi. Har hafta bog'ga borib, Miss Brill o'zini atrofidagi odamlarning hayotida muhim ishtirokchi sifatida tasavvur qilib, aloqa qilishning tasavvuriy dunyosini yaratadi. Ammo hikoyaning klimaksida — Miss Brill yosh juftlikning uni masxara qilishini eshitganda — u o'zining ko'rinmasligi va ijtimoiy ahamiyatsizligini tan olishga majbur bo'ladi. Maqola, Carl Rogersning o'z-o'zini anglash va Freyding himoya mexanizmlari kabi psixologik nazariyalarni qo'llab, Miss Brillning emosional himoya strategiyalarini va uning oxir-oqibat haqiqatdan chekinishini tushuntiradi. Hikoyadagi asosiy ramzlardan biri bo'lgan moxir yaltiroq, Miss Brillning emotsional holatini aks ettirib, uning zaifligini va chuqurlashgan yolg'izligini ifodalaydi. Yakunida, maqola, Mansfieldning Miss Brillni tasvirlash orqali qarilik, kimlik va indifferens dunyoda aloqa qilish ehtiyoji kabi kengroq mavzularni qanday ko'rsatishini ta'kidlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: Yolg'izlik, ijtimoiy uzilish, o'zini aldash, haqiqatni qabul qilish, psixologik parchalanish, ichki qarama-qarshilik, ijtimoiy kuzatish.

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

VOLUME-5, ISSUE-2

Аннотация:

Статья представляет собой детальный психологический анализ главной героини рассказа Кэтрин Мэнсфилд "Мисс Брилл". В статье рассматриваются психологические состояния одиночества, социальной изоляции, самообмана и, в конечном итоге, эмоционального краха, иллюстрируя, как эти темы являются центральными в развитии персонажа Мисс Брилл. Анализ использует литературные приемы, такие как символизм, образность, ирония и психологические концепты, чтобы исследовать, как Мисс Брилл строит иллюзию связи с окружающим миром и как она сталкивается с жестокой реальностью своей изоляции. На протяжении регулярных визитов в парк Мисс Брилл создает фантазийный мир, в котором она воспринимает себя важной участницей жизни других людей. Однако кульминационный момент рассказа — когда Мисс Брилл подслушивает насмешки молодой пары — заставляет ее столкнуться с болезненной правдой о своей невидимости и социальной незначительности. В статье применяются психологические теории, включая концепцию самосознания Карла Роджерса и защитные механизмы Фрейда, для объяснения эмоциональных стратегий Мисс Брилл и ее последующего ухода от реальности. меховая накидка, являющаяся важным символом в рассказе, отражает эмоциональное состояние Мисс Брилл и символизирует ее уязвимость и углубляющуюся изоляцию. В заключение, статья подчеркивает, как изображение Мэнсфилд Мисс Брилл затрагивает более широкие темы старения, идентичности и человеческой потребности в связи в равнодушном мире.

Ключевые слова: одиночество, социальная изоляция, самообман, восприятие реальности, психологическая фрагментация, внутренний конфликт, социальное наблюдение.

INTRODUCTION

In Katherine Mansfield's short story *Miss Brill*, the protagonist, Miss Brill, is an isolated, unmarried, middle-aged woman who finds solace in her routine visits to the public gardens, where she imagines herself as an important part of the lives of others. Through her observations and the shift in her self-perception, the story explores her psychological states—loneliness, self-deception, and the eventual confrontation with reality. This paper will examine these psychological states in *Miss Brill*, analyzing how Mansfield uses literary techniques to portray them, and how they contribute to the character's emotional development. This paper examines the psychological states that define Miss Brill's character—namely, her loneliness, self-deception, and the eventual shattering of her illusions. Through a close reading of the text, we will analyze how Mansfield employs various literary techniques, including symbolism, imagery, and irony, to convey these psychological states and explore their role in the character's emotional development. In doing so, we will demonstrate how Miss Brill's internal collapse represents not just personal tragedy, but also broader themes of identity, aging, and the human need for connection in a world that can be indifferent to individual existence.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative literary analysis approach, focusing on the psychological states of the protagonist, Miss Brill, in Katherine Mansfield's short story. The analysis is based on two key methodologies:

1. Close Reading:

The primary method used in this study is a close reading of *Miss Brill*. This involves a detailed, line-by-line analysis of the text to uncover how Mansfield presents Miss Brill's internal thoughts, feelings, and psychological states. Close reading will focus on specific passages where Miss Brill's inner world

