



Katherine Mansfield and Conceptualisations of the Self

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## Abstract

The thesis aims to show how Katherine Mansfield's desire to discover aspects of the self shaped her strengths and distinctiveness as a writer, particularly in the development of her own modernist aesthetic. Mansfield's letters and notebooks often betray a preoccupation with issues of the self. In one notebook entry she exclaims, 'if one was true to oneself . . . True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many – well, really, that's what it looks like coming to – hundreds of selves' (*CW4*, 349). By examining this and many other scattered references to the self throughout Mansfield's letters and notebooks, this thesis aims to uncover the relationship between Mansfield's personal comments and questions on the self and the development of her literary techniques.

The beginning of the twentieth century, when Mansfield was writing, saw many advancements in science and technology as well as new psychological theories popularised by William James and Sigmund Freud. These theories added to a discourse on the psychological make-up of the individual as modernity caused a crisis in understanding the construction of the self, calling identity into question. By examining these theories, this thesis provides a framework for the analysis of Mansfield's writing, integrating current critical commentary on her fiction, Mansfield's private thoughts and her experimental fiction.

Whilst there have in the past been studies of Mansfield's writing addressing aspects of the narrative techniques of her stories that construct multifarious representations of the self, particularly those by Clare Hanson (1981), Kate Fullbrook (1986) and Sydney Janet Kaplan (1991), to date no full-length study exists which coordinates notebook entries, letters and Mansfield's fiction across her writing career. Using a chronological analysis this thesis demonstrates how her preoccupation with the self underlies the energy and liveliness of her stories and is a key influencing factor in her creation of a unique aesthetic. Using

narratological theory as a guide, close textual analysis of stories from across Mansfield's entire oeuvre informs this study, revealing how she learns to exploit literary techniques such as focalisation and free indirect discourse in order to represent the 'hundreds of selves' experienced by her characters.

The thesis will illustrate from a selection of stories, how the spirit and uniqueness of Mansfield's experimental fiction comes from observations about the contradictions of the self, its multiplicity, its division and its obliqueness, achieved by placing her characters in situations that cause them to misapprehend the self or discover it anew. It will focus on Mansfield's depictions of the frustrations, dreams and passions of her female characters as they seek escape from or transgress the boundaries forced upon them, whether these are self-imposed or result from patriarchal strictures and will aim to reveal how Mansfield's experimental fiction captures the nuances of the female self.

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## Abbreviations

Unless otherwise indicated, all references to Katherine Mansfield's works are to the following editions and are abbreviated thus. Mansfield's personal writing is quoted verbatim without the use of the editorial '[sic]':

<i>CW1 and CW2</i>	<i>The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield: Volumes 1 and 2 – The Collected Fiction</i> , edited by Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
<i>CW3</i>	<i>The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield: Vol 3 – The Poetry and Critical Writings</i> , edited by Gerri Kimber and Angela Smith, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2014.
<i>CW4</i>	<i>The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield: Volume 4 – The Diaries of Katherine Mansfield Including Miscellaneous Works</i> , edited by Gerri Kimber and Claire Davison, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2016.
<i>L1 to L5</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield</i> , 5 volumes, edited by Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984-2008.

Mansfield uses ellipses frequently in her personal writing and in her fiction. These ellipses have been copied verbatim and indicated by double spacing. Where text has been abridged I indicate my own ellipses in square brackets. Where more than one work by the same author is quoted the date of the work is given in brackets.

## Introduction

### Katherine Mansfield and Conceptualisations of the Self

Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp was born in Wellington, New Zealand on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1888 and died at Fontainebleau, France on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1923. The *Collected Works* of her fiction contains 224 stories (or story fragments, dialogues) of which 94 were published in Mansfield's lifetime. Whilst she began two novels, *Juliet* (1906) and *Maata* (1913), and wrote some extended short stories which are the length of novellas, 'The Aloe' (1915), 'Prelude' (1918) and 'At the Bay' (1921), Mansfield did not complete or publish any novels. In addition to her short stories she wrote and published poetry, translations and reviewed novels for the *Athenaeum* from April 1919 to December 1920, writing 115 reviews of fiction. During her lifetime, Mansfield saw the publication of three short story collections: *In a German Pension* (1911), *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920) and *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922).

There are many studies of Mansfield's works which address key theoretical approaches to her writing. These include feminist readings of her fiction, for example, Kate Fullbrook's *Katherine Mansfield* (1986), biographical readings such as Cherry Hankin's *Katherine Mansfield and her Confessional Stories* (1983) or Mary Burgan's *Illness, Gender and Writing: The Case of Katherine Mansfield* (1994). There are also studies that place her within the literary canon of modernism as well as adopting a feminist gender critique, such as Sydney Janet Kaplan's *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction* (1991). Since the establishment of the Katherine Mansfield Society in 2008 and the yearbook *Katherine Mansfield Studies* in 2009, literary interpretation of Mansfield's writing has gained momentum and now includes a wider variety of literary, theoretical, biographical and thematic studies of her work than used to be the case. Recent scholarly interpretation

includes, for example, texts examining the use of the liminal in her fiction by Claire Drewery (2011), her writing in relation to cinema by Maurizio Ascari (2014) or texts that address particular aspects of Mansfield's writing and reception such as Gerri Kimber's *Katherine Mansfield: The View from France* (2008). There are also several comprehensive essay collections that provide new and exciting interpretations of Mansfield's fiction, such as *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays* (Wilson and Kimber, 2011) and very recently *Re-forming World Literature: Katherine Mansfield and the Modernist Short Story* (Kimber and Wilson, 2018). The special edition of *Katherine Mansfield Studies* Volume Five also examines Mansfield as a post-colonial writer.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis examines Mansfield's conceptualisation of the self in her notebooks and letters and how she translates these ideas into her fiction via aesthetic experimentation. Mansfield scholars have already addressed some aspects of Mansfield's preoccupation with the self by examining notebook entries, letters and particular stories; however, there is no full-length study examining how Mansfield's compulsion to write about the self in her notebooks and letters translates into her determination to develop literary techniques to represent the self in her fiction. Moreover, studies such as those I have described above often

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Fullbrook. *Katherine Mansfield*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986. Cherry Hankin. *Katherine Mansfield and her Confessional Stories*. London: MacMillan, 1983. Mary Burgan. *Illness, Gender and Writing: The Case of Katherine Mansfield*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. Sydney Janet Kaplan. *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1991. Claire Drewery. *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. Maurizio Ascari. *Cinema and the Imagination in Katherine Mansfield's Writing*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Gerri Kimber. *Katherine Mansfield: The View from France*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2008. Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson, editors. *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson, editors. *Re-forming World Literature: Katherine Mansfield and the Modernist Short Story*. Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag, 2018.

focus on particular periods of Mansfield's stories, for example, the later stories or the stories she wrote that are set in New Zealand. None of the existing studies of Mansfield's writing trace her thinking about the self over her lifetime or attempt to impose upon her scattered notebook and letter entries, consisting of personal thoughts and ideas on the self and selfhood, a coherent structure that shows how these feed into her experimentation in fiction. Studies that focus on particular periods of Mansfield's writing or singular facets of her fictional experimentation do not capture the complexity of her work in relation to the self, which can only be revealed when examining her entire oeuvre. This thesis will address the gap in Mansfield studies by taking a chronological approach to her writing, reviewing and analysing how the reflections in her personal writing over her lifetime are related to her fictional output.

The period in which Mansfield wrote was an era in which literature responded to cultural changes in distinctive ways that came to be known as modernist. In particular this was a response to the mechanisation and industrialisation of society and how such change affected people's conceptions of time and selfhood. This is not to suggest that all writers of the early twentieth century became what is now termed modernist, but the effect of the changes of the early twentieth century on art and literature is well documented. It will not be my proposal in this thesis to measure Mansfield against any set of criteria that places her within or without the canon of modernism but instead to document how she responded to the changing concept of selfhood that arose as a result of some of the intellectual theories and discoveries that emerged during her lifetime.

