The Flourishing Epiphany of “The Garden Party”

A Narratological Investigation of the Concept Epiphany in Katherine Mansfield’s Short Story “The Garden Party”
Abstract

This essay examines the protagonist of Katherine Mansfield’s “The Garden Party” (1922), Laura, and her experiences of events that are made insignificant by the rest of the narrative. Gérard Genette’s narratological theory and the concept of epiphany is put forward in the theoretical framework in order to preform this investigation. Morris Beja’s and Liesl Olson’s studies of the epiphany in modernist literature assists the investigation.

Thus, with the support of Genette’s narratological theory and the concept of epiphany, this essay examines epiphanic moments in “The Garden Party”. It will also study how these moments transfer on to the reader through multimodal techniques. This argument is supported by Joseph Conrad’s preface to The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’.

Keywords

Gérard Genette, narratology, epiphany, Katherine Mansfield, “The Garden Party”, the reader
# Table of Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 3

Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................. 5  
   Epiphany and Modernism ......................................................................................... 6  
   Gérard Genette’s Narratological Tools ................................................................. 11

Analysis ....................................................................................................................... 17  
   Epiphany 1 ........................................................................................................... 20  
   Epiphany 2 ........................................................................................................... 23  
   Epiphany 3 ........................................................................................................... 28  
   The Reader’s and Laura’s Connection Through the Epiphanies ........................... 30

Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 33

Works Cited ................................................................................................................ 36
Introduction

Morris Beja, the author of *Epiphany in the Modern* defines an epiphany as a “sudden spiritual manifestation, whether from some object, scene, event or memorable phase of the mind — the manifestation being out of proportion to the significance or strict logical relevance of whatever produces it” (18). Epiphany is a concept which is repeatedly found in modernist fiction, in works by for example James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner, authors Beja examines in his study. Likewise, Katherine Mansfield’s “The Garden Party” (1922) offers us fascinating examples of epiphanies.

The short story “The Garden Party” tells the story of a wealthy family, the Sheridans, arranging a party in their garden. The same day as the party, a working class man is killed in a traffic accident. The man lived in one of the little cottages “at the very bottom of a steep rise” (Mansfield 45) across the road from the Sheridans home. The main character Laura wants to cancel the party because of the incident but no other character agrees with her. The party takes place and afterwards Laura is asked by her mother to visit the widow of the dead man and give her a basket of leftovers from the party. After she arrives she walks into the room where the dead man lies. Laura begins to cry before leaving the cottage and on her way back she is met by her brother, who has been sent to check on her.

This essay will look at the protagonist’s epiphanies as well as how these might transfer to the reader. The analysis of “The Garden Party” will be informed by Gérard Genette’s narratological terminology, method and theory, which will provide the tools that will be used to see how the experience of “The Garden Party” is shaped by its narratological and temporal strategies. The analysis will specifically look at the character Laura and her experience of, seemingly, insignificant events that occur. Three events will be investigated, in which the protagonist experiences epiphanies and how these actual significant moments are made insignificant by all characters except Laura.
I have chosen the story “The Garden Party” since it is a good example of how modernist writers use the idea of time in fiction and of how an epiphany is developed through narrative techniques. The format of the short story enables an analysis that can examine the text in detail and fully study the epiphanies. From a narratological point of view this will be done by a close reading of relevant sections of “The Garden Party”. As mentioned before, the concept of epiphany is present in a great deal of modernist fiction, such as in James Joyce’s and adding Katherine Mansfield to this group of writers further invites a necessary investigation of her short story.

There has been work done on the short story before but even so, I think there is more ground to explore here, especially when it comes to the narratological perspective in relation to epiphany. Much of the previous research done on “The Garden Party” focuses on the political aspect of the story or on social classes and how the division between those is shown through the story. There is some research that relates to my subject. The article “Time and Space in Katherine Mansfield’s The Garden Party” written by Hubert Zapf, discusses the connection between temporal and spatial importance in “The Garden Party”. Janine Utell wrote the article “A Fatal Place: The Ritual Encounter with Death in the Fiction of Katherine Mansfield”. Utell examines death and how death is connected to funerals in Katherine Mansfield’s stories, for example the group of mourning people outside the dead man’s cottage. Another article worth mentioning is “The Unmasking of the Reader: Varieties of the Epiphany in Katherine Mansfield's Late Fiction” by Victor Sage which argues that the epiphanies in Katherine Mansfield’s later fiction “unmasks” the reader. Sage discusses both the aspect of class and gender in connection to his thesis: “this cultivation [that he describes] of the epiphanic moment of revelation in Mansfield is paradoxical: the revelation itself is like an empty stage […]. But these are the moments which take away the reader’s mask” (110). The last piece of previous research that I will mention is Don W. Kleine’s article “The
Garden Party’: A Portrait of the Artist”, which discusses how Laura during the course of the narrative realises that there is diversity to life that she has not seen before. This will be examined in this essay as well, but from a different perspective than the one Kleine addresses.

Firstly, this essay will present the concept of epiphany, and its significance in modernist fiction. Secondly, it will examine narratology, with focus on Gérard Genette’s contribution to the theory. The next section is the analysis; it will use the ideas studied in the theoretical section to investigate Katherine Mansfield’s short story “The Garden Party”.

**Theoretical Framework**

In the theory section that follows, the concept of *epiphany* will be understood through Morris Beja’s book *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* and Liesl Olson’s study *Modernism and the Ordinary*. A possible definition of the term is presented, as well as how epiphany relates to modernist fiction. Beja’s theories will help this essay to examine how the significance of the man’s death is crucial to Laura and not to the other characters. Olson’s discussion will add to Beja’s definition of epiphany mainly from explanatory examples from Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Stephen Hero*. The latter study will be used to demonstrate how Joyce uses the epiphanic moment and how he defines it. The theory section will also examine Gérard Genette’s book *Narrative Discourse*. The methods from his seminal work will be presented and the summary will focus on the terminology and the methods which are relevant to my analysis of “The Garden Party”. These will function as methodological tools when the short story is analysed. Lastly, narratology and the concept of epiphany will be connected to each other and this will conclude the theory section.
Epiphany and Modernism

As mentioned before, an epiphany can be described as a “sudden spiritual manifestation”. Earlier, an epiphany was regarded to be a manifestation of divine origin in Christianity, it could for example be a prophet’s vision of God. Beja argues that these kinds of revelations are developed from a mystical experience and share certain traits with the literary epiphany (24-25). They are “sudden and intense moments of exhilaration or pain, and both involve a new sense of awareness” (25). The perception of the literary epiphany has since then acquired a more or less irreligious representation in fiction. In a modernist fashion, an explanation to these “meaningful, unifying, ‘spiritual’, emotions or experiences” (21) is sought after on earth instead of waiting for God to provide an answer.

