

A psychoanalytic approach towards *The Doll's House*

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The plot of *The Doll's House* is centered around a doll's house that is sent to the children of the Burnell family, by an old lady, after staying with the family as a guest. The "perfect, perfect little house!" (p. 27) is welcome by these three little girls who receive the present, with enormous joy and excitement. However, the difference in the way characters approach the house, subtly builds the inner structure of the story that can be pictured by psychic oppositions.

The clear-cut distinction between the child and adult lives is anticipated from the beginning of the story, when Aunt Beryl, the only adult character of the story, doesn't let the house inside the house due to the smell she claims it has.

For, really, the smell of paint coming from that doll's house ("Sweet of old Mrs Hay, of course; most sweet and generous!") – but the smell of paint was quite enough to make anyone seriously ill, in Aunt Beryl's opinion. Even before the sacking was taken off.

The *toy house* belongs to the world of children, a less serious one, so it should be moved away from the *real house*, in which, the rule of the adult reigns. For some reason, Aunt Beryl has an assumption that it smells, even if there is no other clue in the rest of the story, that might suggest it really has that smell. The adult aunt perceives the house as if it has destructive impacts and feels scared to be made ill by the house. Her adult dislike of the child-world object is mixed with her insincere remark about Mrs Hay, which gives another sense of the two-facedness of adult-life.

What makes a sensation about the doll's house among children is that it looks like 'a *real house*'. "It [is] too marvellous; it [is] too much for them" (p. 27); because they are only unimportant *children*, whereas the house has "real windows" (p. 27), papered rooms, as if it is one of the serious houses of the adult. Besides resembling an *actual* house, the doll's house offers an opportunity to gaze into all rooms within it, at one and the same moment. "That is the way for a house to open! Why don't all houses open like that? How much more exciting than peering through the slit of a door into a mean little hall with a hat-stand and two umbrellas!" (p. 27). What the children actually want to peer at, is the adult life that they are not really allowed in. Houses, as well as the world, are places that are possessed by

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adults, and children can take part in it to a limited degree, in so far as they act within the rules of adults. Bedrooms and bathrooms of parents remain as *forbidden* areas that arouse curiosity, anger and fear (against the possibility of punishment in case they break the law) of children. Therefore, they are fascinated by the idea of being the *possessor* and *law-maker* of the toy-house where parents are excluded.

Even if the story is narrated by a third person speaker, we view it from the eyes of the youngest of the sisters, Kezia, throughout the whole chain of events. “What Kezia [likes] more than anything, what she [likes] frightfully, [is] the lamp... an exquisite little amber lamp with a white globe” (p. 28) in the doll’s house. The circle has always been considered as the perfect shape and the symbol of the divine and eternity because of its symmetry. It has no end, side or corner. The Greek scholar Proclus (410-485) claims that it is the first, simplest and the most perfect form. The perfect shape of the lamp combines with the roundness of the breast, the womb and the globe of the Earth in Kezia’s mind and suggests a purity that can never be achieved. The impossibility of this utopic symbiosis with the Mother Nature, the world, the womb makes Kezia even more conscious of her smallness, powerlessness and separateness. The lamp is “even filled all ready for lighting, though of course, you [can’t] light it. But there [is] something inside that [looks] like oil and [moves] when you [shake] it” (p. 28). Kezia is suffering from being the youngest in the family; she projects her unpleasant feeling of being too *small* and *helpless* into the “exquisite little” lamp, which is only a minute detail of the doll’s house, that nobody else is aware of. *Of course*, you *can’t* light the lamp; it is small, is only a toy, is not real and functional. But, it has something inside, that makes it look as if it can be lighted. So, the lamp has the potential to be lighted, though it can’t really be so, like Kezia who has the potential to grow up into an adult, latent within her smallness (like the oil of the lamp), but she doesn’t have the power and authority of the adult at her present stage. The lamp is “all ready for lighting”, like Kezia who is all ready for growing, though she lacks the capacity to function as an adult, for the very same reason.

The father and mother dolls, who sprawled very stiff as though they had fainted in the drawing-room, and their two little children asleep upstairs, were really too big for the doll’s house. They didn’t look as though they belonged. But the lamp was perfect. It seemed to smile at Kezia, to say, “I live here.” The lamp was real.