Although there are readings of Mansfield's fiction exploring her writing in relation to psychological theories – for example, the eighth volume of *Katherine Mansfield Studies* is entirely devoted to this topic – there are no studies which survey Mansfield's enquiries into the self across her lifetime in light of the new modes of thinking of the early twentieth

century, particularly in relation to how psychologists such as William James and Sigmund Freud impacted the representation of self and consciousness in fiction. The psychological proposals and other philosophical theories, such as those of Henri Bergson, of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can partly be read as a response to the increasing mechanisation of society. Their concern with the urges at work in the human psyche and their attempts to capture how individuals grasp a sense of self, can be read as reactions to the questioning of how the self becomes redefined in light of new and challenging societal influences. By analysing Mansfield's thoughts on the self in relation to these theories my thesis will provide an initial structuring framework from which to build a picture of how she constantly re-evaluated her literary techniques to accommodate her changing conception of the self. In later chapters, I will also acknowledge how Mansfield might have responded to aspects of her own life, her friendships, working environments and developing confidence as a writer to consider how they might have affected her changing concepts of the self. In addition to James and Freud my thesis will also relate Mansfield's engagement with issues of the self to the more esoteric concepts advocated by A. R. Orage and Lewis Alexander Wallace (M.B. Oxon) who were important people with whom Mansfield engaged and who may, although not necessarily directly, have had some impact upon her thinking.

Through study of stories selected from particular periods of Mansfield's life, my thesis will show how her notions of the self evolve over time. Specific quotations from her personal writing will be woven into my analysis of the fiction to impose some order on the disparate references to aspects of the self in the letters and notebooks. This will provide a more cohesive interpretation and commentary of her views and how these feed into her fiction. The stories I examine in the thesis have been chosen as the best examples of Mansfield's literary experimentation. For example, they include stories in which Mansfield depicts characters who are placed in situations that force them to examine aspects of their

self. Some of these stories foreground characters who recognise the multiplicity of the self, or who briefly glimpse a hidden or inner self. Additionally, the stories chosen are those that illustrate how Mansfield's ability to use literary techniques such as focalisation or free indirect discourse becomes more sophisticated over time. The analysis will discuss how Mansfield becomes increasingly aware of how to use these literary techniques in order to immerse the reader in a character's consciousness and therefore witness the formation and reformation of the character's sense of self. I will include stories that have often been overlooked in the body of existing criticism, sometimes because they have been considered juvenilia or because they have been unavailable until recently. However, these stories provide evidence of some of Mansfield's earliest attempts to represent the self in her fiction. My aim is to show Mansfield's progression as a writer who can capture the essence of human consciousness in fiction and so I will examine stories that span her entire oeuvre.

Whilst my thesis will not take an entirely theoretical approach to Mansfield's writing my analysis is informed by narrative theory. I will engage with narratological texts by Gerard Genette (1980), Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan (2002), Manfred Jahn (2007) and Mieke Bal (2009), who will provide an underlying framework of narrative theory to aid my examination of how Mansfield's thoughts about the inner world of her characters can be transposed into artistic techniques. Although there has been some analysis of Mansfield's stories in relation to her use of specific narrative techniques, this thesis will be the first to utilise narratological theory to show Mansfield's progression and advancement as a writer who adapts narrative techniques to suit her own thinking about selfhood and its representation in fiction. Below is a summary of each of the chapters of the thesis.

In Chapter 1, I review existing Mansfield criticism that addresses issues of the self and consciousness in her writing. I explore the theories of James and Freud whose theories form the disciplinary foundations for thinking about the self at the beginning of the twentieth

century, and I relate some of their ideas to Mansfield's thoughts on the self and selfhood. Linked to my exploration of Mansfield's personal writing, I additionally focus on Mansfield's methods of using focalisation and free indirect discourse as her approach to the depiction of the human psyche and the inner processes of her characters.

In Chapter 2, I begin my analysis of Mansfield's fiction by investigating her earliest stories. These stories were written, or published, between 1903 and 1909 when Mansfield lived in both London and New Zealand. I scrutinise Mansfield's diaries and letters for clues to her own understanding and exploration of issues of the self and show how these thoughts are re-fashioned and represented through her characters. I review four stories in this first chapter: 'Vignettes' (1907), 'In a Café' (1907), 'The Education of Audrey' (1908) and 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' (1908). These stories best represent Mansfield's initial encounters with ways of representing the self, interpreting some of the literary motifs of the aesthetes such as the doppelgänger but also venturing beyond them to formulate ideas of her own. These notions manifest themselves in her ability to incorporate a variety of narrative techniques including focalisation and the use of the uncanny and the liminal.

Chapter 3 moves onto the period 1909 to 1911 when Mansfield wrote for (although not exclusively) the *New Age* magazine. During this period Mansfield achieved publication of a collection of stories, *In a German Pension* (1911). In this chapter, I analyse stories from this collection along with a fourth story that was unpublished in Mansfield's lifetime, 'The Swing of the Pendulum' (1911). Mansfield's relationship with the editor of the *New Age*, A R Orage, whose interest in esoteric theories, theosophy and psychology earned him the title of the 'Mystic of Fleet Street' (Paul Beekman, 578), proved influential and I connect Mansfield's fiction with his notions of human consciousness. Most of Mansfield's diary entries and letters from this period are missing (presumed destroyed) and evidence of her continued puzzling out of issues of the self can only be surmised. The stories for this period,

however, speak for themselves and evidence a continued effort to discover ways of representing the self through experimentation with narrative viewpoint. In this period, Mansfield takes her writing further by employing ambiguity to illustrate how the self can be represented as a constructed persona.

In Chapter 4, I examine the short period in which Mansfield wrote for, and co-edited, the magazines *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review* between 1912 and 1913. In this chapter, I relate Mansfield's stories not only to her continuing exploration of the self but also to the aims and ideals of the magazines for which she wrote. I analyse three stories: 'The Woman at the Store' (1912), 'New Dresses' (1912) and 'Millie' (1913) in which Mansfield steps away from the satirical style stories of her earlier work to probe aspects of the self in the barren environment of the New Zealand backblocks. Mansfield addresses how gender boundaries can be unstable so affecting the structures of female roles and selfhood. I discuss how Mansfield again employs the uncanny and demonstrates a more adept use of focalisation to capture the fluid and shifting nature of the self.

Chapter 5 covers the wartime period between 1914 and 1918, a time when Mansfield achieved publication of only nine stories, as she was constantly on the move, both in England and in Europe, and dealing with grief after the death of her brother. Nevertheless, this is the period in which Mansfield produced the longest published work of her lifetime, 'Prelude' (1918), which I analyse here along with 'The Little Governess' (1915) and 'A Dill Pickle' (1917). These stories are far more accomplished in terms of Mansfield's ability to harness narrative structures to depict human consciousness, and her diaries and letters evidence her determination to turn her back on her previous writing and develop new methods of representation of the self.

In the final chapter of the thesis, I evaluate some of Mansfield's last stories, 'Miss Brill' (1920), 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1921) and 'At the Bay' (1922). During

this period Mansfield was also writing reviews of fiction for the *Athenaeum* and I use insights from some of those reviews to discuss her thoughts on fiction writing. At this time, Mansfield also read *Cosmic Anatomy* by M. B. Oxon (Lewis Alexander Wallace) and I relate some of her thoughts and ideas to those of Oxon as part of my analysis of the stories. This chapter shows the extent to which Mansfield's development as a writer has advanced from the stories of 1907, and I illustrate with close textual analysis how she has a firm control over narrative perspective (focalisation) and use of free indirect discourse that allows the reader access to the inner consciousness of her characters.

In summary, this thesis will address a gap in the current criticism of Mansfield's writing to show how her conceptualisation of the self changes over her lifetime. This thesis will analyse stories across Mansfield's entire oeuvre to chart how her developing narrative techniques can be related to her thoughts and notions of the self as expressed in her notebooks and letters. Building upon existing Mansfield scholarship, as well as using psychological and narratological theories as a guiding principle, this thesis will show how a chronological approach to Mansfield's fiction can create a structured and cohesive pathway to illustrate her changing attitudes to the self and to its representation in fiction.