As mentioned in the introduction, Beja provides a possible definition of the modernist concept epiphany in his study (15). It is also emphasised that epiphany is a phenomenon which is hard to give a precise definition of. Even so, one of Beja’s ambitions is to attempt to define epiphany (13-14). Beja claims that an epiphany is an immediate experience and that a revelation should be separated from an epiphany. Hence, a revelation is the simple result of a direct statement, when the person in question receives information in a much too rational and easy way (14-16). However, an epiphany can be born out of a revelation, but “the revelation produced is then somehow irrelevant to that statement” (16). When connecting this irrelevance to a broader view it can be called the Criterion of Incongruity, which means that “the epiphany is irrelevant to the object or incident that triggers it” (Langbaum 341). There is also the term Criterion of Insignificance, which, according to Beja, is much similar to the Criterion of Incongruity. It explains how a trivial incident can produce an epiphany. Moreover, these trivial incidents can create a revelation, which to others than the experiencer, can seem insignificant (Beja 16-17).
Olson submits a discussion on James Joyce’s use of the epiphany and how it highlights the Criterion of Insignificance. Joyce’s epiphanies derive from everyday moments which to the reader would seem ordinary and not at all revelatory (39). Moreover, she discusses Joyce’s and his character Stephen’s definition of epiphany. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen, the protagonist of the narrative, defines epiphany as “a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself” (188), a definition much like Beja’s. The definition is often recognised as the practice Joyce himself made of the epiphanic moment, but here Olson makes sure to separate the author’s opinion from his protagonist’s. The character Stephen’s interpretation encourages the reader to automatically look for significance when looking for an epiphany and as mentioned above, Joyce’s epiphanies strive toward the opposite: a more “realistic” representation of everyday life. Olson mentions Joyce’s work *Ulysses* as an example of how he writes about life not being “organized artfully into epiphanic events” (41) but instead of life as being “flooded with moments that are difficult to privilege, harder to ‘read into.’” (41). She claims that Joyce, first and foremost, is interested in the context that epiphanies can evolve from and how a character must comprehend these already present matters to be able to change (42). Olson proceeds to discuss Joyce’s use of epiphanies in his novel *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (43). Olson describes the epiphanies of *The Portrait* as emerging from ordinary conversations and that they are materially detailed. She claims that if the epiphanies lost their materialist features, they become “ludicrous” (43) and cease to have any meaning.

One of the most famous epiphanies in *The Portrait* is the one of the wading girl. Stephen sees a girl wading in the water and he compares her with a bird based on how her clothes are draped and the over-all image of her body. Afterwards Stephen “was swooning into some new world […]. A world, […] [g]limmering and trembling, trembling and
unfolding, a breaking light, an opening flower” (187). One could say that the girl becomes Stephen’s source of inspiration, she opens the door to a new world, and Stephen realises that he wants to become an artist and not a priest.

This is one example of epiphany and its function in modernist fiction. Beja emphasises the epiphany’s function, although he writes that the epiphany is not present in all modernist novels. Nevertheless, he points to the importance of the authors who used the method of the epiphany in their writing, such as Joyce, Proust and Woolf. These writers used epiphany in a way that had not been done before them (18-20). The question is why did epiphany acquire this new important role? Beja claims that “[i]n this century epiphanies have tended to be attached to certain recurrent attitudes towards meaning of experience, toward the nature of reality, and even toward the means of […] enlightenment” (20-21). The way experiences, reality and enlightenment were discussed during the twentieth century is here claimed to be reasons for the new important role of the epiphany.

Two trends, when it comes to pieces of works emphasising epiphany in modernist fiction is, firstly, that the modernist writers “create[ed] highly subjective, introspective, even autobiographical art” (Beja 47). Secondly, a great deal of the characteristics and techniques used in poetry was made use of in fiction, and one of these techniques was evidently the epiphany. The first trend, the inward turn, which is typical for modernism, involves the notion of isolation and the fear of being an outsider as a central theme (47). The modernist short story developed during the same time. The new short story was a “record of a bare ‘slice of life’” (48), in which there was no obvious plot and these rather short stories often ended suddenly. One example of an author writing this new type of short stories was Katherine Mansfield (48-49). The new form centred on “the attempt to provide insight into the world it depicts by recording unexciting events, commonplace scenes, or ordinary dialogue, [therefore] the relationship to the aims of epiphany is of a different, even
more intimate kind” (Beja 49) than in the traditional narrative. Beja also argues that modernist writing focused more on aspects, both external and subjective, perceived by our senses in the real world, than “the broad truths that most of their predecessors had simply assumed” (49). Meaning that the modernist writers was “[searching] to restrict themselves to things that […] they could at least try to grasp” (49) in their writing. It also became important to the writers of the time to make “artistic depiction[s]” (49) of the events they wrote about. This relates to to the idea of how a narrative affects its readers.

