



## **A Stylistic Analysis of Katherin Mansfield's Short Story A Cup of Tea**

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Stylistics "is the study of the way in which meaning is created through language in literature as well as other types of texts. To this end, stylisticians use linguistic models, theories and frameworks as their analytical tools in order to describe and explain how and why a text works as it does and how we come from the words on the page to its meaning" (Norgaard et al 1)

For Michael Halliday, there are three types of functions in language : ideational, interpersonal and textual .Transitivity belongs to the ideational function of the clause. This latter is concerned with the transmission of ideas. Its function is representing 'processes' or 'experiences': actions, events, processes of consciousness and relations. The term process is used "to cover all phenomena...and anything that can be expressed by a verb : event, whether physical or not, state, or relation" (Young 48). Moreover, for Halliday our processes rely on our conception of the world or our opinion of this latter. He says :

Our most powerful conception of reality is that it consists of "goings on" : of doing, happening, feeling, being. These goings-on are sorted out in the semantic system of the language, and expressed through the grammar of the claus...the clause evolved simultaneously in another grammatical function expressing the reflective, experiential aspect of meaning. This...is the system of TRANSITIVITY. Transitivity specifies the different types of processes that are recognized in the language, and the structures by which they are expressed. (Bosseaux 45)

The semantic processes have the following components

- 1- The process : which is declared by the verb phrase of the clause (Toolan 108).

- 2- The participants : which are concerned with the roles of entities that take part in the process. The active one which does, exits, says...etc along with the passive one who is done to, said to...etc. The term "participant entities" used by Hallidays refers to the fact that such entities are not necessarily animate. They are typically realized by noun phrases and, in the case of attributes, adjectival phrases” (ibid).
- 3- The circumstances : are related to the process. “Realized by adverbial or prepositional phrases and adverbial subordinate clauses” (ibid).

The choice between the processes and participants roles help conveying one’s view of reality. Indeed, through transitivity, a single event or situation could be analysed in several different ways. Thus, transitivity is concerned, first, with who or what does what to whom or what? And by that it refers to an actor and a goal. For Halliday, the important question is whether one entity does intentionally the action to another (Bosseaux).

In fact, the participant roles vary according to the processes they are involved in. There are six types of processes :

- 1- Material process : it is concerned with the process of doing and it has two participant roles : Actor which is the doer and Goal which is the one affected by the action. In the ergative analysis of the material process the Actor is called Agent/Causer and the Goal is Medium (Rondal 83).
- 2- Relational process : it is concerned with the act of being. It has three types : Intensive, Circumstantial, and possessive processes (ibid). However, this analysis will be confined to the intensive process which in return is divided into attributive and identifying. The participant roles of the former are the Attribute which is the adjective, and the Carrier which carries the adjective. Whereas the participants of the latter are the Token which is the form, occupant...etc and the Value which defines the Token.
- 3- Mental process : it is concerned with the process of feeling or thinking (Rondal 83). Its participants are Senser who is the one involved in the mental process and Phenomenon which is the feeling ...etc.
- 4- Verbal process : concerned with the process of saying (ibid). Its participants are the Sayer who says something and the Target who is said to.
- 5- Behavioral process : concerned with physiological and psychological behavior (ibid). Its participant is the Behaver who does a certain behavior.

6- Existential process : concerned with existing (ibid). Its participant is the Existent which exists.

In finding out the linguistic characteristic of a certain literary discourse, Halliday's transitivity theory could be a very helpful tool. As Fowler notes : "Linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally; they interpret, organize, and classify the subjects of discourse. They embody theories of how the world is arranged: world-views or ideologies"(27).

Moreover, the interpersonal function describes "the relation between persons (hence questions and answers, positive and negative forms, are part of this function)" (Carter 83). Whereas "the textual function is concerned with the process enabling the speaker or writer to construct texts as a logical sequence of units" (ibid). Thus in this paper, the transitivity theory is to be used to analyse Katherin Masefield's short story *A Cup of Tea*. This analysis will be concerned with the use of the different kinds of processes in the text, as well as, the effect of such use on the reader. Besides, as a matter of fact, studying the interpersonal and the textual functions.

