

**Panel 28**  
**Music and Text**

**Sound Poetics and Performance in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories**

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A concern with performance is at the heart of Katherine Mansfield's modernist stories in which voices and sounds play a significant part in creating her unique literary style. While Mansfield scholars have noted that her impersonal narratives are largely built upon an extensive use of dramatic speech, such as interior monologue and free indirect speech, insufficient attention has been paid to other sound elements embedded in her works, such as environmental sounds, natural sounds and perhaps most importantly, music, that interacts with characters' voices or silence—absence of voices, to 'perform' personalities and emotions. In some ways, it is more apt to recite and listen to, rather than silently read, Mansfield's fiction which appears very close to dramatic art. By examining various kinds of sounds, human and non-human, displayed in some of her renowned stories, such as 'The Garden Party', 'Miss Brill', 'Prelude' and so on, this essay intends to unravel layers of connections between sounds, voices and tone effects that contribute to the characterization and performance of Mansfield's art. This is also an effort to foreground the importance of sound poetics in modernist studies and literary studies, given that these cross-media inquiries are habitually slanted towards visual culture.

**Biography**

Xiaotian Jin, PhD (University of Hong Kong), is a professor at the School of Foreign Languages, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China. Her research interests include British modernist and middlebrow literature, women's writing, and cross-cultural studies. She has published in journals including *Women's History Review*, *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, and *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.