Beja continues by discussing exactly that. He examines how the focus of the narration affects the readers and their perception of the story. Hence, how the epiphanic moment is presented by the narrator is one of the factors which decides how the reader will perceive the epiphany (52-53). He then proceeds to discuss Joseph Conrad and his preface to *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’*. Beja writes that the best literature gives the reader an epiphany and quotes Conrad’s: “to make you hear, to make your feel — it is before all, to make you see” (Conrad 5), to prove his point (Beja 52-53). This quote could be interpreted to explain how it is important for a narrative to make its reader hear, feel and see what the characters in the narrative hear, feel and see. If one looks at the quote in the context of the epiphany, how an epiphany is narrated would be crucial for the reader’s experience and the possibility for the reader to live through the same revelation as the character does. Conrad describes it as “[a]ll art […] appeals primary to the senses, and make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions” (4). Here, it is emphasised that multimodalities are important when looking for “responsive emotions” from the receiver of the art, in our case, the reader. Conrad proceeds:

In a single-minded attempt of that kind, if one be deserving and fortunate, one may perchance attain to such clearness of sincerity that at last
the presented vision of regret or pity, of terror or birth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world. (Conrad 5)

Here, the same idea is discussed, how the reader, the beholder, can be affected by fiction, and as Beja sees it, to experience epiphanies when reading fiction (52). If the reader feels solidarity towards the fiction, and experiences somewhat similar feelings, sees similar things and hears similar sounds, Conrad regards the work of the author successful. In addition, this is what connects humans with the world around themselves (5). Deborah McLeod somewhat touches upon this in her study “Disturbing the Silence: Sound Imagery in Conrad’s The Secret Agent”. McLeod describes how Conrad “uses sound imagery to allow readers to experience the same auditory sensations his characters do” (117). To connect this to Conrad’s discussion about human’s connecting to the world around them, one could say that he describes not only a connection between humans and the world but also between humans (the readers) and the narrative and perhaps the characters in the narrative. This connection happens through the senses such as seeing, feeling and as McLeod mentions, hearing. The senses are expressed through the narrative and how it is written, just as epiphanies.

One type of epiphany that Beja mentions is the *retrospective epiphany*, which he defines as an epiphany that emerges from a memory. The memory does not have any significant meaning when it happened but when it is remembered it gives rise to a new and sudden sensation (15). Beja proceeds to discuss the theory of time being fluent, how the past and the present is in juxtaposition to each other and that “[t]here is no such thing as was — only is” (28). Here Proust is named as an advocate for the theory and also that he understands a memory as something we re-create instead of re-call (28). To re-call something is to only
remember a previous event, but to re-create is to not only remember the event but experience the event again through, for example, feelings. Beja connects this to Wordsworth’s “Preface”, describing how a poet’s “inward eye” (34) sees daffodils which remind him of his childhood, but it does not stop at remembering, but moves on to him re-creating the memory: “he is happy not because he remembers an image that had once been pleasant, but because he regains his past feelings” (34). This memory can become an epiphany, if his re-creating of the old memory changes the meaning of the memory and evolves into a retrospective epiphany (34).

Lastly, there are, according to Beja, both negative and positive functions of epiphanies in narrative. Negative qualities are for example overemphasis, “choppiness” (22), and that it disturbs the course of the narrative. The positive functions of using epiphanies in narrative are that they are a structural device, which signals for example a climax or a recapture of the past. An epiphany could be used to bind the threads of the narrative together (22-23). Moreover, an epiphany can help the author to give the narrative new points of view within his or her objectivity, “allowing his characters moments of revelation which they transcend themselves and see into the truth of things” (Beja 23). As discussed above, narrative and narratological choices play an important part in the construction of an epiphany. Therefore, the next section will examine Gérard Genette’s narratology.

Gérard Genette’s Narratological Tools

In his book, Genette provides narratological terms such as narrative and discourse, focalisation, narrator, analepsis and prolepsis, and he discusses how speech and thought are presented in the narrative. I will begin with a discussion on Genette’s general definitions and then continue by providing short examinations of each chapter in Narrative
Discourse. The study will focus on the terms and methods that will be useful tools in the analysis.

Genette introduces the concepts of narrative as to have three meanings. Firstly, the most common meaning of the term, which is, a narrative is an oral or written discourse and its task is to tell the reader or listener of an event or a series of events. Secondly, narrative could be referred to as the succession of events. These events can be both real and fictitious and are the subjects of the discourse (25). Lastly, there is the oldest meaning of narrative, citing, “narrative refer once more to an event: not, however, the event that is recounted, but the event that consists of someone recounting something” (26). Genette explains that his study is about narrative in its most widespread meaning which is narrative discourse and specifically narrative text (26). He continues to argue that to study narrative discourse is to perpetually study the relationships, which the second meaning of narrative indicates, and “the relationship between the same discourse and the act that produces it” (27). Consequently, the three aspects of narrative are separated to avoid confusion. Genette calls them story, narrative and narrating. Story is the definition of the signified or narrative content, that is, what the narrative contains but in chronological order. One could describe it as the bigger context of the narrative. Narrative is used for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text, that is, the actual text of the novel. Hence, the narrative is the novel itself and the way the events are narrated and the story is how one might explain the narrative in the right order, totally objective. The word narrating is used to describe the producing narrative action and the entire situation in which the events are happening, real or fictional (27).

In the first chapter “Order” Genette discusses the “connections between temporal order of succession of the events in the story and the pseudo-temporal order of their arrangement in the narrative” (35). If a narrative follows the chronological order of the story
Genette calls that a zero degree narrative. Analepsis (flashback) and prolepsis (flash forward) are terms used to describe when the narrative is not zero degreed (36).

In the second chapter, “Duration”, the term duration is explained as time in a narrative that cannot be measured. It can be compared to the reading time, but how fast or slow a reading takes vary “according to particular circumstances” (Genette 86). Genette discusses the concept of speed and defines it as time. Time in a narrative is the relationship between the duration of the narrative (in seconds, minutes, hours, days and so on) and the length of the text (87-88). He states that there is no such thing as a narrative without speed and that the speed decides the rhythm of the narrative (88). There are four basic forms which Genette calls narrative movements (94). The forms are ellipsis, which are breaks in the temporal continuity (52), pause which most often is description (100), scene and summary. In comparison scene is dramatic and intense and a summary is non-dramatic and weak (109).

The chapter “Frequency” discusses the “connections of frequency, that is […] relations between the repetitive capacities of the story and those of the narrative” (Genette 35). Genette states that the frequency (repetition) in a narrative is the relation between the narrative and the diegesis. Repetition is a mental construct and the events that are identified as identical are really “similar events considered only in terms of their resemblance” (113). Genette proceeds to explain that there are different repetitions in narrative. Singulative narrative (telling n times in the narrative what happened n times in the story), repeating narrative (telling n times in the narrative what happened once in the story) and iterative narrative (telling once in the narrative what happened n times in the story) (114-16).