## Chapter 1

### Approaching Katherine Mansfield and Conceptualisations of the Self

#### Introduction

In the introduction to the thesis I explained how my topic can be sited within the existing scholarship relating to Mansfield's writing. In this chapter, I will expand on that discussion to examine studies that specifically explore aspects of the self in Mansfield's fiction. In reviewing the existing literature relating to Mansfield's writing I will refer to the ideas about the self that she discusses in her personal writing, her letters and notebooks, to begin to illustrate how those ideas fed into her fiction. I will return to these quotations from Mansfield's notebooks and letters in later chapters of the thesis to support the textual analysis of her stories. In this chapter, my review of Mansfield criticism is also supported by reference to specific stories that illustrate how Mansfield addresses different aspects of the self.

Additionally, discussed below are some of the literary techniques that Mansfield employed in her fiction to represent the self, in particular her engagement with focalisation and free indirect discourse as well as her use of liminality. In discussing these techniques, I refer to existing criticism of Mansfield's stories whilst also connecting my review to some of Mansfield's own thoughts on her techniques. This section is not designed to be exhaustive but instead provides a precis to the longer discussion of Mansfield's literary experimentation in later chapters.

Finally, I outline some elements of two important psychological theories of the late nineteenth century which may have had an indirect influence on Mansfield's thoughts on the self, namely those of James and Freud. Mansfield was writing in an era that was engaged in intellectual enquiry into the structure of the human psyche, popularised by James's and Freud's publications. Some of the principles of James's and Freud's theories form a partial

framework for my analysis of Mansfield's fiction and in this chapter I briefly address the aspects of those theories that seem to align with Mansfield's own ideas. Whilst there is no firm evidence that Mansfield read these theories, scholars often remark upon how writers of the early twentieth century did not need to be well-versed in psychology for it to have exerted some influence on their literary output. For example, Judith Ryan remarks how psychological theories

should not be regarded as a direct influence but rather that modernists were responding creatively to issues raised by those theories. It is their reaction to the issues raised which enables them to experiment with form and structure in an attempt to address the questions that are raised by psychological theory. (3)

These theories will be examined as part of the fabric of influences that may have had some bearing on Mansfield's efforts to represent the self in her fiction, particularly in her early stories. Before I discuss those theories, however, I begin with a review of Mansfield criticism.

### **A Review of Katherine Mansfield Criticism**

The rationale for my study of Katherine Mansfield's writing arose in response to the studies already conducted of her work, particularly those of the 1980s and 1990s. There are many scholarly texts that are either devoted entirely to Mansfield's work or include her as part of a wider study. The criticism of the 1980s and 1990s often provides feminist readings or biographical readings of her work, for example, Kate Fullbrook's *Katherine Mansfield* (1986) and Cherry Hankin's *Katherine Mansfield and Her Confessional Stories* (1983). Since the establishment of the Katherine Mansfield Society in 2008 and the yearbook *Katherine Mansfield Studies* in 2009, criticism of Mansfield's work has grown considerably. This has been aided by the re-publication of all of Mansfield's works, including some previously unavailable pieces, in the *Edinburgh Collected Works* (4 volumes, 2012 to date). In addition to the recent publications of Mansfield's works, the development of a database of little

magazines from the early twentieth century by Brown University in the USA has also meant that copies of the *New Age*, *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review*, in which Mansfield published many of her stories, have also become available. Whilst recent criticism has updated and extended the scope of the work of scholars such as Hankin and Fullbrook, there still remains little criticism that addresses Mansfield's representation of the self in her fiction. Unlike many critical studies of Mansfield and the self, my thesis examines stories spanning her entire oeuvre. Whilst I refer frequently to scholars such as Kate Fullbrook and Sydney Janet Kaplan, my thesis extends beyond their enquiries by working with more recent criticism, such as that by Joanna Kokot and Nancy Gray, building from that to create a new and fuller analysis of Mansfield's thoughts on the self. Nevertheless, recent criticism addressing notions of the self in Mansfield's writing examines only a small number of her short stories.

Below I begin by reviewing some of the important scholarly criticism relating to Mansfield's writing and her conceptualisation of the self. The purpose of this section is to illustrate how my own study of Mansfield's fiction and personal writing builds upon and extends approaches already established by academics in this field. I discuss the scholarly interpretation of Mansfield's writing thematically rather than chronologically in this section and I include quotations from Mansfield's letters and notebooks to illustrate the range of ideas that she expressed about the self and how, at times, these seem contradictory.

### **The Self as a Mask in Mansfield's Writing**

Fullbrook's study of 1986 examines Mansfield's ideas about the self in terms of the symbolist theory of the mask, relating her thoughts to those of the decadents of the 1890s, particularly Oscar Wilde, and the idea of the doppelgänger. The doppelgänger theme, she argues, relates to 'an artificially constructed self that overlays an uncontrollable alter ego' (16). An example might be Vera in 'A Dill Pickle' (1917) who suppresses the 'strange beast

that had slumbered so long within her bosom' (*CW2*, 100). In Mansfield's fiction characters' mask wearing can be for several reasons. In some stories, Mansfield shows how women are forced to adopt roles as a result of pressures placed upon them by patriarchy. Linda Burnell in 'Prelude' (1918), for example, conceals her hatred of being a wife and mother, and her inner self behind the mask is only revealed through her fantasies (see my discussion in Chapter 5). In some instances, however, Mansfield's characters are shown to deliberately construct personas or try out roles. In 'The Swing of the Pendulum' (1911), Viola constructs a guise for herself as a rich man's courtesan (see my discussion in Chapter 3). The courtesan role is depicted as a necessary result of Viola's poverty but is, nevertheless, shown as fragile and easily removed. Mansfield herself wrote to Murry in 1917 saying, 'don't lower your mask before you have another mask prepared beneath, as terrible as you like – but a mask' (*LI*, 318). The urgency of Mansfield's comment would suggest that living without a mask is unimaginable and that whatever the real self is, it must remain hidden. Mansfield's words express a hidden vulnerability that she conceals beneath an outer persona and here she advises her future husband to do the same.

In August 1907 Mansfield wrote to Tom (Arnold) Trowell saying, 'this loneliness is not so terrible to me – because in reality – my outer life is but a phantom life – a world of intangible – meaningless grey shadow – my inner life pulsates with sunshine and music & Happiness – unlimited vast unfathomable wells of Happiness and *You*' (*LI*, 24). These sentiments express how Mansfield envisions the self as a duality of the inner self and the outer self, even at this early stage of her career (in 1907 she was only 18 years old). By 1919, however, Mansfield was writing of the self in more complex terms. In a letter to Ottoline Morrell she extends her ideas about the self:

I began thinking of all the time one has 'waited' for so many and strange people and things – the special quality it has – the *agony* of it and the strange sense that there is a second you who is outside yourself & does nothing – nothing but just listen – the other complicated you goes on – & then there is this keen – unsleeping

creature – waiting to leap – It is like a dark beast – and he who comes is its prey.  
(L2, 350)

Whilst Mansfield writes here of the self as a duality of the inner self and another second self that does ‘nothing but just listen’, she also writes of a third self that is ‘like a dark beast’. This is reminiscent of the gothic imagery of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, or Dorian Gray’s doppelgänger (as Fullbrook asserts above) but it is unclear in this passage whether Mansfield does advocate that there is a third self, or whether the ‘dark beast’ is an aspect of repression. The final line ‘he who comes is its prey’ could be interpreted to mean that the other selves are consumed by this ‘unsleeping creature’, suggesting that regardless of the masks one wears they are always temporary and fragile, easily removed by the repressed aspects of one’s psyche when they come to the surface. Nonetheless, in many of Mansfield’s stories the mask-wearing self (the ‘complicated you’ of the quotation) is frequently depicted as a necessary self, as women are forced into pre-prescribed roles as a result of pressures in society. Burgan claims, for example, that Mansfield ‘is a connoisseur of constructed selves, especially of feminine selves that have been made up in the image of the social expectations instituted by patriarchy’ (38). The ‘dark beast’ of Mansfield’s comment could represent those aspects of oneself repressed as socially risky compelling us to adopt constructed selves.