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

VOLUME-5, ISSUE-2

is most apparent, such as her monologues, interactions with others, and moments of self-reflection. This method helps to identify key emotional shifts in the character's psyche and how these shifts correlate with the unfolding of the story. When "Miss Brill" is closely examined, it reveals a very lonely old woman who creates a fantasy of belonging and connection through her weekly trips to the park, where she watches other people and sees herself as a part of the scene. She clings to the illusion of her fur coat as a symbol of her imagined significance, but she eventually faces the harsh reality of her isolation when a young couple harshly rejects her, shattering her self-perception and leaving her feeling completely alone.

2. Application of Psychological Concepts:

To interpret Miss Brill's psychological states, this study applies several psychological concepts:

Self-perception: The study explores how Miss Brill perceives herself and her role in the world. This involves analyzing her belief that she is an important figure in the lives of the people she observes, and how this perception evolves throughout the story.¹

Denial and Self-deception: The paper examines Miss Brill's tendency to deceive herself into believing she is part of a larger social narrative, focusing on how she builds and sustains her delusion. This is analyzed in relation to psychological theories on denial as a defense mechanism.²

Emotional Coping and Withdrawal: The study looks at how Miss Brill copes with her loneliness and emotional vulnerability. Her final retreat, symbolized by the act of putting the fur stole back in its box, is analyzed as a manifestation of emotional withdrawal and the acceptance of isolation.

3. Literary Devices and Symbolism:

A significant part of this analysis involves examining the literary devices used by Mansfield to depict Miss Brill's psychological states. Key devices to be explored include:

Symbolism: The fur stole serves as a symbol of Miss Brill's emotional state and her need for connection. It represents both her companionship and her attempt to protect herself from her loneliness.³

Significance of the "Cupboard": Miss Brill's retreat into loneliness and the closing of her delusions are symbolized by her putting away her fur coat in her "cupboard-like" room.

Imagery: Mansfield uses vivid descriptions of the park and its inhabitants to mirror Miss Brill's emotional world. The "play" that she imagines the world around her to be is filled with symbolic significance, reflecting her desire for engagement and recognition.

Irony: The story's use of irony, particularly in the way Miss Brill interprets the actions of others, helps to reveal the dissonance between her self-perception and the reality of her situation. The irony of the young couple's mockery serves as the breaking point for Miss Brill's illusions. Miss Brill hopes the elderly couple who sat next to her will go since she is frustrated that they don't talk. She is unaware that she is in a similar situation, that she is not interacting with anyone, and that people may wish for her to leave. She notices the woman in the ermine toque looks order and shabby, without any awareness that she is the same

Dramatic irony-,when the reader knows the upcoming event but the character in the story does not know". In Miss Brill we are aware she is the 'fur' that she carries around but she doesn't see that

¹ SONG, S. L. (2009). A stylistic analysis of Miss Brill by Katherine Mansfield. *Review of European Studies*, 1(2), 117-122.

² Correa, D. S. (2011). "Katherine Mansfield and music: Nineteenth-century echoes".

³ Seigneuret, J. C. (1988). *Dictionary of literary themes and motifs*. Greenwood Press

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

VOLUME-5, ISSUE-2

in herself. Miss Brill makes fun of other characters in the story that are old but she doesn't see that she is describing herself and she is one of those people.⁴

4. Psychological Frameworks:

The study draws on theories from psychology, such as those by Carl Rogers (on self-concept and self-idealization) and Sigmund Freud (on defense mechanisms like repression and denial). These psychological frameworks are applied to better understand Miss Brill's need to construct a false reality to protect herself from the pain of loneliness and rejection.

Results:

The analysis of Katherine Mansfield's Miss Brill reveals several key psychological states that evolve throughout the narrative. These psychological shifts are deeply intertwined with the protagonist's sense of identity, emotional needs, and her interaction with the outside world. The following sections outline the primary psychological states observed in Miss Brill, based on a close reading of the text and an application of psychological concepts.

1. Loneliness and Isolation:

This story is about loneliness and feeling uncherished when you are older when people no longer want to engage with you. At the start of the story, Miss Brill's psychological state is characterized by profound loneliness. She lives in relative isolation, with few connections to others, and derives her sense of purpose and social belonging from her weekly visits to the park. Through her observations of the people around her, she creates an illusion that she is an integral part of the lives of others. She imagines herself as a quiet observer who is important in the unfolding drama of others' lives.