"Katherin Mansfield was born a century ago and died in 1923" (Tomalin 5). She was considered as "the true modernist who changed the rules for the English-language short story" (ibid). Before starting analysing her short story, it would be helpful to give a brief summary of it. It is the story of a couple, Rosemary and Philip Fell, who lead a nice and remarkable life without having problems or troubles. Everyone in the society admires Rosemary. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman Who actually does not believe in this fact. Other characters of the story are the shopman, who was attracted to Rosmary. One day a young woman came to Rosemary and asked her for a cup of tea .This latter took her home and made her comfortable, however, Rosemary's reaction towards her changed at the end of the story, when Philip admits that the young woman or Miss. Smith is pretty. The story ends with Rosemary's unanswered question "am I pretty ?"

When analysing stylistically the story *A Cup of Tea* using Halliday's transitivity theory, one notices that the main participant is Rosemary and all the processes are related to her. Other participants in the story are, mainly, Philip and Miss. Smith, as well as, the shopman. This analysis will tackle the processes related to them. Thus, to relate the language of the text to its cognitive reality and have an accurate meaning, it will be helpful to use the ideational, interpersonal and the textual functions of language. This way, we get to know the feelings, thoughts, processes, circumstantial features ...etc of the characters.

### **Mental process :**

Rosemary is a woman who does express herself freely. She can decide what to like and what to dislike. The mental processes related to her reveal her cognition, affection and perception of the outside world:

#### Cognition

- "But Rosemary wouldn't **acknowledge** it" (403)<sup>1</sup>.
- "I **knew** you'd say that" (405).

#### Affection

- "I **want** those and those and those" (398).
- "I **hate** lilac" (398).
- "Rosemary **felt** a strange pang" (400).
- "she **wished** she had the little box" (400).
- "Yes, she **liked** it very much, she **loved** it" (399).
- "Rosemary **admired** the flowers" (399).
- "She **wanted** to spare this poor little thing..." (402).
- "she **felt** how simple and kind her smile was" (401).
- "She **had a feeling** of triumph" (401).
- "I only **wanted** to tell you" (406).
- "Why not? I **want** to. Isn't that a reason?" (405).

#### Perception

- "She **saw** a little battered creature with enormous eyes" (400).
- "and **touched** her arm" (401).
- "I **saw** a fascinating little box to-day" (406).
- "Rosemary inside the shop just **gazed** in her dazzled" (398).
- "She **stared** at a plump tea-kettle like a plump hen" (400).
- "**gazing** at the winter afternoon" (400).
- "Rosemary **peered** through the dusk" (398).
- "And she **heard** herself saying afterwards" (401).
- "she **gazed** at the little captive she had netted" (401).

<sup>1</sup> Katherine, Mansfield. ("A Cup of Tea". The collected stories of Katherine Mansfield. Ed. Penguin Modern Classics. Middlesex : Penguin, 1987.389-406) All subsequent references to the novel will be cited in the text.

Furthermore, Rosemary seems to care about what people think and feel, especially about her :

- "She really **was touched** beyond words (404)."
- "Do **you think** so?" (405).
- "Do **you like** me?" said she" (406).

In most of the sentences mentioned above, Rosemary is the participant. Other characters, like Philip and Miss. Smith, didn't express themselves vastly or they might not have the opportunity to :

Philip : In this sentences he is the actor while Rosemary is the goal

Cognition :

- "**I think** you're making a ghastly mistake" (405).

Affection

- "her husband absolutely **adored** her" (398).
- "**I wanted** you to come into the library for a moment" (405).
- "**I like** you awfully" (406).

Perception :

- "**looking** at that listless figure, **looking** at its hands and boots" (404).
- "his eye **caught sight** of the coat and hat on the floor" (404).

Miss. Smith : Being led by Rosemary, the girl was afraid to get in any action even feeling

Perception :

- "the girl **gazed back at her**" (401).
- "The big eyes **were raised** to him" (405).

The shopman : is the actor in all the mental processes which introduce him to the reader :

Cognition:

- "The shopman, in some dim cavern of his mind, **may have dared to think** so too" (399).

Affection:

- "the man who kept it was ridiculously **fond** of serving her" (398).
- "**I love** my things" (399).

Perception:

- "The shopman did not **seem to hear**" (399).

