



THE MOMENT OF INNER RECOGNITION: EPIPHANY IN THE SHORT FICTION OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD AND NODIRA IBROHIMOVA

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 03rd September 2026

Accepted: 05th September 2026

Online: 07th September 2026

KEYWORDS

epiphany, inner recognition, female psychological experience, perception, re-evaluation, literary detail, open ending, short fiction, Katherine Mansfield, Nodira Ibrohimova

ABSTRACT

This article comparatively examines epiphany in the short fiction of Katherine Mansfield and Nodira Ibrohimova not as a dramatic plot reversal but as a brief moment of inner recognition that compels a heroine to reassess an established interpretation of her experience. Through “Miss Brill”, “Bliss”, “The Garden Party”, “Chorshanba uchun ko‘ylak”, and “Voz kechilgan kitoblar”, the study analyses how detail, social situation, material objects, and narrative endings prepare recognition without converting it automatically into decisive action. The comparison argues that Mansfield more often constructs recognition through a disruption of perception, whereas Ibrohimova tends to connect it with the recovery of personal meaning that has been neglected, deferred, or emotionally displaced.

Introduction. In psychological short fiction, a decisive event does not always coincide with a decisive action. A heroine may remain in the same room, continue an ordinary routine, or leave her external circumstances unchanged, while the meaning of what she has experienced has already shifted. This discrepancy between outward continuity and inward re-evaluation is particularly important for the short story, whose compressed form often places psychological change in a small perceptual or interpretive movement rather than in an extended sequence of events.

The concept of epiphany offers a useful way of describing such moments, provided that it is used with precision. In the present study, epiphany does not mean a mystical revelation or a complete acquisition of truth. It refers to a moment when a familiar situation, object, relationship, or social scene is suddenly or gradually perceived under a different meaning. The significance of the moment lies less in the new information itself than in the heroine’s inability to continue interpreting her experience exactly as before. This approach is consistent with the modernist short story’s concentration on perception, implication, and incomplete closure (Head, 1992).

The comparative value of this category becomes clearer when Katherine Mansfield and Nodira Ibrohimova are read without assuming that they employ the same historical poetics. Mansfield writes within a modernist tradition in which unstable perception and incomplete

revelation are central formal resources. Ibrohimova belongs to a different literary and cultural context, yet some of her stories likewise organise psychological meaning around a point at which ordinary experience is reinterpreted. The aim of this article is therefore not to classify Ibrohimova as a modernist writer, but to use inner recognition as a comparative analytical lens. The central question is what produces recognition, how it alters the heroine's relation to herself or her surroundings, and why the stories often stop before recognition becomes resolution.

Epiphany as Re-evaluation Rather Than Revelation

A useful distinction must first be made between revelation and re-evaluation. Revelation implies that a hidden fact is disclosed; re-evaluation concerns a change in the meaning assigned to what is already present. Psychological short fiction frequently relies on the second mechanism. A social scene, an object, or a routine does not have to change materially for its significance to change in the heroine's consciousness. The narrative therefore creates a before and an after not through two different events, but through two different readings of the same experience.

This distinction is important for comparative analysis because it prevents epiphany from becoming a vague label for any emotional scene. The recognition must produce a measurable interpretive shift. Before the moment, the heroine relies on one organising assumption; afterwards, that assumption is weakened, contradicted, or supplemented by another understanding. In narratological terms, the reader recognises the shift through changes in perception, selection of detail, internal response, or the organisation of the ending rather than through an authorial statement explaining what has been learned (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002).

Such recognition may be painful, liberating, incomplete, or even resistant to verbal formulation. What matters is that the heroine cannot simply return to the earlier meaning of the situation. This makes epiphany especially productive for the representation of women's psychological experience: the inner change can be significant even where social, familial, or material circumstances remain unchanged.