Kezia transfers her feelings about her family onto the dolls. The doll family seems too *big* for the toy house, they do not *belong* to it. Kezia feels that the other members of her family are too *big* for her *small* child-life, which is transferred into the doll’s house where every element of adult-life exists in a miniaturized and non-functional form. The parents and their two children, equated to Kezia’s own parents and two elder sisters, fail to fit into that small life of Kezia. They don’t *belong* to the toy-house, just as Kezia doesn’t belong to their adult-world. Kezia’s absent self as one of the children in the doll family is projected into the ‘little’ lamp instead, which fits ‘perfect’. It is Kezia’s own self living in the lamp; that’s why she has the false assumption that it is *real, living, smiling at her*. Idea of *stiff* parents *sleeping*, as if they have *fainted* reveals Kezia’s feeling that her parents are dead, inside. They fail to respond Kezia emotionally or to adapt to any inner need of Kezia. Some sense of lack of understanding, affection and attention prevails the air. Kezia’s parents are strangely missing during the story; they have no physical effect on the flow of events, even if they exist silently in everything the child characters think or do. Some strong sense of neglect hangs up in their unspoken absence and this neglect appears in emotional as well as in physical terms in Kezia’s world. She projects her need of emotional communication onto the lamp which she believes smiles at her, after, unlike the doll parents, *fitting* it perfectly into the *toy-house*, which is as small as to *fit* into her *little* world. Kezia tries to reintroject the breast, with all its warmth, through the lamp. Anything *big* implies rules emptied of love and affection. Kezia seeks these elements in *small* items. Small items, being under the control of Kezia, helps her to reverse her situation of being controlled by her parents.

In the story, there is no hint that the girls ever play with the house. They “burn” to “boast about their doll’s house” (p. 28) to everyone at school, and to take them in turns to their house “not to stay to tea, of course, or to come traipsing through the house. But just to stand quietly in the courtyard while Isabel [points] out the beauties, and Lottie and Kezia [looks] pleased....” (p. 28). The house becomes

an object of showing-off. It stands for the *good object* or the *ego ideal* (Freud, 1914) of the three girls. They mark the difference between them and feel that they possess the good-object, whereas the others lack it, while showing it to those who don't have it. Feelings of *possession* and power are concretized in the body of the doll's house. The house is something to show, not to play with; because they are scared of any harm that may come to it. It is actually their internal world that they are trying to protect through the doll's house, into which they have projected the big ideals (ego-ideals) of their *small* lives. The doll's house is a sort of *transitional object* (Winnicott, 1951) which represents both worlds of the internal and the external, of the child and the adult.

It is Isabel who dominates the procedure of this important showing-off event, as she is the *eldest* of the three girls. Lottie and Kezia unwillingly comply with the rules she sets, because they "[know] too well the powers that [go] with being eldest" (p. 28). All ideas that are associated with the adult-world and authority are transferred to Isabel. "Isabel [is] bossy, but she [is] always right" (p. 28). This statement, which is implied to be made from the point of view of Kezia, indicates her ambivalent response to the figure of authority, in the body of her elder sister, Isabel. The remark about Isabel's *rightness*, juxtaposed with her not-really-liked bossiness, points out Kezia's feeling of being *wrong*, as well as her sense of guilt.

Kezia's conflict with Isabel and the others about the doll's house appears as none of them becomes aware of the the lamp Kezia feels so fascinated by. When Isabel finishes with her demonstration of the house which includes telling about the items it includes, Kezia breaks in screaming "[She's] forgotten the lamp"! Then, Isabel, in agreement, adds the description of the "teeny little lamp"; however, Kezia "[thinks] Isabel [isn't] making half enough of the little lamp. But nobody [pays] any attention" (p. 30).

Kezia's all efforts to make the others notice the *tiny* lamp remain fruitless. Actually, it is Kezia's own *little* self, identified with the lamp, that *can't* take the attention of the *bigger* others. The lamp, *forgotten*, symbolizes her need for love and attention in a *big* world of adults.

Kezia is unconsciously suffering from the highly incomplete development of her ego, which has been contributing to her dependence. The perfect, endless circle of the lamp suggests a feeling of completeness that Kezia is desperately in need of. The lamp is complete, despite of its smallness; therefore, it becomes the ego-ideal of Kezia. Kezia tries to complete her lacking self by robbing the *fullness* of the lamp.