Genette discusses in chapter four, “Mood”, under the subheading “Narrative of Words”, how thought and speech are presented in a narrative. The terms used are reported speech (“You need to call me later” I told her.), transported speech (I said to her that she needed to call me later.) and narratised speech (I instructed her, that she was bound to call me
later.). Hence, reported speech is direct speech with a tagging after it so the reader is told who was speaking. Transported speech is indirect speech which also uses a version of tagging but in a different way than reported speech, here it is intertwined with the indirect speaking. Last there is the narratised speech which is comparative to transported speech, indirect speech with a form of tagging. It is important to notice the difference between the two, that the narratised speech allows the actual “living speech” to change into a ”narrated event” (169-89). Genette also mentions immediate speech, which is often referred to as “interior monologue” (173) and is closely related to free indirect speech. There is a difference between free indirect speech, where “the narrator takes on the speech of the character […] and the two instances are then merged” (174) and the immediate speech, in which “the narrator is obliterated and the character substitutes for him [or her]” (174).

The term focalisation is also discussed in detail (189-94). Focalisation is a way of describing the focus of a narration, that is, who is seeing the narration (186, 189). There are a few different ways of focalising a narration. First there is external focalisation, in which the narrative is, as the name suggests, told from an outside point of view. The opposite of that is called internal focalisation. This simply means that the story is told from a character’s point of view. Genette mentions that the internal focalisation “is fully realized only in the narrative of “interior monologue” (193), that is, in immediate speech. While the focus in an externally narrated story is on what the characters say and do, an internally narrated story focuses on how the characters feel and what they think. Genette also describes non-focalised narrative which is a narrative that is not narrated by a specific character (189-90). The non-focalised narrative can be quite hard to determine since it “can most often be analyzed as a narrative that is multifocalized” (192). Two things that Genette points out here is that the focus of a narration can change over the length of a narrative (191) and that one should not confuse
“information given by focalized narrative with the interpretation the reader is called on to give of it” (197).

The last chapter, “Voice”, describes the voice of a narrative as who is speaking in the narrative (186). He presents four types of narrating; subsequent narrating (the classical, past tense narrative), prior narrating (predictive narrative), simultaneous narrating (narrative in present tense) and interpolated narrating (narrative between moments of action) (217).

Subsequent narrating is most commonly in past tense and in third person (Genette 220). “[T]emporal interval separates the moment of the narrating from the moment of the story”, and in the end of a narrative we are closer to the actual time of the story (221). The story could take over the narrating but then the duration of the first story's duration cannot surpass the duration of the narrative (222). “[S]ubsequent narrating exists through this paradox: it possesses at the same time a temporal situation (with respect to the past story) and an atemporal essence (since it has no duration proper)” (223).

Moreover, Genette also discusses different levels of narration which are extradiegetic (when a literal act is carried out at the first level of the narrative), intradiegetic (when events are carried out inside the first narrative) and metadiegetic (when events are told on the second degree in a narrative) (228). Genette later discusses the notion of narrator, the voice in a narrative which speaks of the events that is seen, under the subheading “Person” (243). He introduces the term non-focalised narrator, a narrator which only possesses a voice when telling the story. He explains that the non-focalised narrator never acquires a name, personal history or such in the narrative. The narrator simply remains an intelligent almighty narrator, who strives to be as neutral and transparent in his or her point of view. These narrators can be called non-intrusive. In contrast to this there are the intrusive narrators. They are identified in one way or another. The reader may find out their name, gender, ethnicity or perhaps social class. These narrators imply their own thoughts to their narration. Intrusive narrators can be
both **heterodiegetic** (the narrator is not part of the story they are telling) and **homodiegetic** (the narrator is present in the story he or she is telling). Genette then connects the different levels of narration with the different narrators and these combinations he calls **narrator statuses** (245).

Lastly, he investigates the functions of the narrator. There is the **narrative function**, the **directing function**, the **function of communication**, the **testimonial function**, and the **ideological function** (255-57). The narrative function is the notion that the narrator tells the story, an unavoidable function. The directing function is that of how the narrator controls and navigates the discourse (255) and the function of communication, refers to the communication between the narrator and the narratee (256), the receiver of the narrative (259). The testimonial function describes the relationship the narrator has with the narrative and his or her “attestation” (256) to it. Here the narrator’s interventions are based on feelings and such, but if the interventions are in “didactic form of an authorized commentary on the action” (256) the narrator has an ideological function.

In conclusion, we can see how the narratological choices of a narrative can construct epiphanies. These choices can, for example, be the narrative’s focalisation or how the narrator is constructed. Also, the speed of a narrative and the duration effects the representation of the epiphany in the narrative. There are a couple of specific connection that will be useful when analysing “The Garden Party”. The functions of the epiphany in a narrative can be compared to the functions a narrator has in a narrative. A valued part of the analysis is the weight the narrator’s position has, both for the format of the narrative but also because of the reader’s experience of the narrative. Connections could be seen between the notion of the retrospective epiphany and the subsequent narrative.
Analysis

This analysis will concentrate on using the tools and methods provided in the theoretical framework to investigate “The Garden Party”. More precisely, it will look at the way the character Laura is affected by events and how her experience of the events is different from other characters and why this could be. This essay’s approach is that the reason behind Laura’s reactions is that she has epiphanies on three occasions in the short story when there is an, generally seen, insignificant event. This will be discussed using Beja’s book on epiphanies in modernist fiction, Olson’s study on the everyday life of the modernist novel and with the narratological tools Genette provides. The point is to combine the two, to reach a result where the narratological analysis will help to show how insignificant moments in a narrative are structured to give the character in question an epiphany but also how this could possibly affect the reader. Other approaches will also be looked at, for example, the use of the Criterion of Incongruity and the retrospective epiphany. In the first part of this analysis a section on general narratological comments will be provided, then a discussion on how the last epiphany builds on the two first ones. Thirdly, a section where each of the epiphanies will be examined will be found and lastly, the connections between Laura’s and the reader’s experiences will be studied.