In either interpretation it is important to note that Mansfield’s vocabulary here reveals evidence of her attempts to make sense of these complex notions although she frequently struggles to articulate her thoughts. Throughout the thesis I will show how Mansfield’s writing signifies what, at times, seems like an obsession with trying to understand the self, but her diaries and letters betray how she may not have the linguistic means to formulate notions in recognisable ways, making many of her comments enigmatic. Speaking of Mansfield’s fiction, Nancy Gray argues that ‘[t]he notion of self that we encounter on Mansfield’s pages comes to us in forms persistently resistant to definition. Nor does Mansfield set out to pin down or redefine this creature anew’ (2011, 81). I will show throughout this thesis that the

inability to define the self in any coherent way is to show its multifaceted and unfathomable nature, which are other aspects of the self that Mansfield was concerned with.

### **Mansfield's Concept of the Self as Multiple**

Fullbrook argues above that what lies beneath the mask is 'an uncontrollable alter ego'.

Whilst this may be true of a character such as Beryl in 'Prelude' about whom Mansfield remarks that 'for a long time now, she really hasn't been even able to control her second self' (*CW4*, 184), in many of Mansfield's stories what is hidden by the mask is more often depicted as unfathomable rather than uncontrollable. For Mansfield's characters, the inability to gain a firm purchase on the inner self arises from its multiplicity (see, for example, my discussion in Chapter 5 of Linda in 'Prelude' who describes her selves as packets she would like to give to her husband). Fullbrook observes how Mansfield questions the notion of a hidden inner self within the socially constructed self, highlighting how, for Mansfield, the self is 'multiple, shifting, non-consecutive, without essence, and perhaps unknowable' (17). Kaplan agrees, arguing that 'Mansfield was already suspicious of the idea of the *essential* self. Her emphasis on roles and role-playing reflects her sense of self as a multiplicity, ever-changing, dependent on the shifting focus of relationships' (1991, 37). Kaplan makes an important point in emphasising her choice of the word multiplicity:

I want to stress the use of this term rather than *fragmentation*, which suggests the end of a process, the breaking apart of something that was once whole; multiplicity, implying an original complexity that continues to cohere, has an ontological status quite different from the linearity connoted by 'fragmentation'. ([author's italics] 1991,169)

For Mansfield studies this is a key distinction. Mansfield's concentration on the idea that we wear masks suggests how these things are interchangeable. The term mask implies

temporality as well as concealment and there is no indication in Mansfield's writing that masks are broken or fragmented. Rather, in Mansfield's stories, selves are numerous and nuanced and in 1921 Mansfield writes of the self as a collective in her notebook:

Of course it followed as the night the day that if one was true to oneself . . . True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many – well, really, that's what it looks like coming to – hundreds of selves. For what with complexes and suppressions, and reactions and vibrations and reflections – there are moments when I feel I'm nothing but the small clerk of some hotel without a proprietor who has all his work cut out to enter the names and hand the keys to the wilful guests. (*CW4*, 349)

Later in this chapter (see below) I will show how Mansfield's ideas in this quotation relate to William James's theories of the self. Angela Smith argues, additionally, that Mansfield's vocabulary shows some awareness of Freudian thought ('complexes and repressions') and illustrates how 'the pressure of modernity can be felt in her account of a subject position, rather than a unified identity' (1999, 114). Fullbrook extends this point, also relating Mansfield's ideas about the multiple self to the roles of women in society. She argues that '[t]he only protection for individuals, who are in constant danger of utter fragmentation, is the covering of a mask, a consciously wrought presentation of a coherent self that was of necessity artificial' (17). She further asserts that 'Mansfield's ideas of the self, blow any fixed notion of women to pieces. Gender at once becomes an elaborate joke an obviously *invented* prison' (34 – 35). In many of Mansfield's stories 'an elaborate joke' would seem an inappropriate description of her depiction of women struggling within patriarchal systems. Many characters are shown as subjected to violence as a result of their gender, for example, the woman of 'The Woman at the Store' (1912) or Frau Brechenmacher in 'Frau Brechenmacher attends a Wedding' (1910). Nevertheless, Fullbrook's comment suggests that gender is a performative role, one forced upon women but often used by them strategically to gain some advantage. Ironically, the role forced upon women by men is, then, used against them. For example, I will discuss in Chapter 4 how Anna Binzer, in 'New Dresses' (1912)

uses her femininity to manipulate her husband when she overspends on fabric for dresses. Fullbrook's comment that gender is 'an invented prison' foregrounds the idea that gender is a constructed position and its associations are anchored in patriarchal perceptions of women and their place in society. These are the systems that force women to adopt the roles that cause the fragmentation of her earlier comment.

Fullbrook paints Mansfield's ideology as simultaneously representing patriarchal systems as powerful and flawed in relation to how social codes are public and the generation of self is an intensely private and individual affair. She remarks:

Her pessimism, her sense of fixed social forms as laughably flimsy and arbitrary and yet powerful as the sources of an otherwise unattainable communal illusion of certainty about individuals, and the sudden shifts in tone that emphasises discontinuity of vision are all, in their different ways, related to her ideas regarding the self. (17)

The dichotomy of public and private is important in Mansfield's stories as women are often depicted as maintaining a public self that hides an inner, more private self. Fullbrook argues that Mansfield illustrates how patriarchal systems force women to adopt certain roles, but at the same time these roles or masks are represented in the stories as fragile. The 'communal illusion' she writes of suggests that roles adopted by women provide an element of certainty, but that this often turns out to be illusory. Women play the roles of wives and mothers, adhering to fixed social norms when in fact they harbour selves that silently rebel against these subject positions. Gray reiterates Fullbrook's point that patriarchy is a crucial element in a woman's creation of many selves in Mansfield's writing:

If [...] women can never attempt self without also occupying the patriarchal category of man's other, then any female sense of self is always at least split, if not (ideologically) impossible. The advantage of this condition is that women are well positioned to be conscious of the self's competing demands, and to use that consciousness to resist settling for just one self or another. (2011, 78-9)

Gray clearly outlines how patriarchy is the driver of the split in women's sense of self in Mansfield's characters. She does, however, also acknowledge that in some of Mansfield's

stories selves are deliberately constructed. Viola in 'The Swing of the Pendulum' provides a good example of a character constructing an alternative self, in this case a courtesan, to take advantage of a difficult situation. Moreover, Angela Smith argues that 'in Woolf's case and certainly in Mansfield's, the response to being forced into pre-scripted and prescriptive roles was to write an alternative script' (1999, 56). Later in this chapter, I will examine the methods that Mansfield employed in her 'alternative script' to show how she developed her writing techniques to represent ideas about the construction of the self for women.

### **Mansfield's Concept of the Inner or Hidden self**

Mansfield's notebook entry from 1921 above describing her 'many selves' does in fact suggest the existence of a single, inner self ('the clerk') whose purpose is to arrange the others, maintain control or organise them. What makes up the other selves or causes their existence is the 'reactions, vibrations and reflections' (*CW4*, 349) as the self is constantly reformulated in light of these influences. One can see how the term fragmentation could be applied, in that selves could be described as breaking off or being fractured by these influences. Kaplan's term multiplicity is more appropriate, however, suggesting that the selves are nuanced despite Mansfield's assertion that they are separate 'wilful guests' (1999, 169). The idea that there is a central organising force in this analogy to guests is interesting and contradicts other comments she makes in her letters and notebooks. For example, in May 1918 she writes:

I positively feel, in my hideous modern way, I can't get in touch with my mind. I am standing gasping in one of those disgusting telephone boxes and I can't get through. 'Sorry. There is no reply' tinkles out the little voice. 'Will you ring them again, exchange? A good long ring. There must be somebody there'. 'I can't get any answer.' (*CW4*, 247)

Whilst the analogy and vocabulary here is different (discussing her 'mind' not her 'selves') there are connections to ideas about the self. Who, for example, answers the telephone? This

is a representation of another self, the telephone operator here representing the central organising self like the ‘clerk’ of the description above. There are at least three selves here: the self who makes the call, the self who answers the call and the self who is being elusive (‘my mind’). Mansfield repeats her notion of the elusive or hidden self in a letter to John Middleton Murry in October 1922 saying, ‘[w]e are all hidden, looking out at each other; I mean even those of us who want not to hide’ (*L5*, 296).