The *group matrix* (Foulkes, 1964) of the town people is characterized by class distinctions on the fore, besides the age distinctions hidden in the background. The only two who are not asked to come and see the doll's house are "the *little* Kelveys" (p. 31, [my italic]), girls of a washerwoman who is looked down upon because of her social status. Worse still, there is a rumour in the town that the father of the girls is in prison. The *parents* don't let their children even speak to the Kelveys. Parents dislike the idea of sending their children to the same school with these girls, but the Kelveys are strictly kept as outsiders and shunned by everybody at school as well as in other places.

What is going on between the Kelveys and the community is a case of *projective identification* (Klein, 1946) of the community resulting from *cultural narcissism* (Lasch, 1979), as a defense against their own anxiety and guilt. People want to keep the distance between themselves and the Kelveys as far as possible. This pathological narcissism, which shapes the primitive social matrix, arises with the wish to distinguish the self from other objects. The narcissistic identity of the self is secured with the construction of the difference of an other. (For details, see Figlio, "Psychoanalysis, Politics and the Self-awareness of society", 2004, pp. 89-93). Societal boundaries put the emphasis on difference which sustains order as opposed to the Other which is dirty, polluting and dangerous (Clarke, 2003, p. 4). On the other hand, the unruly – in this case, Mr Kelvey, whose absence arouses the *fear* that he *might* be in prison, and who is treated on that assumption – is perceived as a threat against the established security of the society (see Figlio and Richards, "The Containing Matrix of the Social", 2003, pp. 415-417).

This process of projective identification is clearly pictured in the story, represented in the body of the *bits*, that the children were given by the town people. Immediately after saying "the daughters of a washerwoman and a jailbird. Very nice company for other people's children!", Mansfield adds: "And they *looked* it" (my italic).

The truth was they were dressed in “bits” given to [Mrs Kelvey] by the people for whom she worked. Lil, for instance, who was a stout, plain child, with big freckles, came to school in a dress made from a green art-serge tablecloth of the Burnells’, with red plush sleeves from the Logans’ curtains. Her hat, perched on top of her high forehead, was a grown-up woman’s hat, once the property of Miss Lecky, the post-mistress... And her little sister, our Else, wore a long white dress, rather like a nightgown, and a pair of little boy’s boots (p. 29).

The “bits” Lil and Else are dressed with are the old, worn out possessions of the town people that they don’t want to possess anymore. The Kelveys contain the unwanted, inferior parts of these people that they want to get rid of. Disowning these inferior, bad parts by expelling them into the Kelveys helps them to secure the narcissistic purity of their selves. Projection of the bad parts, which is basically a fantasy, finds its physical expression in the *bad* clothes the Kelveys are dressed with, through *containment* (Bion, 1962). The moment these parts, that they used to own, are given, they become old; and the moment these clothes are old (bad), they become disowned and belong to the Kelveys thereafter. So it is the Kelveys, not them, who own these bad dresses/parts. The society are kept pure and they have to ignore the fact that these parts, once, used to belong to them. In order to keep their identity narcissistically pure and secure, they distinguish the Kelveys from the rest of the society. And they hate the Kelveys due to these bad clothes they do have; because they unconsciously know that these parts they hate in the Kelveys were theirs, not the Kelveys’, at the beginning. The Kelveys contain the hatred, anxiety, fear and guilt of the society, as they establish a threat for their narcissistic purity. It is actually their own selves that they hate in the clothes of the Kelveys, but this reality is so horrible to face that they ignore it; the *reality principle* (Freud, 1920) yields to the pleasure of narcissism. They reinforce what they *want* to believe the Kelveys are, by the way they *look*. Despite of their hatred for the Kelveys’ appearance, they continue giving these old possessions to them, so that they wear them in this *unusual* way and that the difference between them is secured. And they want to see them dressed in “bits”, so that the Kelveys won’t be perceived as “whole” or “pure” beings and can be torn into pieces in their minds.

It is also interesting that the physical characteristics of both the Kelveys as well as their dresses are portrayed as out of the standard. Lil is *huge*, whereas our Else is described as “a tiny wishbone of a child” (p. 29). On the one hand, they are physically beyond the *boundaries* of the social norms; and on the other, isn’t it remarkable that the younger of the sisters is constantly called “*our* Else”, by the narrator whose identity is unknown, which might point to an unconscious *knowing* (Bion, 1967) by the society about the destination their unwanted parts have been sent to?

