

A married man's story
by Katherine
Mansfield- innovative
literary devices



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"A Married Man's Story" A Modernist story Modernist Literature The literary expression of the characteristics of Modernism is known as Modernist literature, it reached its summit in Europe between 1900 and the middle 1920s after the dislocation and discordance of the First World War. Modernist literature as opposed to the grand plots of romanticism addressed the mundane concerns of everyday life.

Modernist literature can be seen mostly in terms of its recognized, stylistic and semantic movement away from the Romantic genre, where a common motif is that of an alienated individual and dysfunctional individual trying to make sense of a principally urban and disjointed society. The questioning spirit of modernism can be seen as part of a basic search for ways to make a new sense of a society torn apart by the World Wars. The Modernist style of writing used satire and psycho-analysis, meta-narratives (story within a story), discontinuous narratives etc. The general thematic concerns of Modernist literature were a sense of alienation, despair and frustration of the individual with life and the social obligations of society.

"A Married Man's Story"

Throughout her career as an author Katherine Mansfield wrote many short stories that deal with friendship, matrimony and family life. In "A Married Man's Story" Mansfield employs the modernist literary devices of psychoanalysis and meta-narrative to describe the emotional turmoil of an unnamed married man. Mansfield's story takes place almost entirely inside the head of the narrator. It is composed totally of thoughts, jotted down like a confessional on paper. In this manner the reader is always distanced even from the scene of the tale i. e. the typical Modernist meta-narrative style.

This man is unhappy in his relation with his wife and relates his past and <https://assignbuster.com/a-married-mans-story-by-katherine-mansfield-innovative-literary-devices/>

present life in writing his memoirs. These are disjointed and follow no timeline giving the story a sense of timelessness; also this process leads to the writer (the married man) realizing some truths about himself and his familial relationships (self-realization is an important aspect of Modernist literature).

The thematic style of the story also follows the modernist trend of dealing with an individual's inner struggle to relate to a society and relationships where he feels himself exiled and out of sync. "Outside it is raining," he writes, and he pictures himself outside in the cold darkness; "while I am here, I am there, lifting my face to the dim sky, and it seems to me it must be raining all over the world," he concludes (Mansfield, 1923: 609). These lines from the story clearly indicate the sense of isolation and despair felt by the anonymous man even as he leads a conventionally normal and happy life on the surface. Discontent with society and social order was a prominent theme in Modernist literature which dealt with the confused individuals of a rapidly changing society where all the old rules were thrown out and there were no clear rules as to gender, sex, social class and religion.

Conclusion

Katherine Mansfield forms part of the literary pioneers whose innovations in the early twentieth century signalled the appearance of modernism. She pioneered many new literary devices such as the plotless short story that focused on the thoughts and feelings of her characters instead of their actions. For Kaplan (1991), Mansfield's "emergence into modernism was not derivative of other twentieth-century writers, but a function of her own synthesis and imaginative reworking of late nineteenth-century techniques and themes."

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