Mansfield does believe in the possibility of an inner self. In the remainder of the ‘many selves’ quotation discussed above she says we have a

persistent yet mysterious belief in a self which is continuous and permanent, which, untouched by all we acquire and all we shed, pushes a green spear through the leaves and through the mould, thrusts a sealed bud through years of darkness until, one day, the light discovers it and shakes the flower free and – we are alive – we are flowering for our moment upon the Earth. This is the moment which, after all, we live for, the moment of direct feeling when we are most ourselves and least personal. (*CW4*, 349)

Whilst this is enigmatic it is, nevertheless, confirmation that Mansfield believed in the possibility of something more permanent beneath the roles and masks (‘all we acquire and all we shed’). It is interesting to note that Mansfield’s imagery of nature contrasts sharply with the ‘hideous modern way’ of the telephone exchange analogy discussed above. The inability to access her ‘mind’ is captured in the rhetoric of the everyday, of modernity. This would suggest that it is the pressures of modern life, as Smith asserts, that force us to adopt the role playing and mask wearing that results in the inner self being hidden (1999, 114). Conversely, it is the lexicon of natural elements that is used above to describe the possibility of the inner self, the natural order of things prevailing over impediments as it ‘pushes’ and ‘thrusts’ its way clear. It is, however, transitory and seen only in a ‘moment’. In Mansfield’s stories these moments are available when the mask briefly slips or is removed and also in moments of unexpected revelation for a character who is placed in an unusual or unexpected situation. In ‘Millie’ (1913), for example, the main character experiences a few moments of maternal

nurturing when a young man arrives on her farm and the sisters of 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1920) have a sudden but passing opportunity to see into their inner selves after their father's death.

Fullbrook discusses the brief moments of revelation in Mansfield's stories arguing that she had 'an attraction to a mystic notion of an essential self, discoverable only in moments of spiritual inspiration' (Fullbrook, 17). Clare Hanson conveys similar ideas claiming that 'Mansfield expresses her sense of a tension between the multiplicity of the self – a multiplicity defined by her in Freudian terms that acknowledge the significance of the unconscious – and an awareness of unity that transcends their multiplicity, if only momentarily' (1990, 302). The unity that Hanson's comment refers to is revealed in the hotel analogy quoted above, the 'clerk' who organises the 'wilful guests'. Use of the term 'wilful' is interesting as it hints at Fullbrook's 'uncontrollable alter ego' (16) and affirms Kaplan's statement that '[t]he nostalgia for an essential, original self alternates with the defiant – and at times triumphant – admission of self-generation' (179). The guests are 'wilful' and therefore have some autonomy or are difficult to control. Mansfield's use of the word 'guests' is also significant, suggesting that they are temporary inhabitants. This supports Kaplan's comment about 'self-generation', that the 'wilful guests' are invited in, stay a little while and then leave or are ejected. As Mary Burgan argues, Mansfield's 'sense of identity formation [involves] a vital dialectic between a hidden, inner 'real' self and the outer manifestations of false personae' (37). These 'false personae' are temporary, constructed to suit a particular set of circumstances and then discarded.

The multiplicity of the self in Mansfield's fiction is, then, underscored by the concept of an inner self that is glimpsed only in certain moments. In her stories it is 'a moment of enhanced inner significance, often channelled through a character's perception of an object or scene. It is the most intense rendering of atmosphere in Mansfield's fiction' (Sarah Sandley

83). Sandley's point is illustrated in Mansfield's story 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' whose ending provides an atmospheric liminal experience for the sisters, who briefly glimpse more liberated selves. Mansfield herself writes of these moments, again verbalised with the rhetoric of the natural world in a long extract from her notebook of 1920 which is worth quoting in full:

And yet one has these 'glimpses' before which all that one ever has written (what has one written) all (yes, all) that one ever has read, pales . . . The waves, as I drove home this afternoon – and the high foam, how it was suspended in the air before it fell . . . What is it that happens in that moment of suspension? It is timeless. In that moment (what do I mean) the whole life of the soul is contained. One is flung up – out of life – one is 'held' – and then, down, bright, broken, glittering onto the rocks, tossed back – part of the ebb and flow . . . Shall one ever be at peace with oneself, ever quiet and uninterrupted – without pain – with the one whom one loves under the same roof? Is it too much to ask?' (*CW4*, 310)

Initially, Mansfield seems to be considering her writing, 'all that one has ever written' and how it 'pales' as she observes the sea. In later chapters, I will examine how Mansfield uses the symbolism of the sea which is depicted as a powerful force and potentially dangerous but also a symbol of freedom (see discussion of 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' and 'At the Bay' ([1922] in Chapter 6, for example).

In the extract above Mansfield addresses the 'moment of suspension' as the waves rise and then become, once again, 'part of the ebb and flow'. Reading this metaphorically, I would argue that Mansfield refers to moments of revelation, glimpses of an alternative self that are permitted in that liminal moment of suspension. In many stories, Mansfield places her characters in liminal positions such as on stairways or beside windows that provide brief pauses in the everyday to allow for self-reflection (see my discussion later in this chapter). This is evident in stories such as 'Vignettes I' (1907), 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' (1908) or 'Prelude'. In the passage above Mansfield continues saying how her many selves 'mumbled, indifferent and intimate' in 'a huge cavern' (*CW4*, 310). There is the suggestion here that the selves are those that have been discarded, left behind in the 'cavern' whilst her other self, the

one 'apart in the carriage' looks on. Mansfield's question 'shall one ever be at peace with oneself?' is important and a question that she articulates in several letters and notebook entries. In 1922, for example, she wrote to Murry, '[y]ou see, my love, the question is always *'who am I'* and until that is discovered I don't see how one can really direct anything in one's self. *'Is there a me'* (L5, 340). In her notebook in February of the same year she wrote, '[t]o do anything, to be anything, one must gather oneself together and one's faith make stronger. Nothing of any worth can come from a disunited being' (CW4, 411). These thoughts manifest themselves in several stories where Mansfield presents women who struggle with their many selves, trying to attain a stable sense of who they are, for example, Audrey in 'The Education of Audrey' (1908), Sabina in 'At Lehmann's' (1910) or the sisters in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'.

In reviewing Mansfield criticism above and by examining some of the entries in Mansfield's letters and notebooks I have explored how Mansfield writes of the self as a duality, as multiple and at times as unfathomable. In the next section, I will consider the methods that Mansfield uses in her fiction to represent the self. Predominantly, Mansfield uses techniques such as focalisation and free indirect discourse to explore aspects of the self in her fiction but she also makes use of the motif of the liminal to depict characters who have a brief opportunity to see into their inner selves. I consider some of Mansfield's own thoughts about her writing from her notebooks and letters, as well as criticism of her work by Mansfield scholars.

### **Mansfield's Literary Aesthetics for Depicting the Self**

Antony Alpers, one of Mansfield's biographers, remarks that she had a 'unique talent for impersonation, for capturing the subtle nuances of voice and gesture that unmistakably reflect an individual's sense of self, way of being in the world, one's personal style' (88). The

concept of ‘impersonation’ is important for understanding how Mansfield translated the ideas she expresses in her letters and notebooks into narrative style and technique in her fiction. As early as 1906 (when she was only 17 years old) she was writing to her cousin Sylvia Payne saying, ‘[w]ould you not like to try all sorts of lives – one is so very small – but that is the satisfaction of writing – one can impersonate so many people’ (*LI*, 17-18). In her own life, Mansfield often wore a diverse range of clothing or adopted very different styles to ‘try all sorts of lives’. Anne Estelle Rice, writing of her memories of Mansfield for the *Adam Review* in 1965, discusses how ‘[b]efore she became too sick, one of her great jokes was to be “someone” for a whole day – take the part of a shop girl and play it all day long’ (86). Smith relates Mansfield’s dressing up to her ideas about the self. She says: ‘Implicit in these disguises, Maori, Japanese or cross-dressing, is an awareness of multiple selves, and perhaps of the difficulty of deciding what aspect of the “soul” to reflect in one’s clothes’ (2000, 47). As I discussed above, Mansfield was attracted to notions of the self as multiple but also to the idea that there was the possibility of something more permanent beneath the guises and subterfuge of everyday mask wearing. Kaplan relates Mansfield’s impersonation to her insecurity about the self, saying:

Impersonation gave her a sense of freedom, but only when she could make clear to herself that she was playing a role, that no-one could mistake the role for her essential self. But not knowing who that self was – and even worse, not being sure that it was not *essentially* divided – made her uneasy in spite of her defiance.  
(Kaplan, 170)

In Mansfield’s fiction, as I have illustrated above with reference to some of her stories, the self is often depicted as multiple but in some moments of revelation characters catch sight of what Kaplan here refers to as the essential self. The concerns that Mansfield had about the self’s indefinability became a key issue that is addressed in her writing, often by using focalisation to reveal the inner workings of her characters’ minds and I will explore these techniques in depth in later chapters.