### Material processes :

Considered as the heroine, Rosemary is the participant of most of the story's material processes, whereas the beneficiary or the recipients are mostly Miss. Smith, the shopman and Philip :

- "One winter afternoon she **had been buying** something" (398).
- "She **laid** the little box down" (399).
- "she **buttoned** her gloves again" (399).
- "She **pressed** her muff against her breast" (400).
- "But still she **waited**"(400).
- "I simply **took** her home with me"(401).
- "as she **stepped** forward"(401).
- "Rosemary **put** out a hand"(401).
- "she **slipped** her hand through the velvet strap"(401).
- "She **turned** impulsively" (402).
- "**drew** the other into the hall" (402).
- "**dragging** her big chair up to the fire"(402).
- "Rosemary **ran** forward"(402).
- "she half **pushed** the thin figure into its deep cradle"(402).
- "And let me **help** you off with your coat, too"(403).

The shopman

- "He **beamed** whenever she came in"(399).
- "He **clasped** his hands"(399).
- "I would rather not **part** with them than sell them to someone"(399).
- "He **had been keeping** it for her"(399).
- "**had shown** it to nobody as yet"(399).
- "For he **took** a pencil"(399).
- " **leant** over the counter"(399).
- "the shopman **had** already **bowed**"(400).

Miss. Smith :

- "**clutched** at her coat-collar with reddened hands, and shivered"(400).
- "She even **stopped** shivering"(401).

- "The girl **put** her fingers to her lips"(401).
- "The girl **stood** just inside the door"(402).
- "The girl **stayed**"(403).
- "The girl **stood up**"(403).
- "The other **did stop**"(404).

Philip :

In such clauses, Philip is the actor and the controller, actually. He knows how to affect Rosemary and can reach what he wants. The narrator uses the sentences mentioned below : "and he cut the end of a cigar "and "Philip struck a match" as metaphors. In fact, when Philip said "But...she's so astonishingly pretty". He put an end to the innocent and spontaneous feeling that Rosemary had toward Miss. Smith and he, as a matter of fact, "struck a match." inside Rosemary. It is jealousy which did strike in the heart of Rosemary.

- "He **came in**"(404).
- "He **came over** to the fire and turned his back"(404).
- "and he **cut** the end of a cigar"(405).
- "Philip **struck** a match (inside rosemary)"(405).
- "Philip **put down** the paper"(406).
- "and he **held** her tighter"(406).
- "Philip **jumped** her on his knee"(406).

### **Relational processes**

Beside the mental process, most of the sentences related to Rosemary are relational :

#### **Intensive Attributive Processes :**

- "Rosemary Fell **was** not exactly **beautiful**"(398).
- "She **was young, brilliant**, extremely **modern**, exquisitely **well dressed**, amazingly **well read**"(398).
- "her parties **were the most delicious** mixture of the really **important** people and"(398).
- "some of them too **terrifying** for words, but others quite **presentable** and **amusing**"(398).
- "They **were rich**" (398).
- "her **dazzled**, rather **exotic** way"(398).
- "She **looked vague**"(399).

- "to **be generous**"(402).
- "how **thoughtless I am**"(403).
- "her tone, **sweet, husky**"(406).

**Intensive Identifying Processes:**

- "Rosemary **had been married** two years"(398).

The shopman

**Intensive Attributive Processes :**

- "he **was so gratified**"(399).
- "and his **pale, bloodless** fingers"(399).

Miss. Smith

**Intensive Attributive Processes :**

- "a young girl, **thin, dark, shadowy**"(400).
- "**enormous** eyes, someone quite **young**, no **older** than herself"(400).
- "There **was** something **simple, sincere**"(400).
- "to that **dim** person" (402).
- "who **was** strangely **still** and **unafraid**"(404).

Philip

**Intensive Attributive Processes :**

- "his **charming** smile"(405).
- "I'm **crude**"(405).

**Verbial Processes**

Rosemary

Indeed Rosemary does not express herself by talking, thus there is not many verbal processes related to her

- "she **answered**"(405).
- "**asked** Rosemary"(402).
- "she heard herself **saying**"(401).
- "**said** to that dim person"(402).
- "She could **have said**"(401).
- "**Saying**"(402).
- "Then Rosemary **said** dreamily"(406).
- "she **whispered**"(406).
- "she **added** softly"(406).



- "**retorted** Rosemary"(405).

The shopman

- "he would **explain**" (399).
- "he **murmured** gently"(399).
- "Then **a murmur reached** her"(399).