The emphasis of group matrix on social difference is internalized by the children in the story as well. One day, the subject “rather flag”s among children, when they see the Kelveys eating by themselves at the dinner hour, while they are all together, as always. “They [want] to be horrid to them” and one of the girls goes over to the Kelveys “sliding, gliding, dragging one foot, giggling behind her hand” and asks “Is it true you’re going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?”. The girl can’t stand the *defeat*, when Lil “[doesn’t] seem to mind the question at all”, and she “[shoots] forward”:

“Yah, yer father’s in prison!” she hissed spitefully.

This was such a marvellous thing to have said that the little girls rushed away in a body, deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy. Someone found a long rope, and they began skipping. And never did they skip so high, run in and out so fast, or do such daring things as on that morning (p. 31).

The scene reveals a fight of powers and a practise of tyranny celebrated as a group of children who is imposing it upon an *other*, as a result of their previous experience of containment provided by their parents (for a development of the idea of tyranny mentioned here, see Meltzer, “Tyranny”, 1973, pp. 143-150; Figlio and Richards, “The Containing Matrix of the Social”, 2003, pp. 417-419). What makes it so “marvellous” is, going beyond the limits by speaking the taboo out, which is *forbidden* by the adults, the very same people who have taught them the seriousness of this taboo itself and not to speak it out at the same time. The reason for the pleasure that they derive from the cathexis which they experience,

here, is multi-layered: They are discharging the unpleasant energy they have accumulated for so long by trying to repress the unspoken idea which is known to everyone – that their father might have done something *bad* and have been put in prison. Breaking the boundaries imposed by adults for the sake of accentuating the difference, as practised by adults, is so *exciting*. In this way, they are both coming up against their parents and identifying themselves with them, who have been imposing power on children in a similar way. They are overpowered by the horror of a *jailbird* and try to suppress their depressive anxiety by throwing it in the face of the Kelveys in a tyrannical way. The Kelveys contain the fear that they have for their parents as well. From the primitive social matrix that they were born into, they create a new form of *projective communication* (Figlio, “Psychoanalysis, Politics and the Self-awareness of society”, 2004) peculiar to their own *small* community by which they can convert the narcissistic imposition of the adult-community into their own; and they become “a body”, they unite as a *proper* community, while doing that. Anything that resembles an element of the adult-community, is perceived as the *proper*. They are aware that the *society* is *ruled* by the adults. Within the rules of the adult-world they have adapted, they become tyrants who impose the power upon another, instead of victims upon whom the power is imposed. By means of this new projective communication which provides a transitional stage for them to power, they enable themselves to complete their narcissistic purity. Besides, they enjoy defeating the parents with their own weapons, breaking the rule of the Father (*see* the idea of the Name-of-the-Father or the Law-of-the-Father by Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of the Desire in the Freudian Unconscious”, 1960) with his own rule, and replacing the adult-rule with the child one, at the same time.

It is only Kezia who identifies with the victim instead of the tyrant. She doesn’t draw any distinction in her desire between showing the doll’s house to the Kelveys or to the others. But her attempts to ask the Kelveys to see the house *just for once* are refused without any explanation:

“Mother,” said Kezia, “can’t I ask the Kelveys just once?”

“Certainly not, Kezia.”

“But why not?”

“Run away Kezia; you know quite well why not.” (p. 30).

As the youngest, the ego of Kezia is still so weak that she doesn’t feel *powerful* enough to join in the tyrannical act of the *small* community she is supposed to belong to. She is too small for even this child-community, as she is imposed power by the elder ones within this small-society as well. Besides, being the youngest, she hasn’t completed her process of internalization of the social norms yet. She is ambivalent between her desire and the social rules; she conforms to them just because of her sense of guilt, which is predominated by the pressure of her strong super-ego upon her weak ego.

The last scene of the story takes place in the afternoon of the day the Kelveys are humiliated. There are visitors in the house and Kezia thives out from the back to the courtyard, unlike her sisters, “who [like] visitors [and go] upstairs to change their pinafores” (p. 31). This dislike of visitors, which is an adult way of socialization, sets forth another example that Kezia doesn’t feel a part of this social adult-world.