As I discussed above, Gray argues that the self depicted in Mansfield's stories is difficult to define suggesting that Mansfield's technique is in fact to circumvent any definitive outline for the self, thus representing how it is undiscoverable (2011, 81). In Mansfield's fiction, these ideas are shown rather than described through her methods of interiorisation, such as the use of focalisation and free indirect discourse. Focalisation indicates who 'sees' at various points in the narrative. As Manfred Jahn states, 'the story's events are "focalized through" one or more story-internal reflector characters, and narrative information is restricted to data available to their perception, cognition, and thought' (98). In many of Mansfield's early stories, she indicates when the focal point of the narrative shifts from the external narrator to a character by using 'attributive signs' (Mieke Bal, 162) or 'perception indicators' (Jahn, 106) like 'she thought'. For instance, in 'At Lehmann's' Mansfield focalises some of the action from Sabina's point of view but indicates that she does so: 'She knew practically nothing except that the Frau had a baby inside her, which had to come out – very painful indeed' (179). As Mansfield's technique becomes more adept, these reporting clauses are removed.

Free indirect discourse (FID) provides a moment where the external narrator offers the character's thoughts, adopting the verbal style and register of the character. For example, when Rosabel in 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' (1908) remembers the man she served in the shop, FID reveals how she amends the memory of him: 'How handsome he had been! She had thought of no-one else all day' (135). Both focalisation and FID differ from the stream of consciousness narrative adopted by the early modernists at the level of immersion. FID and focalisation offer a brief incursion into a character's mind, with FID adopting the character's speech pattern. Stream of consciousness narrative, on the other hand, provides a sustained immersion into a character's mind, such as this passage from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925):

In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June. (4)

Mansfield's technique is to place characters into situations that force them to evaluate their sense of self, often momentarily, and she reveals this to the reader by briefly allowing access to her character's inner thought processes through the use of FID and focalisation so that the reader can witness the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self at various points in the narrative.

In May 1920 Mansfield wrote to Sydney and Violet Schiff saying how, '[d]elicate perception is not enough; one must find the exact way in which to convey the delicate perception. One must inhabit the other mind and know more of the other mind' (*L4*, 4). Mansfield's ability to immerse herself within her characters is a defining feature of her art. Raymond Mortimer reiterates these points in his review of *The Dove's Nest and Other Stories*, for the *New Statesman* on July 7, 1923 saying:

The other principal characteristic of Katherine Mansfield's art, I suggested, was her ability to put herself in other people's skins. All her stories are written in a sort of oratio obliqua. Every thought, every feeling, and even many of the turns of phrase in the narrative parts of the stories belong to the characters; sometimes to the same character throughout the story, more often to the one who is at the moment in the foreground. (Jan Pilditch, 13)

Mansfield's use of free indirect discourse and focalisation allows the reader to observe the inner workings of her characters' minds, what Mortimer here refers to as 'oratio obliqua'. Smith agrees, arguing that Mansfield presents 'a moment of stasis as a perceiving consciousness observes it, directing the reader's gaze' (2003, 102).

Moreover, Hanson has observed that it is in 'the fluid interplay between multiple levels and intensities of consciousness that the distinctiveness of Mansfield's characterization

lies' (2016, 25). Throughout the thesis I will show how Mansfield manipulates the narrative texture so that at certain points the perspective of events in a story is delegated to a character (or multiple characters) so that '[t]here is no authoritative, omniscience narrator to disparage any of the characters' world visions. Thus instead of a truth about reality what is revealed is the truth about the observer' (Joanna Kokot, 71). What Mansfield depicts is the world as envisioned by her characters and how that vision affects their self-conceptualisation. Kokot observes how Mansfield's techniques are modernist:

Literary techniques such as limiting the narrative point of view, free indirect speech, stream of consciousness, a focus on the inner life of the characters and literary Impressionism, tended to foreground the observer by stressing the subjectivity of perception. The modernist writer (or artist) would seek to grasp and communicate the unique, individual vision of reality, often endowed with the characteristics of an epiphany. (68)

For Mansfield, as Gray argues, these techniques are used to situate her characters in positions that place stress upon their self-conceptualisation, 'moments of tension', so that the reader can observe the characters in the process of formulating a sense of self (2011, 80). For example, in 'At Lehmann's' (1910) the narrative viewpoint is given over to the main character Sabina at certain points in the story to observe how an interaction with a young man, who eventually sexually assaults her, affects her self-referentiality.

Janet Wilson further observes that

the more psychical underpinnings of the late stories, as she worked at the limits of consciousness, creating intuitive enlightenment and visionary perspectives unmediated by language, and piling up moments or glimpses through images and epiphany, also reaffirm her literary modernism. (2013, 30)

Mansfield wrote to Dorothy Brett in October 1917 discussing her literary technique. She says: "'What form is it?" You ask. Ah, Brett, its so difficult to say. As far as I know its more or less my own invention' (*LI*, 330-1). Throughout this thesis I will show how Mansfield works towards the assured techniques of Wilson's comment, building upon her initial hesitant

use of some aspects of focalisation in the early stories. Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr remark of 'The Tiredness of Rosabel', for example, how Mansfield begins by using

indirect representation of inner consciousness. She does not use interior monologue proper, a direct transcription of a character's thought processes, or even the illusion of it. Her 'interior monologue' is indirect, stylised, filtered through third person, past tense, syntactically conventional narration. (29)

I will argue in the thesis that Mansfield experiments with her literary techniques eliminating reporting clauses ('she thought') to gain a more assured use of focalisation and free indirect discourse that illustrates the 'visionary perspectives' of Wilson's comment.

One such technique is to create what Gray has named 'unstable narrative spaces where we are invited to catch sight of [the self] as if out of the corner of the eye, register its effects, and let it go' (2011, 81). These unstable spaces include use of unreliable narrators (see my discussion of 'The Woman at the Store' in Chapter 4), mirror tropes and the liminal (discussed below). These spaces relate directly to Mansfield's conceptualisation of the self as 'brief, unpredictable, discontinuous, tied in no orderly way to rational or sequential experience' (Kaplan, 33). Wilson observes how '[b]oth Mansfield and Woolf introduced structural fragmentation, disunity and indeterminacy into the short story, while also achieving a more fluid expression of subjectivity as they rewrote literary conventions into a feminist modernism' (2018, 133). The 'fluid expression of subjectivity' in Mansfield's writing appears in her use of multiple focalisers where the focalised is viewed from several characters' perspectives. For example, in 'Prelude' or 'At the Bay' there are several focalisers and in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' both sisters are focalisers simultaneously (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Mansfield's use of the short story form can also be related to her ideas about the self. Scholars agree that the short story's lack of definition gives it 'advantages of elasticity, in both choice of character and use of time' (H. E. Bates, 19) and allows for a certain latitude in terms of its form, not confining it to strict codes of practice. This makes it appropriate for a

writer who wants to introduce ‘structural fragmentation, disunity and indeterminacy’ (Wilson, 2018, 133). The many different forms, styles and modes of short stories, which prevent categorisation, permit a multitude of techniques, schemas and forms of rhetoric. Dominic Head argues that the short story has ‘a generic tendency towards paradox and ambiguity, another modernist hallmark: authorial detachment and the resulting emphasis on artifice and structural patterning’ (8). This would suggest that for a writer wishing to secure an impression of human perception in fiction, the short story’s attributes are ideally suited. Recently, Emma Young and James Bailey have highlighted how ‘the short story’s aesthetic ability to foster tension, ambivalence and uncertainty became a significant factor in its popularity with women writers who were fascinated with representing identity in a new, non-restrictive and more realistic manner’ (7-8). Head concurs, pointing in particular to how the short story form allows for a ‘consideration of the fragmented, dehumanised self’ (7-8). Mansfield often exploits short story elements in order to explore aspects of the self. For example, a ‘A Dill Pickle’ (1917) has almost no plot or syuzhet, something that it would be difficult to maintain in a novel, and instead Mansfield uses analepsis (memory) to explore Vera’s sense of self.