The symbolism of the fur stole represents her loneliness. The stole is described as "a little fur," which she treats like a companion, a substitute for the human connection she lacks. She speaks to it as if it were alive, showing her deep need for companionship. The stole's worn, faded state also hints at her aging and the passage of time, which she refuses to acknowledge, suggesting a psychological defense against the harsh reality of her social isolation.⁵

Loneliness and Alienation Quotes in Miss Brill: 'And when she breathed, something light and sad—no, not sad, exactly—something gentle seemed to move in her bosom.'⁶

Uselessness: Also, this story is about the pain of feeling useless and forgotten in society while everyone around you seems to be engaging with the community.

2. Self-Deception and Illusion:

Throughout the story, Miss Brill constructs a fantasy world in which she is not only a participant but an important one. She believes that she plays a central role in the lives of the people she watches in the park. For example, she imagines that she is part of a theatrical performance, where the park and its visitors are actors, and she is a key player in the unfolding drama. She even fantasizes that the people in the park notice her presence and that her being there gives life to the social scene around her.

Her self-deception is evident when she describes the other park-goers as characters in a "play." She convinces herself that she is special and that her presence completes the performance. This belief serves as a coping mechanism that helps Miss Brill maintain her sense of self-worth and purpose. She does not recognize that her illusions are rooted in her deep emotional need for connection and

⁴<https://youtu.be/ljPatASjkSo?si=bz69fZmYZiLioZ2x>

⁵ Kaplan, S. J. (1991). Katherine Mansfield and the origins of modernist fiction. Cornell UP.

⁶ <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/miss-brill/themes/loneliness-and-alienation>.

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

VOLUME-5, ISSUE-2

validation. Her denial of her isolation is a defense mechanism that protects her from facing the harsh reality of her loneliness.

3. Shattered Illusions and Emotional Collapse:

The turning point in the story occurs when Miss Brill overhears a young couple mocking her. Their cruel remarks—particularly the young man's comment that she is "a funny old thing"—shatter Miss Brill's illusion of being an important and admired figure in the social landscape of the park. This sudden confrontation with reality is a significant emotional shock. Miss Brill's psychological state shifts from self-assurance to a profound realization of her invisibility and irrelevance in the eyes of others.⁷

The imagery of the fur stole plays a critical role here. After hearing the mockery, Miss Brill's mental state deteriorates, and she retreats into herself. The act of putting the fur stole back in its box symbolizes her withdrawal from the world and her retreat into isolation. She recognizes the painful truth that her life, like her stole, is not as meaningful as she had imagined. This act of putting the fur away signifies her emotional collapse and an acceptance of her loneliness. The fur, once a symbol of her perceived importance, now becomes a reminder of her vulnerability and insignificance.

4. Emotional Withdrawal:

At the end of the story, Miss Brill's emotional withdrawal becomes more pronounced. After the painful experience of being mocked, she leaves the park early and returns to her small, empty apartment. The closing image of her putting the fur stole back in its box is deeply symbolic. The fur, which had been a companion and a symbol of her illusions, is now discarded, representing her retreat into the solitude of her inner world. The box where the fur is kept may also symbolize Miss Brill's attempt to shut off her emotional vulnerability and protect herself from further pain.

Her final thoughts, as she leaves the park, are marked by a profound sense of shame and rejection. She no longer finds comfort in the park or in her imagined social role. Her experience reveals the fragility of the psychological defense mechanisms she had used to cope with loneliness and isolation. The result is a deeper understanding of her emotional state—one that is rooted in the painful realization that her fantasies of connection have been shattered.

5. Youth and old age:

Miss Brill's longing for her younger years is symbolized by her fur cloak. According to her, elderly folks are those species who are oppressed and marginalized.

Characters analysis in Miss Brill.

Miss Brill: A middle-aged, unmarried English tutor in France, she is optimistic, sensitive and observant. Her reflections about her day to day life reveal that she is extremely lonely.

The old man and women: They seem uninteresting to Miss Brill as they do not communicate.

Young boy and girl: They appear at the end of the story. They are two adults who criticize Miss Brill. They call her 'a stupid old thing' and make fun of her coat.