While swinging, Kezia notices the Kelveys passing by and after some hesitation, makes up her mind to approach them instead of running away. She says “Hullo” to the astounded Kelveys and invite them to see the doll’s house. The Kelveys, whose super-egos are as dominant as Kezia’s, think they *shouldn’t* come, but can’t resist the temptation to see *the doll’s house*. Finally, following Kezia like “two little stray cats”, they find themselves on the way to *the famous doll’s house*.

Kezia’s first words after opening the house are interrupted by the furious voice of Aunt Beryl, who screams: “How dare you ask the little Kelveys into the courtyard!”. Aunt Beryl “[shooes the Kelveys] out as if they [are] chickens” (p. 32) and slams the doll’s house calling Kezia bitterly “Wicked, disobedient girl!” (p. 33).

We can’t witness the reaction of Kezia, as the scope suddenly turns to Aunt Beryl here:

The afternoon had been awful. A letter had come from Willie Brent, a terrifying, threatening letter, saying if she did not meet him that evening in Pulman’s Bush, he’d come to the front

door and ask the reason why! But now that she had frightened those little rats of Kelveys and given Kezia a good scolding, her heart felt lighter. That ghastly pressure was gone. She went back to the house humming (p. 33).

The projective communication so joyfully actualized by the little girls only a few hours earlier is beautifully interwoven with the projective communication of the adult Aunt Beryl, which is the climax point of the plot as well, within the inner structure of the story. The wild act of the girls is changed into a subtler form of imposition in the adult version here; and the power clashes with the weak Kelveys, and for the first and only time, with Kezia, concretely. However, the content of the projective identification in each case doesn't change; as projective identification is always a manifestation of the subject's own psychotic and schizoid anxieties.

The Kelveys, frightened to death, stop to rest on a drainpipe, when they are well out of sight. They sit silently looking over the hay paddocks, dreamily; and then, our Else, nudging up close to her sister, smiles her rare smile:

“I seen the little lamp,” she said softly.
Then both were silent once more” (p. 33).

Notice of Kezia's beloved *little lamp* by the “wishbone of a child” for the first time provides a common place for those two little girls, through which their inner worlds communicate. The *exquisite little lamp* signifies the same meaning in the personal matrix of the two little girls, predominated by a social matrix of power relationships. This psyche concretized in the body of the lamp reveals the psyche of the story as well, as it is only the reader who has the privilege to follow that focus on the lamp, which is carried from Kezia's vision along with the plot, till it is taken over by our Else at the very end. Sad silence of the Kelveys is also the sad silence of the story. The possibility of an *introjective communication* (Figlio, 1998) between the two children is annihilated by the interruption of an adult, which marks the story with a distinct separation line, dividing the purity of the lamp into two. Kezia's feeling is ratified by an outer attack: Purity and integrity are really impossible to achieve. The adult hand of Aunt Beryl that slams the doll's house slams the hopes of purity that used to live in the hearts of the two *little girls*, externalized in a little lamp. Narcissism wins against the utopia of equality. The lamp, which the girls used to have an unconscious phantasy to hold on to, remains shut within the *doll's house* when Aunt Beryl enters the scene.

Mansfield wrote *The Doll's House* in October 1921, fourteen months before her death on 9 January 1923. She was already suffering from tuberculosis which, at that time, meant an irrevocable death sentence. In these closing eighteen months of her life, she wrote ceaselessly, very well aware that she didn't have much time left; and both the amount and quality of the stories she wrote in the last two years of her life surpassed her previous whole-life writings. Her two previous books and other works that she had been writing since her early ages had been unfairly ignored by critics. Mansfield was writing with enormous rage and fury, against both her illness and the critics who had undervalued her; and her rage was being reflected in her stories. She had to work despite of her increasing fatigue; she needed money for her treatment which was remarkably costly.

Mansfield set the physical context of the story in Wellington, Mansfield's hometown in New Zealand, where she spent the first fourteen years of her life, and, even, in her own childhood home, which still exists today. After having studied three years at Queen's College in London, she had rebelled against her father, for being sent back to England, and succeeding, had spent the rest of her life there, in England, from 1908. Her extra-marital affairs which were quite frequent were received with extreme blame and anger by the conservatist people of her time and she stayed as an outsider all her life. It was not only the society, but also her father, the most important person in her life, who denied her. Even her eventual marriage to John Middleton Murry, who had been her prolonged lover, in 1918, didn't give any way to her acceptance. Besides, Murry's flirtations with other women increased her anger after their marriage.