Discussing Mansfield’s use of the ‘glimpse’ Sandley argues that the

fusing of external detail and a character’s inner life, was central to [Mansfield’s] artistic objectives. Perception of significant external detail can provide insights into thought or feelings the character may not consciously acknowledge. It helped Mansfield to dispense with a narrator who colours and controls the narrative. (Sandley, 83)

In several of Mansfield’s stories characters are depicted as experiencing a glimpse or a moment of revelation of something that they have previously been unaware of. The inner self is briefly available to a character and can be depicted through fantasy (for example, Beryl and Linda in ‘Prelude’ and ‘At the Bay’) or through symbolism (for example, the symbolism of the fox fur in ‘Miss Brill’ [1920]) or after events that cause disruption (for example, the

eponymous character Millie [1913], or the sisters in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'). Gray has recently examined how the use of such 'glimpses' creates narrative that is reflective of the nature of the self. She attests that Mansfield's 'famous use of "moments of being" functions as a technique that invites us to occupy narrative spaces that feel uncertain or undefined: they do not tell us what happens but enact the experience of its happening' (2011, 79). The 'moments of being' or 'glimpses' of Sandley's comment are brief interludes where characters gain a sense of an inner self. Mansfield's use of liminality, and in some stories such as 'The Woman at the Store' use of the uncanny, Mansfield allows the kind of self-referentiality that permits a character these 'glimpses'. Additionally, inviting the reader to 'catch sight of it out of the corner of the eye' (Gray, 2011, 81) allows Mansfield to depict the notion of the ephemerality of the self.

Clare Drewery argues that for short story writers the liminal allows them 'to represent the borders of unconsciousness, and to convey a sense of the 'unsayable'. They typically depict moments or interludes of revelation in which the possibilities for protagonists' subjectivity may be recognised but not realised' (120-1). As a concept that may only be glimpsed in brief moments, the self is appropriately represented in the liminal space, one in which a character may experience momentarily feelings or states of being outside normal strictures. Drewery further argues that use of the liminal represents 'an acute awareness of shifting, transient states, exclusionary categories, marginality and superfluity as conditions which are intimately tied to women's subjectivities' (11). In 'Vignette I' the liminal space of the window allows the main character to explore aspects of her self, and in 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' Rosabel is able to imagine an entirely different self through fantasy as she sits by her bedroom window.

Drewery further asserts that '[t]he liminal state as depicted in modernist short fiction thus challenged the limits of language, subjectivity and social structure and appeared to hint

towards the realisation of freedom, individual and social change, and a renewed sense of self' (120-1). It is in moments of freedom discovered in liminal spaces that Mansfield's characters glimpse alternative selves. The two sisters of 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' sit beside a window at the close of the narrative and this positioning illustrates Drewery's point. The two women, aided by the symbolism of the natural elements they see through the window, contemplate alternative selves and the possibility of change after their father's death.

In this section I have provided a brief introduction to the techniques that Mansfield employs in examining and questioning representations of the self in her fiction. Ruth Parkin-Gounelas summarises how for Mansfield, 'although what she was seeking constantly eluded her, the achievement lay in the rigour of the approach' (160). Throughout the thesis I will illustrate how Mansfield experiments with fictional forms in order to work through some of the ideas she writes about in her notebooks and letters. Whilst Mansfield's stories do exemplify her attempts to understand the nature of the self, her schema throughout is to adapt narrative structures to depict the complexity and fragility of the nature of the self, showing how a woman's sense of self in private is in opposition to the public mask wearing of the outer self.

In the final section of this chapter, I will outline some of the psychological theories that were developed at the beginning of the twentieth century showing how Mansfield's ideas about the self may have been indirectly influenced by theories of the mind's interiority and new modes of thinking about the self. In the thesis, I will refer to these ideas as an initial framework for examining Mansfield's ideas in her notebooks and letters and how they translated into her fiction.

### **Theories of Psychology at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century**

In the introduction to Freud's text *The Unconscious* (1915), Mark Cousins remarks that '[t]he ratio between clarity and obscurity at the level of knowledge tipped towards obscurity in the nineteenth century [...] everything was becoming less self-evident including the self' (vii). Advances in science and technology meant that society changed rapidly at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries and part of these changes was the development of new psychological theories that related to consciousness and the self. This is not to suggest that either James or Freud developed their theories of psychology in isolation but rather that they built upon the work of many previous scholars.<sup>2</sup> The British Psychological Society was formed in 1901 with the *British Journal of Psychology* established soon after in 1904, and this gives some indication of how important psychological ideas had become by the beginning of the twentieth century. Mansfield lived in an era of intellectual enquiry into how the individual psyche is structured and in this final section of the chapter I will briefly examine how Mansfield's ideas about the self expressed in her personal writing can be related to some of those intellectual enquiries.

There is little concrete evidence that Mansfield read the works of Freud or James, although Patricia Moran confirms that Mansfield 'was present at numerous gatherings hosted by Lady Ottoline Morrell at Garsington Manor where discussions of Freud were rife' (11). Moran also points out that Mansfield reveals her knowledge of Freudian theory through vocabulary used in her letters (12). The only indirect reference to Freud in Mansfield's letters or notebooks is in a letter to Beatrice Campbell in 1916. Discussing D. H. Lawrence, who was a friend of Mansfield and her husband John Middleton Murry, she exclaims that unlike Lawrence, she shall '*never* see sex in trees, sex in the running brooks, sex in stones & sex in everything. The number of things that are really phallic from Fountain pen fillers onwards!'

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<sup>2</sup> In the opening chapter of *Interpreting Dreams*, Freud summarises the work of previous scholars. See Chapter 1 'The Scientific Literature on Dream-Problems'.

(LI, 261). There is also evidence that Mansfield discussed psychology, or psychological publications with Lawrence in a letter that he sent to her in 1918 remarking that he had enclosed the 'Jung book' (Huxley, 458). He does not specify which text he encloses but a later letter would indicate that Lawrence and Mansfield did discuss it, evidenced by his answer to a question from her in a letter of 1919 saying, '[a]sk Jung or Freud about it? Never!' (475)<sup>3</sup>. Their exchange provides some indication that Mansfield was at least aware of psychological theories available at the time. This may have been aided by the fact that discussion of Freud and matters of psychology were also pervasive in the *New Age*, to which Mansfield contributed for several years (Moore, 123) (see my discussion in Chapter 3).

Mansfield penned a story entitled 'Psychology' (1920) which I do not analyse in this thesis because I have chosen other more fitting examples of Mansfield's fictional experimentation from the period it was written. However, in the story one of the characters asks, 'How sure are you that psychology *qua* psychology has got anything to do with literature at all?' (author's italics, *CW2*, 196) which might suggest that Mansfield questioned psychological theory and its relationship to her writing. For Mansfield what is important is her attempt to represent the human psyche in fiction, not by examining it through theory but through experimentation with narrative technique. As discussed above, Mansfield often struggled to articulate her notions of the self; perhaps she felt that psychological theory could not aid her in that endeavour. Despite this, there are notable connections between Mansfield's representation of the self and the theories of James and Freud. Below I provide a brief outline of aspects of the theories posed by James and Freud that are most relevant to my study of Mansfield's conceptualisation of the self to lay a foundation for my analysis of her fiction writing, especially of her earliest stories.

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<sup>3</sup> The letter from Lawrence was written between March and May 1919 (it is undated) but there is no corresponding letter from Mansfield to Lawrence at that time in the published edition of her letters.