Miss. smith : the girl hardly speaks

- "**came the answer**"(400).
- "**said** the girl"(401).
- "the girl **said** quickly"(403).
- "There **was a whisper that sounded like**"(403).

Philip

- "**said** Philip slowly"(405).

### **Behavioral Processes**

Rosemary

- "**cried** Rosemary"(401).
- "Rosemary **laughed out**"(401).
- "she **cried**"(402).
- "she **watched** that other receive"(402).

The shopman

- "**breathing** deeply"(406).

Miss.Smith

- "she **stammered**"(400).
- "a voice like a sigh, almost like a sob, **breathed**"(400).

Philip

- "**cried** Philip"(405).
- "Philip **smiled**"(405).

**Existential process** :there are four existential processes in the text :

- "**There was** something"(400).
- "**There was** no answer"(403).
- "**There was** a whisper that sounded like"(403).
- "**There was** a pause" (406).

**The Chart :**

The character	Mental processes	Material processes	Relational processes	Verbial processes	Behavioral processes	Existential processes
Rosemary	53	58	44	23	8	1
The shopman	6	16	10	3	1	1
Miss Smith	10	24	19	7	5	2
Philip	9	10	7	9	2	0

"In the short story *A Cup of Tea* by Katherine Mansfield, the dominancy of Rosemary as the central character is obvious when we count all the sentences describing her or the ones in which her name occurs"(Nozar 32). Following this chart, we can obviously notice that the processes used a lot are the material ones and are particularly related to Rosemary. Most of the actions of the story are done by her. She gives ordersto people and is accustomed to tell them what she wants. "I want those and those and those. Give me four bunches of those. And that jar of roses"(398). Moreover, she acts according to what she perceives from the outside world and this is what led to the occurrence of many mental processes .Rosemary uses her feelings and her senses to act and react. She is very sensitive to what she perceives through her senses. However, Rosemary who was taking by her feelings and who brought the girl home at the beginning of the story is not the same at the end of it. She is manipulated by the words of philip who seems to understand the personality of her. She is a person who is not really mature and who lack the self-esteem (Morrw 100). The fact that she brought Miss. Smith home is simply to prove to herself that she can make a serious decision in her life. However, the number of menatl and material processes of philip are somehow balanced which makes it obvious that it is not Rosemary who controles her life as it appears from the first sight, rather it is philip. This latter enabled Rosemary to get rid of the liberal ideas that she suddenly had. Her desire of making serious decisions, her indulgence in the women’s world or her good riddance from the imaginary world in which she lived are all manipulated by Philip who makes sure that Rosemary remains superficial.

Rosemary is beautiful only if she is taken into peices. This could also be the case with the lilac. Rosemary does not like the lilac because it is shapless and maybe because it reminds her of being shapless and that is why, probably, the narrator alludes to the fact that

one should take rosemary to pieces to be aware of her beauty. Rosemary is described externally in her first contact with the reader. Her superficiality is referred to in different situations throughout the story (ibid). The fact that she was unable to believe that the girl can't have the price of a cup of tea is one of the most noticeable proofs. Others could be the fact that she is very sensational.

### **Interpersonal function**

The way the language is used in Katherine Mansfield's short story makes this latter similar to reality (ibid). The interaction between the participants has different forms. Among them are questions and answers, imperatives, requests, exclamations...and so on.

Throughout their interaction, Rosemary and Miss Smith tend to use a number of questions and answers. As was early mentioned, such questions reflect how superficial Rosemary is, her interests and worries are part of a world of fantasy (ibid). A world where her most terrifying worry is to be pretty and her greatest interest is in having a box which costs a lot, a lot more than a simple girl's dream : a cup of tea

- "Speak to me?"(Rosemary was surprised of the girl's request) (400).
- "A cup of tea? "" Then have you no money at all ?" (400).
- "Why won't you ?"(401).
- why shouldn't you come back with me?(401).
- Why are you afraid?(402).
- Won't you take off your hat?(403).
- one is so much more comfortable without a hat, isn't one?"(403).
- Don't you see what a good thing it was that you met me?(404).
- And when did you have your last meal?"(404).

On the other hand, most of the girl's questions stand as requests or indicate how surprised and astonished she felt for being invited to one of the rich ladies' homes :

- "Madam, may I speak to you a moment?"(400).