Mansfield was constantly thinking about her relationship with her father towards the end of her life. Immediately after finishing *The Doll's House*, she wrote a long letter to her father begging for his

forgiveness. She was suffering from the conflict between the immense love she felt for her father and his coldness.

As a result of all these influences, Mansfield's imagination turned towards various forms of power relationships in her last years. Accordingly, it went back to her childhood years in her homeland. Mansfield had difficult years in England as a refugee from New Zealand and as a lonely woman who was living in a world of men. The colonizer England as opposed to the colonial New Zealand, active paternalism as opposed to being passive as a woman, destructive death as opposed to life, painful illness as opposed to the longed-for health, authoritative father as opposed to the helpless child, power of critics as opposed to writers, were all mixed in her personal matrix and she was on the side of the oppressed, in each of these oppositions. While feeling the need to defend her self against the strong, she also built her story on the elements derived from the social matrix of her own time, governed by conservatism. She was being tyrannized by a cultural narcissism which was projecting hatred into her in the name of *purity*. These reasons led Mansfield to come to question the content of purity, unconsciously. (for a discussion on purity, see Grunberger, "On Purity", 1989, pp. 89-103)

The blend of all these ideas took her back to a childhood memory when she was given a doll's house. At the time, she was feeling displaced by her mother and grandmother in terms of affection, as all their attention had belonged to a newly born, sick sister of Mansfield, Gwen, who could live for only three months. Her elder sisters had been away when the house was sent, and Mansfield developed a strong sense of *proprietorship* for the house. She says she wanted *badly* to show it to somebody.

Now, Mansfield was writing that story, because she wanted *badly* to show her talent to critics and to the world, through them, before she died. Her talent had been ignored, just as Kezia or the little lamp. Her effort to write was another rebel against the power of death. She was feeling weak in her physical helplessness which was increasing day by day; but, creating stories, as against mortality, stood as a defense against the persecutory anxiety of death and illness for her.

Her feelings had taken Mansfield back to her stage in childhood. Her regression resulted with an act of sublimation (for a discussion of this idea of sublimation, see Kris, 1953) and she transferred her feelings both into the plot or the inner plot of the story and into Kezia. The scope of Kezia was the scope of the story, as well as Mansfield's. Mansfield picked up an object from her childhood – the doll's house – and added the inner elements of her present life into it. The indifference of those who are surrounding her, to her physical and emotional suffering showed itself in Kezia as a need for love and attention. Coldness of her familial, societal and literary environment to Mansfield was transferred to the *stiff*, big dolls in the house. Mansfield's countertransference to these figures which represented authority, found its expression in the form of the hatred towards social snobbery, mental abuse of the child by its parents and the other adults in the story.

Her letters reveal that Mansfield began to feel extremely guilty towards the end of her life; that helps us to understand Kezia's sense of guilt which remains unexplained during the plot. This guilt is reinforced by the pressure of the super-ego, which corresponds to the pressure of the social norms upon Mansfield, besides the pressure of her own super-ego at the time. Mansfield felt that pressure more during her illness, as her physical vulnerability contributed to the weakening of her ego, which contributed to her regression towards childhood, when our egos are much weaker.

Mansfield died on 9 January 1923, poor and infamous, with nobody with her, except her husband, whom she had called to visit her on that very night. Her works began to be appreciated much later after her death. Like Aunt Beryl's hand which slammed the doll's house so abruptly and unexpectedly, her untimely death suddenly put an end to her writing career and shut the round lamp, which symbolizes completeness, inside. That was what she feared and interpreted as the interference of upper powers. That was why she constructed her story upon power relationships, in which one side oppressed the other. Her helplessness towards the inevitable end made her feel persecuted by *authority* and she carried this idea with her in the construction of her story.

However, today, we are still reading Mansfield and writing on her works. Aren't we outside the doll's house, like the Kelveys, who have seen the lamp and continuing the story? The lamp still reaches out to us, though it has remained at the other side of the line that separates us.

Isn't the story going on as we read it now?

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