Therefore, let us begin with the general comments on the narratology of “The Garden Party”. Mansfield makes use of all the narrative movements mentioned in the theory. The rhythm of the narrative is mostly made from scenes and pauses. It should be noted that the epiphanies are positioned in the scene’s of the narrative, but Laura’s final revelations is through her stream of consciousness, which are parts of the narrative that can be viewed as pauses. This clearly lets the pauses do their descriptive “job”. When Laura then “awakens” from her own thoughts we enter a new scene which brings the narrative forward. Moreover, the narrative movement summary that can be found is the one of the garden party and it takes
Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans’ garden for this one afternoon, on their way to – where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

‘Darling Laura, how well you look!’

‘What a becoming hat, child!’

‘Laura, you look quite Spanish. I’ve never seen you look so striking.’

And Laura, glowing, answered softly, ‘Have you had tea? Won’t you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special.’ She ran to her father and begged him. ‘Daddy darling, can’t the band have something to drink?’

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

‘Never a more delightful party…’ ‘The greatest success…’ ‘Quite the most…’

Laura helped her mother with the goodbyes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over. (Mansfield 47-48)

Here, the relationship between the duration of the party and the actual length of the text is displayed. The duration of the party is longer than noted in the narrative and it is quite ironic
how the short story is named after an event so diminished in the actual narrative. One example of ellipsis can also be found, which will be closer described and discussed under the subheading “Epiphany 2” in this analysis.

Moreover, when we turn to the frequency of the narrative the notion of repeating narrative occurs when it, at several occasions, is mentioned that the man has died, even if, of course, the man only dies once, at least in the practical aspect of dying. However, in theory, the man dies once the actual time he dies, but to Laura he is not dead until she sees him lying dead on the bed. If we look at it in this fashion, we have an example of singulative narrative. The singulative narrative can also be found if one looks at how Mrs Sheridan lets Laura organise the party, but really she organises it by herself. Instances of this appears through out the story, for example when we find out that Mrs Sheridan have ordered canna lilies and when she gives the girls directives just after Laura’s sister sings. This is when Laura goes to fetch the envelope with the notes of what the sandwiches toppings are. When it comes to the different kinds of “speech” used in the narrative, they will be described throughout the analysis but most of the time reported speech, immediate speech and free indirect speech are used.

The focalisation of the narrative is internal. Hence, the seeing in “The Garden Party” is made from within the narrative and the focus then lies on what the characters feel and think. However, the voice, that is, the speaker of the narrative is a little bit more complicated. Firstly, one should note that the narrating is subsequent. Secondly, that the narrative is extradietgetic. Now, we will move on to study the narrator of the narrative. The narrator begins as being non-intrusive, only a voice telling the narrative. For most of the narrative this is the role that the narrator fills, but in some places the narrator changes. When that happens, it will be brought up in the analysis. When the narrator is intrusive one could also note that he or she is heterodiegetic, which means that the narrator status is extradietgetic-heterodiegetic. Lastly, we can notice the different functions the narrator has. I believe all the functions
Genette explains can be found in Mansfield’s short story. It is worth mentioning here that the functions the narrator has can be connected to the ones of the epiphany, as brought up in the theory section.

Before moving on to look at each of the epiphanies, the idea that the two first epiphanies build up to the last one will be touched upon. One thing that Olson mentions in her study of Joyce’s view of epiphanies is that his peak of interest is the context in which the epiphanies come from and then how the character needs to adopt to the context to reach the state of the epiphanic moment (42). If one connects this to “The Garden Party”, it may be concluded that this applies to the three epiphanies I discuss in this essay. The two first epiphanies produce the context of which Laura is surrounded by when she experiences the last epiphany. Without those already present matters, and the way Laura deals with those, her manner of understanding the last epiphany, would not be the same. In short, I believe there are three instances where Laura has epiphanies and that the first and the second epiphany builds up to, that is, give the context of, the third epiphany. By this, I mean that the two first epiphanies plant seeds inside Laura’s mind which over the duration of the narrative have grown and evolved into this great epiphany at the end of the narrative when she sees the dead body. That said, let us move into a detailed analysis of the three epiphanies.

**Epiphany 1**

The first epiphany Laura experiences is when she helps to organise the party, for example discussing with the workmen where to place the marquee (Mansfield 39-40). Entering into the narrative, the reader is met by a descriptive pause, describing the state of the garden and the weather.
And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. […] As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night […]. (Mansfield 38)

This first descriptive pause brings the narrative forth to the breakfast and the announcing of the arriving workmen who will put up a marquee. In the scene that follows Mrs Sheridan “hands over” the organising of the garden party to her daughters, and the narrator explains how none of the other two girls can go and direct the workmen. “‘You’ll have to go, Laura; you’re the artistic one.’” (38) and Laura is chosen. Laura “flew” (38), still with her breakfast bread in her hand, to go meet the workers. Through free indirect speech the reader understands that Laura “loved having to arrange things” (38) and that “she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else” (38). Laura’s excitement and confidence in her ability to organise the party is obvious. It seems important for her to receive the responsibility, as a type of acknowledgement, from her mother. The other sisters are exonerated from the task of helping the workers by the narrator, since one of them just showered, so her hair is wet and in a towel and the other one because she is not dressed properly.

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket. (Mansfield 38)
These motivations really are not reasons for not being able to help, since both the sisters easily could get changed and go help but none of them is interested enough to make an effort. For them, organising the party is obviously insignificant.

I understand this scene as the first epiphany of the narrative. The event of being asked to help with the organising could be seen as a trivial, everyday event. The conversation is of the ordinary kind which can be seen by looking at the reported speech that Mansfield uses to account for the event. However, Mansfield also uses free indirect speech to explain Laura’s reaction to the next interaction with the workmen. Her reaction declares the revelation she has through just looking in the worker’s eyes, hence the use of free indirect speech shows the reader Laura’s feelings during the encounter with the workers, which connects the reader to the character.

Laura wished now that she was not holding that piece of bread-and-butter, […]

‘Good morning,’ she said, copying her mother’s voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, ‘Oh – er – have you come – is it about the marquee?’ […]

His smile was so easy, so friendly, that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. ‘Cheer up, we won’t bite,’ their smile seemed to say.