- "Would you let me have the price of a cup of tea?"(400).
- "You're - you're not taking me to the police station?"(401).

There are also questions and answers between Rosemary and the shopman :

- "But what was the price?"(399).
- "Twenty-eight guineas, madam"(399).
- "Well, keep it for me - will you?"(The answer came as an immediate reaction from the shopman)(400).

There are also a number of questions between Rosemary and Philip, however such interaction indicates to which extent Rosemary is controlled by Philip :

Rosemary

- "Yes, isn't it?"(405).
- "Why not?"(405).
- "Isn't that a reason?"(405).
- "Pretty?"(405).
- "Do you think so?"(405)
- "I couldn't keep her against her will, could I?"(406).
- "Do you like me?"(406).
- "May I have it?"(406).
- "am I pretty?"(406).

Philip

- "Rosemary, may I come in?"(404).
- "Would you? Will Miss Smith excuse us?"(405).
- "Explain. Who is she?"(405).
- "What does it all mean?"(405).
- "But what on earth are you going to do with her?"(405).
- "Oh, what's happened? Previous engagement?"(406).

Most of the imperatives are used by Rosemary to the girl but they are kindly uttered:

- "Come along"(401).
- "Come ,come upstairs"(402).
- "Come and sit down"(402).
- "Don't cry"(403).
- "Do stop crying"(404).
- "Kiss me" ( this is used as a request by Rosemary to philip)(406).

The other imperatives are used by philip to Rosemary

- "Explain" (405).
- "Look again,my child"(405).

Exclamations are used by Rosemary to :

Express her feelings mainly of surprise :

- "Charming!"(399).
- "How extraordinary!"(401).
- "How more than extraordinary!"(401).
- "The police station!"(403).
- " how thoughtless I am!"(403).
- "Pretty! Absolutely lovely! Bowled over"(406).

Show something:

- "There!"(401).
- "There!" cried Rosemary again (402).

Express anger :

- "You absurd creature!"(406).

Textual function :

The narrator uses different kind of processes, as well as, questions and answers to show the reader the inner feelings and thoughts of the characters along with their actions and behaviors. Dialogues also help presenting the speech acts.

Material Processes :

- It had been baked in cream (399).
- a minute creature stood under a flowery tree (399).
- a more minute creature still had her arms round his neck (399).

- The discreet door shut with a click (400).
- they burned as if regretting something (400).
- And people hurried by (400).
- One oughtn't to give way to them (400).
- One ought to go home and have an extra-special tea. (this process and the previous one reflect what Rosemary was thinking about) (400).
- Hungry people are easily led (401).
- The bell was rung (402).
- the door opened (402).
- the thought came and went through Rosemary's mind (403).
- the door-handle turned (404).

#### Relational Processes :

- lilac was dreadfully shapeless (398).
- To-day it was a little box (399).
- An exquisite little enamel box (399).
- a glaze so fine (399).
- it was a great duck (399).
- Even if one is rich (399).
- Rain was falling (400).
- with the rain it seemed the dark came too (400).
- the new-lighted lamps looked sad (400).
- Sad were the lights in the houses opposite( the condition of the environment) (400).
- It was a terrible and fascinating moment (402).
- sugar was so nourishing (404).
- it was time to begin.(this is what Rosemary was thinking about) (404).
- the effect of that slight meal was marvelous (404).
- Absolutely lovely! Bowled over! Her heart beat like a heavy bell. Pretty! Lovely!  
(405).

#### Verbal Processes

- People always said sugar was so nourishing (404).

Accordingly, without these processes the reader would not have been able to understand the personality of Rosemary or that of any other character. Noticing also their role showing the setting and the condition of the environment.

## Conclusion

Mansfield presents Rosemary as a perfect woman who possesses all what could be dreamt of and who is married to a rich man who adores her. However, after the stylistic analysis of the story one comes to the truth that the author hid between the lines. In addition to the number of the material processes which reveal her materialistic thinking, the fact that she gave three pounds to the penniless girl and dreamt of the twenty-eight guineas box reflects deeply her shallowness and selfishness.

The ending of this short story will be instilled in the readers' minds. They will be aware of the significance of words and how they could lead the individual's act and behavior. The readers experience several feelings and reactions during the process of reading until the participants, actors, goals, tokens carriers, values, phenomenon ...etc lead him to the final truth of the story in which every word does account.

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