The Fur and Miss Brill

The fur coat represents the protagonist. Here are some of the parallels between them:

- both of them come out their 'boxes' - a literal one and Miss Brill's small, dark room.
- the fur's nose looks like its taken a hit; Miss Brill is figuratively hit in the face by the young adults.
- the young man insults her looks, while the young woman insults the fur's.

⁷ Miriam, B. M. (1978). Reductive imagery in Miss Brill. *Studies in Short Fiction*, 6(4), 473-477.

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

VOLUME-5, ISSUE-2

- the protagonist identifies with the fur when she hears crying.

Discussion:

The psychological states explored in Miss Brill reflect the broader themes of identity, self-worth, and emotional coping in a world that often neglects or dismisses the individual. Miss Brill's isolation and self-deception are not merely personal issues but also reflect societal tendencies to overlook or marginalize older individuals. Mansfield's portrayal of Miss Brill's internal collapse, when her constructed identity is shattered, emphasizes the fragility of human self-esteem. The story highlights the devastating effects of living in a world of illusions, where facing reality can be a painful and disorienting experience. Additionally, the character of Miss Brill can be seen as an exploration of the human need for connection and the lengths to which one will go to preserve a sense of belonging. In a more symbolic sense, her retreat into her fur stole may suggest the human need to withdraw in times of emotional vulnerability, yet this withdrawal also marks the painful acknowledgement of one's loneliness.

Conclusion:

Katherine Mansfield's "Miss Brill" serves as a poignant exploration of the human psyche, particularly the psychological challenges of loneliness, identity, and self-deception that arise with aging. The story traces Miss Brill's emotional journey, illustrating her attempts to stave off the harsh reality of her isolation by constructing a fantasy where she feels important and connected to the world around her. Initially, Miss Brill's psychological defense mechanisms, such as self-deception and projection, allow her to maintain an illusion of belonging. She perceives herself as a central figure in the park's drama, interpreting the mundane activities of the people around her as part of a greater narrative in which she plays a role. However, the cruel and unkind remark from the young couple shatters this fragile self-illusion and forces Miss Brill to confront the painful truth of her social invisibility and emotional isolation.

Her reaction to this realization—retreating into silence and returning to her empty apartment—signifies not just a physical withdrawal but a deeper emotional and psychological collapse. The earlier psychological state of denial transforms into despair, illustrating the fragility of her self-worth and the devastating impact of social rejection. This shift highlights how vulnerable individuals can be when their carefully constructed identities are undermined by reality, particularly for those in their later years who may feel increasingly disconnected from the society around them.⁸

The story's conclusion underscores the central theme of the human struggle between fantasy and reality. Miss Brill's breakdown illustrates the psychological toll of living in denial and the inevitable unraveling of self-deception when faced with an undeniable truth. The rejection she experiences is not just social but deeply existential—her sense of self-worth is irrevocably damaged, and the painful reality of her isolation becomes inescapable. In this sense, Miss Brill's journey is a reflection of the universal human experience of confronting one's own mortality and the limitations of self-delusion.

⁸ YANG, H. (2007). An analysis of the detailed description in Miss Brill. *Journal of Hubei Adult Education Institute*, 4, 54-55.

REFERENCES

1. Correa, D. S. (2011). "Katherine Mansfield and music: Nineteenth-century echoes".
2. Katherine Mansfield: A centenary volume of essays. Eds. Gerri Kimber & Janet Wilson.
3. Seigneuret, J. C. (1988). Dictionary of literary themes and motifs. Greenwood Press
4. SONG, S. L. (2009). A stylistic analysis of Miss Brill by Katherine Mansfield. Review of European Studies, 1(2), 117-122.
5. Thorpe, P. (1962). "Teaching "Miss Brill". College English, 23 (8), pp. 661-663.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/373778>.
6. Kaplan, S. J. (1991). Katherine Mansfield and the origins of modernist fiction. Cornell UP.
7. Mansfield, K. (2007). The garden party and other stories. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing LLC.
8. YANG, H. (2007). An analysis of the detailed description in Miss Brill. Journal of Hubei Adult Education Institute, 4, 54-55.
9. Miriam, B. M. (1978). Reductive imagery in Miss Brill. Studies in Short Fiction, 6(4), 473-477.
10. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/miss-brill/themes/loneliness-and-alienation>
11. <https://youtu.be/ljPatASjkSo?si=bz69fZmYZiLioZ2x>