(Mansfield 38-39)

First, our protagonist experiences confidence, and feels that her mother trusts her with the “job” of organising the party. One could interpret it as Laura feeling she is more talented than her sisters are, after all she is called the artistic one. At least the character Laura is pictured as
the most sufficient one for the task. When Laura then goes with the workmen one understands that she is discouraged, both because she brings her bread, which she before thought a good idea and also because she first stammers when addressing the workmen. Nevertheless, when Laura speaks to the men and sees the workmen’s eyes, it lifts her spirits again.

When Laura and the workmen decide where to place the marquee, actually mostly the workmen, we again float into Laura’s head. This time through immediate speech, the karaka-trees are described and a descriptive pause is created: “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?” (39-40). After this Laura returns to thinking about the workmen, which is communicated through free indirect speech. Here it is clear how Joyce’s realistic representation of ordinary life is made use of. This is something that Olson discusses, she brings up the subject of epiphanies not being “organized artfully” (41) and that Joyce instead regarded life to be “flooded with moments that are difficult to privilege, harder to ‘read into.’” (41). I understand the switching between reported speech and free indirect speech to emphasise what Olson examines, but also it creates the choppiness of the discourse that Beja points out to be a negative function that an epiphany can have. Consequently, as the event is not specifically artfully organised, it makes use of the notions of ordinary conversations and materialist features which Olson names as characteristics for Joyce’s epiphanies in *The Portrait* (43). Through this, one could conclude that Laura understands, through her epiphany, that she does not have to just sit around, she can make herself useful. She has the ability to organise and to be creative.

**Epiphany 2**

The second epiphany emerges from Laura finding out that a man, living close by, has died. This event would, normally, be regarded highly “important”, because of the seriousness
that death carries with it, but in “The Garden Party” this event is reduced by the characters
and the narrator. The Criterion of Insignificance is addressed by Beja and in connection to the
trivial trigger of epiphany he mentions how the events sometimes only is significant to the
experiencer alone. This could be seen in all the instances of epiphany in “The Garden Party”
to different degrees. However, Beja also discusses the Criterion of Incongruity, which could
possibly be found in this second epiphany. As noted above, death is a quite important incident
in general. Perhaps the revelation of the death has nothing to do with Laura’s epiphany. We
will get back to this later, but first let us look at the scene when our protagonist receives the
information about the death.

Laura leaves the workmen when she is called to the telephone. After a quick chat with
her brother Laurie in the hallway, Laura picks up the phone to speak to her friend. The scene
of the phone call brings the story, through reported speech, into the next scene where again
Laura helps to organise the party by talking to the florist delivering canna lilies. Two more
scenes float by with the help of reported speech. Laura, her sister Jose and the narrative
arrives in the kitchen where the deliverer of creampuffs for the party is telling a story to two
servants. Laura and her sister hear the conversation which reveals that a charter who lived in
“the little cottages just below” (44) has been killed in a traffic accident. Laura cries out
“[d]ead!” (44). Laura takes her sister aside and the narrative enters the following
conversation between the sisters:

‘Jose!’ she said, horrified, ‘however are we going to stop everything?’

‘Stop everything, Laura!’ cried Jose in astonishment. ‘What do you
mean?’

‘Stop the garden party, of course.’ Why did Jose pretend?
But Jose was still more amazed. ‘Stop the garden party? My dear Laura, don’t be so absurd. Of course we can’t do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don’t be so extravagant.’

‘But we can’t possibly have a garden party with a man dead just outside the front gate.’ (Mansfield 45)

Here, through reported speech, even though the tagging sometimes is left out, the news about the dead man is clearly made insignificant by the sister Jose. She even writes Laura of as “extravagant”. One can also note that when Laura thinks “[w]hy did Jose pretend?”, immediate speech is used, which somewhat connects the reader to Laura. It is as if Laura is whispering a secret to the reader, and with the help of immediate speech she speaks directly to the reader, escaping the narrative and pushes away the narrator for a second. The next paragraph is introduced by the narrator noting “[t]hat really was extravagant”, which indicates that even the narrator makes the man’s death insignificant and by applying an opinion the narrator is intrusive here. Consequently, the narrator could be considered to “trap” Laura inside the narrative. Much since he or she does not let the protagonist, the hero, of the narrative be “right”. At first glance this might be seen as detaching the reader and Laura, since the narrator does not agree with her. One could make us of Victor Sage’s comment on Mansfield’s fiction in his article “The Unmasking of the Reader: Varieties of the Epiphany in Katherine Mansfield's Late Fiction” here: “we are allowed to see the failure of the character at the very moment of insight” (110). Hence, at second glance, an interpretation could be that the narrator’s acknowledgement of Laura being extravagant (her failure) is the reason we as readers understand the revelation as an epiphany, and perhaps it is first later that Laura understands her epiphany. Thus, to connect back to the Criterion of Incongruity, the epiphany
itself has nothing to do with the revelation of the death, but much more to the way both the 
narrator and the other characters react to it and make it insignificant.

The conversation is followed by a pause where the narrator describes the little 
cottages where the man lived. The narrator does this through an analepsis, describing how 
Laura and Laurie sometimes walked through there, and the place left them feeling shaky.
However, Laura and Jose’s conversation continues:

‘And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman,’
said Laura.

‘Oh, Laura!’ Jose began to be seriously annoyed. ‘If you’re going to 
stop a band playing every time someone has an accident, you’ll lead a very
strenuous life. I’m every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic.’
[...] ‘I’m going straight up to tell mother.’ [Laura says] (Mansfield 45-46)

When Laura tells her mother, her immediate response is ‘‘[n]ot in the garden?’’ (46),
referring to if the man had died in the garden, and when she is told no, she is relieved. Laura
is upset that her mother handles the situation the same way her sister does and not taking her
seriously. Laura continuously proves that this event is significant to her even though it is
made insignificant by the other characters. Laura says ‘‘[m]other, isn’t it really terribly
heartless of us [to not stop the party]?’’ (46) and instead of responding, her mother switches
the subject to the hat she is holding, which Laura is going to wear at the party. Laura is
dismissed as “being very absurd” (46) and her mother even says “‘[p]eople like that don’t
expect sacrifices from us. And it’s not very sympathetic to spoil everybody’s enjoyment as
you’re doing now.’” (46-47). Mrs Sheridan emphasises the weight of the party compared to
the man who died, clearly the party is of more value. Laura begins to question her intuition
turning her attention to the hat. Laura thinks about the family of the man, but they are described as “blurred” and “unreal” (47). Laura decides to “remember it [the death] again after the party’s over” (47). Again, free indirect speech is used, which lets the reader come closer to the character.

