

MANSFIELD’S ART OF PROBLEMATISATION, RATHER THAN CONSOLIDATION OF IDENTITIES IN FICTIONS OF PECULIAR POLYVALENCE A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF CATHERINE MANSFIELD’S “THE FLY EPISODE”

ABHIK MAITI

Pursuing M.A in English, University of Calcutta, M.A in History, Rabindra Bharati University, Diploma in Fine Arts

“I adore life but my experiences with the world is that it is pretty terrible”

-Letters and Journals,

Katherine Mansfield

ABSTRACT

Hailed as “The New Zealand Chekov”, Katherine Beauchamp Mansfield was one of the leading exponents of the genre of short story in the twentieth century literature. The Fly, included in The Dove’s Nest is one of the shortest in the genre that deals with the protagonist’s encounter with the fly that had fallen into his inkwell- the slightest of incident being, but a pretext for the hidden tension, both emotional and physical that comes to the forefront. Sylvia Berkman observes, “*no note of pathos or anguish in the story but a relentless grim depiction of the caprices of destiny*” In the classical example of fictional compression, one encounters a complex reading of moods and characters, associated with the modern short story. The Fly, is often compared to Chekov’s Small Fry in which the discontented clerk crushes a cockroach to cease the gnawing of his heart. Thus Mansfield, like Chekov also used the moment of cruelty to unravel the sadist’s nature of man that lies beneath the veneer of affection and goodness.

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