Mansfield: Recognition Through a Rupture in Perception

In Mansfield's "Miss Brill", the psychological turning point is prepared by the heroine's own interpretation of the Sunday park. She does not merely watch other people; she arranges them mentally into a communal performance and grants herself a place within it. Her sense of belonging is therefore not produced by actual participation but by an interpretive structure that makes solitude bearable. The young couple's contemptuous remarks do more than hurt her feelings: they destroy the organising fiction through which the park had become meaningful. The external setting remains the same, yet the heroine's place within it becomes impossible to perceive in the previous way (Mansfield, 1923, pp. 182-189).

The ending intensifies this change by returning attention to the fur that had accompanied Miss Brill's self-presentation. Earlier, the object participates in her ritual of preparation and in the imaginative vitality she assigns to the day. At the end, the act of putting it away condenses humiliation, withdrawal, and altered self-perception without requiring the narrator to define any of these states directly. Recognition therefore occurs as a collapse of an

interpretation: Miss Brill is forced to encounter the gap between imagined social inclusion and the gaze of others.

A related but more complex structure appears in “Bliss”. Bertha’s emotional intensity shapes the evening into a pattern of apparent harmony. Her perception of Pearl Fulton and the pear tree gives form to a private conviction that emotional affinity, beauty, marriage, and social intimacy are somehow converging. The later discovery of Harry and Pearl’s relationship does not simply add an unexpected fact to the plot. It retroactively destabilises the meanings Bertha has assigned to the entire evening. The same objects and gestures now belong to another interpretive order (Mansfield, 1922, pp. 116-136).

The psychological force of this episode depends on the proximity between Bertha’s consciousness and the narrative perspective. Free indirect discourse allows the reader to inhabit the intensity of her interpretation while also becoming capable of seeing its limitations, a feature discussed by Park in relation to anxiety, alienation, and narrative perspective in “Bliss” (Park, 2019). Recognition is therefore double: Bertha confronts the inadequacy of her understanding, while the reader recognises how that understanding had been produced. The epiphany is not a stable truth delivered from outside but a rupture within the heroine’s own structure of perception.

Ibrohimova: Recognition Through Recovered Personal Meaning

In Ibrohimova’s “Voz kechilgan kitoblar”, the movement toward recognition is organised differently. The books do not function primarily as evidence that an external social reality has been misread. Their renewed importance directs the heroine toward an aspect of her own life that has been displaced from everyday priority. What changes is not the objective identity of the books but the value they regain when they become connected with neglected intellectual and personal needs. The object thus enables the heroine to measure the distance between the life she has been living and a dimension of herself that has not disappeared completely (Ibrohimova, 2024).

This is a quieter form of epiphany because it develops through recovery rather than shock. The heroine is not suddenly handed a new identity. Instead, the ordinary object becomes a point from which she can recognise that an earlier personal meaning still claims a place in the present. The inner shift lies in the movement from habituated neglect to renewed significance. For this reason, it is more accurate to describe the episode as recognition than as transformation: the story marks a change in self-relation without claiming that all consequences of that change have already been realised.

A comparable principle can be observed in “Chorshanba uchun ko’ylak”. The recurring day and the dress accumulate emotional significance through expectation. At first, preparation belongs to a routine sustained by hope; as the situation develops, the same routine begins to reveal the heroine’s dependence on a meaning that cannot remain unquestioned. The psychological change therefore arises from the altered value of a repeated action. What had supported anticipation becomes a means of perceiving the emotional cost of waiting (Ibrohimova, 2023, pp. 135-138).

The importance of this construction is that recognition grows inside the heroine’s existing experience rather than arriving as an external verdict. Ibrohimova’s narrative economy permits an ordinary object or repeated temporal marker to carry a change in self-

understanding. The heroine does not need to formulate an abstract conclusion about her life; the reader detects the shift in the changing relationship between the woman and the details that had previously organised her expectation.

The Ending as a Test of Recognition

The difference between recognition and resolution becomes most visible at the ending. A completed plot conventionally answers two questions: what has the character understood, and what will the character now do? Psychological short fiction may answer only the first, and even that answer may remain provisional. This separation is not a weakness of closure; it is a way of preserving the difference between a changed consciousness and changed circumstances.