Moreover, the narrative movement ellipsis is introduced. Between Laura deciding on remembering the event of death later and the paragraph after that, which begins, “[l]unch was over by half past one. By half past two they were all ready for the fray” (47), there is a gap in the duration of the narrative. The gap disconnects the reader from the story for a moment. Now, Laura’s friend Kitty, from the telephone call earlier, has arrived as well as Laura’s brother, Laurie. Here, through free indirect speech, the reader is informed that Laura wants to tell him about the dead man and rushes to do that, but when Laurie complements her hat. Once again, she is distracted from what she thinks is significant and her focus falls on what the rest of the narrative implies to be significant.

Thenceforth, a summary of the garden party (quoted above) is carried out. The narrator presents it as a successful party over the course of 20 lines. Laura’s hat is again in focus during the party. Afterwards, when Laura and her mother have said goodbye to the guests, the family sits down to have some coffee, Mr Sheridan speaks of the charter and the accident from earlier and, suddenly, Mrs Sheridan brings more attention to the incident. She decides to send a basket with leftovers to the mourning family and she also decides that Laura should be the one bringing the leftovers to the home of the dead man’s family. Laura asks her mother if she “really think[s] it’s a good idea?” (49) and the question is followed by the statement “[a]gain, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all” (49). Here the narrator directly addresses the fact that Laura seems different than the other characters, also here the narrator is intrusive. It does not only indicate that the protagonist is different, but also, consequently, that she and her reaction should be viewed as significant by the reader.
Perhaps, Mansfield, already here, is implying the next epiphany and allows her character to get a glimpse of the truth. Beja addresses this when he discusses the epiphany’s function of helping the author create a new perspective of his story and here Mansfield accomplishes this through the narrator. This will further be examined in the next section, where we look at the full extent of the third and last epiphany.

**Epiphany 3**

Next, we enter into the free indirect speech of Laura. She is walking across the road and down to the village of small cottages. The walk stretches over 18 lines, only two lines lesser than the summary of the garden party. The speed of this event is positively slower than the speed of the garden party. One can compare it to slow-motion when it comes to Laura’s walk to the dead man’s house and fast motion when looking at the garden party. Consequently, the party seems less important to Laura. The much more detailed and close depiction of the walk emphasises that the walk is more significant to Laura than the party is. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that the narrative puts the walk in more focus than the actual party.

Laura arrives at the house where a group of mourning people are gathered, Laura walks up to the house and is let inside. She is, through free indirect speech, expressed to be quite afraid, and urgent to leave. I mentioned before that the village is described once before this event, through an analepsis. The village is then depicted as a dark and smoky place where Laura and her brother “on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder” (45). One could perhaps look at this as being the beginning of the third epiphany, and see it as retrospective. At first her image of the village and the people living there was negative, both because of influences from her family and because of her values in general. However, what happens next changes her point of view of
the lower class. Hence, when Laura re-calls her memory of the village when she visits, she re-
creates it and the meaning of the memory changes, which lets the memory become a
retrospective epiphany, and this is something that Beja mentions as a type of epiphany.

Laura is invited in to meet the widow. When she hurries to leave she walks through
the wrong door and enters the bedroom where the corpse of the man lies. Laura is persuaded
to look at the dead man, who is described as: “‘e looks a picture” (51). Through immediate
speech Laura pauses the narrative by describing the dead man:

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 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 as it should be. I am content. (Mansfield 51)

The last epiphany gives Laura the final revelation that life has more layers to it
than she has, and probably will ever experience. It creates a climax in the narrative and also
binds the narrative together, which are two function of the epiphany that Beja mentions. She
looks at a dead person and sees life clearer. She sees a man who has been given to his dream
and even calls him a marvel. Laura understand that there is more to life than parties and
fancy dressing for example. To emphasise my previous argument, the old memory of Laura’s
view of the village, the people and the life there is changed when she re-creates the memory.
Laura regains her past feelings of the memory and through this the meaning of the memory, as
previously stated, changes and the memory develops into a retrospective epiphany.
The end of the quote could be seen as confusing. Who is content? Laura? I would say it is Laura standing in as a narrator for the dead man, which brings the reader closer to the character. Perhaps it also says something about Laura’s state of mind. Laura’s statement could be seen as a realisation for her that she should be content with her life. Even though she understands that her way of living is not the only way of living, she also understands that she should be happy that she is as fortunate as she is. By this, I think one can conclude that there are not only more layers to life but also to these epiphanies that have been studied in this analysis.

The Reader’s and Laura’s Connection Through the Epiphanies

To understand what the epiphanies mean and what they do to the reader we will turn our attention to Conrad’s preface to The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’. Conrad discusses how our senses and the depiction of these in literature can affect the reader to feel the same thing as the characters in the narrative one reads. The epiphanies have their “final strike” of revelation to Laura in her paragraphs of free indirect speech, which is a perfect way to convey senses and emotions to the reader. Therefore, perhaps, it is not only the final strike of the epiphanies for Laura, but for the reader as well. The senses of sound, vision and feeling are expressed in these paragraphs. After Laura begins to organise the party and meets the workmen, she has some time to herself during which she reflects upon the sounds and feeling of the house.

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. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running
voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. 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. And there were two tint spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it. (Mansfield 41)

Through free indirect speech the house is described as being “alive with soft, quick steps and running voices”. The wind is “playing chase in the tops of the windows, out at the doors” and the air in the house is questioned, “was the air always like this?”. The sun light hitting the inkpot is depicted as “a warm little silver star”. As a readers we feel, see and hear the house. One could say that we get a sense of being there, sitting inside Laura’s head, connected to her nerve threads. The revelation that is displayed here could be the display of Laura’s creativity. Her vivid depiction of experiencing the everyday life of the house around her which is channelled through the non-intrusive narrator. By using a non-intrusive narrator, the reader is brought closer to the narrative and to Laura’s experience since her free indirect speech is not disturbed.

Later on, after the revelation of the event of death, when Laura walks with the basket down to the small cottages, she reflects upon how quiet the road she is walking is compared to the party she attended earlier in the afternoon. “And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somewhat inside her. She had no room for anything else” (49). The life of the party is still alive inside Laura and there is no room for the quiet. I feel this changes in the next lines when she enters the “smokey and
dark” (49) lane. Laura enters in to a world she never really connected to, now she is forced to “take part” of the life here. “A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window” (49). Again, sound and sight is used to describe the impression Laura gets from the village. She hurries along regretting her dress choice and it is as if suddenly she, who her entire life has harmonised with her surroundings, feels displaced and asks herself if the people in village were watching her, citing, “[w]ere the people looking at her? They must be” (49). She is uncertain of her place in this, for her, new context. Laura recognises the social differences between the place she has now entered and where she comes from. She understands that not everyone is as fortunate as she is and that there are people living differently from her and her family.

The last time we enter Laura’s headspace is the instance quoted above, under the subheading “Epiphany 3”. Through immediate speech, Laura’s reaction to the sight of the dead man is described. The depiction causes the reader to perceive the event in the same fashion that Laura does and it lets Laura and the narrative’s beholders arrive to the final epiphany of the narrative. The dead man is described to look peaceful, lying there “sleeping”. He is also depicted by the protagonist to be “remote” and “dreaming” and his head is “sunk in the pillow”. All of these descriptions indicate, to the reader, that Laura’s experience of death becomes a quite sane one. Hence, because of the use of multimodalities and immediate speech, the reader’s experience is of the same kind as Laura’s.

After the immediate speech by Laura the narrator returns and tells the reader that Laura begins “a loud childish sob” (51), but she feels that she needs to say something to the man before she leaves. “‘Forgive the hat,’ she said” (51), bringing attention to the thing itself that throughout the narrative has been made significant, and one interpretation of this could be that Laura is apologising to the man for being distracted and making a hat more important
than his death. What is notable here is that the hat, almost as a metaphor for the world of her family which oppresses her thoughts, again disturbs her. This time around there is no one that can effect her, due to the lack of “real” oppression and Laura is able to maintain the significance of the event. Enabling the epiphany to stay significant when, probably, it would have been made insignificant if her mother or sisters would have been there. Here we only experience Laura’s view of the event and therefore it maintains its significance. Laura runs back home but bumps into her brother on the way. He has been sent to check on her, since their mother is worried. Laura hugs her brother, crying, and he asks her:

‘Was it awful?’

‘No,’ sobbed Laura. ‘It was simply marvellous. But, Laurie —’ She stopped, she looked at her brother. ‘Isn’t life,’ she stammered, ‘isn’t —’ But what life was she couldn’t explain. No matter. He quite understood.

‘Isn’t it, darling?’ said Laurie. (Mansfield 51)

**Conclusion**

Arriving at the end of this essay, it is clear that epiphanies are of central use in Mansfield’s “The Garden Party”. My investigation describes three epiphanies which Laura, the protagonist of the narrative, experiences. Initially, the epiphanies seems to be of the kind that Beja discusses when he writes about the Criterion of Insignificance, but when Genette’s narratological tools and methods are applied to the analysis other interpretations are introduced. The ideas of both a retrospective epiphany and the Criterion of Incongruity can be found in the second and third epiphanies.

According to this essay the use of narratology affects the presentation of the epiphanies in “The Garden Party”. From my discussion, one could conclude that the absolute
central focus of Genette’s theory lies on the narrative movements, the narrator and how
speech and thoughts are represented in the narrative. For example, how the analysis indicates
that the narrator affects the experience of the narrative and the epiphanies. Another tool that is
made use of is analepsis, when we examine the third epiphany and how it could be seen as
retrospective. The narrative movements (ellipsis, scene, summary and pause) often marks a
new part of the story. They move the narrative forward, which lets the protagonist be present
throughout the story. The epiphanies often start in a scene and when the narrative is paused
by Laura’s stream of consciousness (either through free indirect speech or immediate speech)
the final revelation of the epiphany is made. The use of immediate speech or free indirect
speech helps the reader to understand Laura’s exact experience of the different events and
consequently the reader understands the events in a similar way.

Here I would like to bring in the use of the sensorial descriptions. When Laura’s
stream of consciousness is presented through either one of these “speeches”, there is always
some kind of multimodal focus. To use sight, sound and feeling in the narrative are methods,
in excess of the immediate and free indirect speech, used by Mansfield which connects the
reader to not only the narrative but to the protagonist.

Moreover, the studies done by Beja and Olson have supported this essay in its analysis
of Laura’s epiphanies. One can see several connections to Beja’s study in form of the
Criterion of Insignificance and of Incongruity, the retrospective epiphany and the functions of
the epiphany. Olson’s study connects to this essay when the Joycean idea of the epiphany
which can be related to Beja’s Criterion of Insignificance. One can also see a reflection of
Olson’s suggestions of the ordinary moments which trigger epiphanies in “The Garden Party”.

The space of this essay does not allow me to investigate all the aspects of the
epiphanies. A feminist point of view would be interesting to look at in connection to what this
essay has been discussing. Mostly, since my observation is that every time a man enters the
narrative the women adjust their opinions for example. It would also be useful to investigate Mrs Sheridans role in the narrative closer, since she very much affects Laura throughout the narrative.

To sum up, “The Garden Party” is a short story in which the protagonist Laura’s experiences of events can be interpreted as moments of epiphanic revelations. Her experiences are enhanced by narratological tools which gives her and the reader epiphanies. The reader is also affected by Laura’s stream of consciousness in which her experiences are depicted with the help her senses and this connects the protagonist and the narrative’s reader.
Works Cited