Mansfield repeatedly exploits this distinction. In “The Garden Party”, Laura’s movement from the protected festive space toward the dead workman’s house exposes her to an experience that resists the social categories with which the day began. Her encounter does not produce a fully articulated doctrine about class, death, or life. The unfinished quality of her response is precisely the point: recognition exceeds the language available to her, and the story closes before the new perception can be translated into a stable position (Mansfield, 1923, pp. 59-82).

“Miss Brill” and “Bliss” similarly refuse to convert recognition into an immediate programme of action. Miss Brill withdraws; Bertha is left confronting a radically altered meaning of her domestic world. The reader can identify a psychological threshold, but cannot confidently predict what follows. Mansfield’s epiphany therefore often functions as a break in interpretation rather than as the beginning of a clearly narrated recovery.

Ibrohimova’s endings can also preserve this interval between awareness and consequence. In “Voz kechilgan kitoblar”, renewed attention to what had been relinquished creates the possibility of returning to neglected personal needs, but possibility is not identical with completion. In “Chorshanba uchun ko‘ylak”, the emotional logic of waiting becomes more visible to the heroine, yet the significance of that recognition lies in a changed relation to the situation rather than in a fully closed life trajectory. In both cases, the ending protects psychological credibility by refusing to turn awareness into an instant solution.

A Comparative Model of Inner Recognition

The comparison permits a four-part analytical model of inner recognition. First, the story establishes an interpretive arrangement through which the heroine makes sense of an ordinary situation: Miss Brill imagines belonging, Bertha perceives harmony, Ibrohimova’s heroines invest a recurring day or familiar objects with personal meaning. Second, a detail, encounter, or change of emphasis places pressure on that arrangement. Third, the heroine is compelled to reassess either the external world or her own relation to it. Finally, the narrative stops before the consequences of the reassessment are fully stabilised.

The model also clarifies an important difference between the two writers. Mansfield frequently moves from confidence in perception toward disruption: a heroine discovers that the social or emotional pattern she has constructed cannot contain the reality before her. Ibrohimova more often moves from habitual displacement toward renewed recognition: something emotionally or personally significant, previously pushed to the margins, re-enters

the heroine's field of value. These tendencies are not absolute rules, but they identify different directions of psychological movement within the selected stories.

At the same time, both writers rely on indirection. Neither needs a narrator who announces that the heroine has reached a decisive psychological insight. Meaning is distributed among gesture, object, spatial movement, repeated action, perception, and the final arrangement of the narrative. The reader therefore participates in establishing the scale of the change. This interpretive participation is especially important in short fiction, where psychological density often depends on what is implied rather than exhaustively explained.

For comparative literary study, this suggests that epiphany should not be treated merely as a thematic motif. It is better understood as a structural relation between perception before a threshold and perception after it. Such an approach makes it possible to compare texts from different literary contexts without erasing their differences: the shared category is recognition, while the triggers, emotional direction, and degree of closure remain specific to each writer.

Conclusion

The selected stories of Katherine Mansfield and Nodira Ibrohimova demonstrate that inner recognition can organise psychological change without requiring dramatic external action. Epiphany in these texts is most productively understood as re-evaluation: an ordinary social scene, object, repeated action, or encounter acquires a new meaning that prevents the heroine from returning unchanged to her earlier interpretation.

Mansfield typically constructs this threshold through a rupture in perception. In "Miss Brill" and "Bliss", recognition exposes the instability of an interpretation that had sustained the heroine's sense of belonging or emotional coherence; in "The Garden Party", the new perception remains difficult to formulate and therefore resists complete closure. Ibrohimova, by contrast, often locates recognition in the recovery or reassessment of personal meaning, as the books in "Voz kechilgan kitoblar" and the repeated preparation in "Chorshanba uchun ko'ylak" become measures of the heroine's relation to her own needs, hopes, and emotional limits.

The principal comparative finding is therefore not that the two writers employ an identical type of epiphany, but that both separate recognition from resolution. Psychological change becomes visible when meaning shifts, even if circumstances do not immediately change. This distinction allows the short story to represent female psychological experience as a process of perception, reassessment, and unfinished self-positioning rather than as a sequence that must end in a definitive decision..

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