## William James's Theories of the Self

William James was a psychologist best remembered for coining the phrase 'stream of consciousness', which was later applied to modernist literature for the first time by May Sinclair in her review of Dorothy Richardson's novels for *The Egoist* in April 1918. James was commissioned to write *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), a project that spanned ten years. What underlies James's description of the human experience is the concept of an ever changing, personal consciousness which selects from the elements of a stream, creating a unique perception of the world for each individual. James begins with the basic premise that 'thought goes on', founded on the underlying principle that 'no psychology [...] can question the *existence* of personal selves'. We are aware of our own existence, and aware of the thought process that tells us that we exist separately from the rest of the world. It is not *the* thought but *my* thought (1892, 19-20). James's rationale for describing human consciousness as a stream is, therefore, rendered thus:

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.* (author's italics, 1892, 25)

James's theory advocates that perception, and the creation of one's self, are individual endeavours and subject to constant revision. This accords with Mansfield's endeavours to privilege the individual perception of her characters through the use of focalisation and free indirect discourse, and her efforts to immerse herself within her characters, her 'impersonation' (Kaplan, 170). James's concept of the individuality of perception also resonates with the discussion earlier in the chapter of the dichotomy between the public and private self. Self-conceptualisation is a private matter but the public pressures of modernity forced women to adopt very public selves.

In describing the constituents of the self, James first makes it clear that it is twofold:

Whatever I may be thinking of, I am always at the same time more or less aware of *myself*, of my *personal existence*. At the same time it is I who am aware; so that the total self of me, being as it were duplex, partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject, must have two aspects discriminated in it, of which for shortness we may call one the *Me* and the other the *I*. (1892, 42-3)

James's theory does not suggest, however, that the 'Me' or the 'I' are distinct and whole but rather that 'the identity found by the *I* in its *Me* is only a loosely construed thing, an identity "on the whole"' (1890, 372). The self, then, is not a fixed entity but rather a 'resemblance among parts of a continuum of feelings' which allows us the opportunity to create 'the real and verifiable "personal identity" that we feel' (1890, 336). As early as 1908 in her letter to Tom Trowell discussed above, Mansfield was referring to the self as a duality: 'my outer life is but a phantom life [...] my inner life pulsates with sunshine' (*LI*, 24). The hotel analogy discussed above also resonates with James's theory in establishing how parts of the self are 'known' (the 'wilful guests') and another part constitutes the knower, 'the clerk' (*CW4*, 349).

The act of conceptualisation itself involves the recognition of the self as a mutable and shifting structure, knowable to oneself but equally alien to it:

The past and present selves compared are the same just so far as they *are* the same, and no farther. A uniform feeling of 'warmth', of bodily existence (or an equally uniform feeling of pure psychic energy?) pervades them all; and this is what gives them a generic *unity*, and makes them the same in *kind*. But this generic unity coexists with generic differences just as real as the unity. And if from the one point of view they are one self, from others they are as truly not one but many selves. (James, 1890, 335)

The trope of the doppelgänger mentioned in Fullbrook's comment discussed earlier in this chapter echoes James's sentiments of an alternative self or selves that are both 'the same in kind' but to which are attached 'generic differences'. For Mansfield these differences arise from the 'complexes and suppressions' that are exerted upon the self (*CW4*, 349). Both difference and sameness are what characterise the self as having both unity and disunity; many selves that are at the same time a part of oneself.

Despite Mansfield's acknowledgement of the self as multiple, she nevertheless expresses how she believes in the 'persistent yet mysterious belief in a self which is continuous and permanent' (*CW4*, 349). James uses the metaphor of a 'herdsman' to describe how, despite the multifaceted nature of the self, there is an overseeing 'self' that guides (the 'knower') much like Mansfield's 'clerk' above: 'the herdsman is there, in the shape of something not among the things collected, but superior to them all, namely, the real, present onlooking, remembering, 'judging thought' or identifying 'section' of the stream. (1890, 338). It is interesting to note that Mansfield's analogy is drawn from the rhetoric of modernity and class, whereas James resorts to images of the natural world. James's 'herdsman' is also 'superior to them all' and sits in judgment. Mansfield's clerk, however, is inferior and subject to the demands of the 'wilful guests'. Mansfield's conception of the inner guiding self, then, is attached to her own ideas of a woman's place in society as subject to the pressures of the modern world. These ideas inform her fiction making and whilst there is some accord with the new modes of thought about the self advocated by James, Mansfield adapts these ideas for her own purposes in her fiction illustrating how the stresses of the modern world come to bear upon a woman's sense of self.

### **Sigmund Freud's *Interpreting Dreams* (1913)**

Of major significance in the early twentieth century was Freud's publication *Interpreting Dreams* (1913). It is not feasible within this thesis to discuss Freud's complex ideas at length but instead I examine a small portion of Freud's theory, in particular that relating to the unconscious. In his text Freud asserts that the human psyche is a combination of three elements: consciousness, the preconscious and the unconscious (1913, 630) and that '*psychical* reality is a separate form of existence, not to be confused with *material* reality' (author's italics, 1913, 635). *Interpreting Dreams* was published initially in German in 1900

and in English translation in 1913. In it, Freud hypothesises that the human psyche is driven by innate desires suppressed by the act of socialisation, the need to function in society. As Elizabeth Wright summarises: ‘Psychoanalysis explores what happens when primordial impulse is directed into social goals, when bodily needs become subject to the demands of culture’ (1).

Freud’s theory supports the idea that ‘in our most personal daily experience we encounter ideas of unknown origin and the results of thought processes whose workings remain hidden to us’ (1915, 50). The drives of the human psyche, then, are in fact largely unknowable. What is important for this study of Mansfield’s work and her endeavours to represent the self, is the notion developed by Freud that the self and the human psyche are subject to competing and conflicting desires. Freud identifies in *The Unconscious*, how the primary process from birth obeys only the ‘pleasure unpleasure-principle’ (1915, 3) but as a mature adult this becomes subject to the ‘reality principle’ (1915, 4). The human psyche, then, is driven by unconscious desires that are innate.

As I discussed above in several of Mansfield’s stories, characters attain a glimpse of this innate self, of their unconscious drives in moments of self-reflexivity permitted by liminal spaces or as a result of some disruption or interruption of the everyday. For example, Linda achieves a momentary connection with her unconscious desires through fantasy, and the sisters in ‘The Daughters of the Late Colonel’ through a liminal experience at the end of the narrative. For notions of the self, Freud’s theories suggest that desires and innate drives account for our conceptualisation of the self and that these innate urges exist beyond our own knowledge, occurring instinctively. It also proposes that these are not stable but shifting and, therefore, one’s sense of self, one’s personality or identity is equally mutable and is equally subject to the ‘demands of culture’ (Wright, 1). As I discussed above, in Mansfield’s stories often characters reveal something from their inner selves that had previously been hidden to

them, ‘feelings the character may not consciously acknowledge’ (Sandley, 83). This is true of Miss Brill, for example, whose inner self speaks to her through transference from the fox fur, or Linda who hears a ‘faint far-away voice [that] seemed to come from a deep well’ in ‘Prelude’ (*CW2*, 65). Mansfield depicts how these characters hide the inner self, the innate desires, beneath the mask that they must project to the world and these ideas show some association with the psychological theories of both James and Freud.

## **Conclusion**

Parkin-Gounelas remarks that ‘Mansfield was an accomplished mimic, yet she also set, as her life’s project, the inscription of the female subject into English fiction, and this required not mimicry but innovation, the articulation of a new form capable of containing it’ (1991, 7). My thesis addresses Parkin-Gounelas’s point by examining Mansfield’s scattered references to the self in her notebooks and letters and analysing how she may have worked those ideas into her fiction. I will show throughout the thesis how Mansfield developed narrative techniques to create the ‘new form’ of Parkin-Gounelas’s comment. In this chapter I have outlined the most relevant texts relating to Mansfield and representations of the self. I have shown, in brief, the kinds of enquiry that I expand upon in the later chapters of this thesis. I discussed how some scholars highlight how Mansfield depicts the self as a mask, relating this to the notion of the *doppelgänger*. I have also illustrated how Mansfield envisions the self as a dual entity, an amalgamation of the inner and outer self, whilst at the same time acknowledging how it is often a multiplicity.

Reviewers remark upon Mansfield’s ability to immerse herself in her characters to such an extent that ‘[i]t is an art that is a kind of divination’ where she ‘makes herself at home in the chosen phase of reality’ (Anonymous review, Pilditch, 3). In terms of Mansfield’s output I have identified some of the techniques that she employs, such as

focalisation and free indirect discourse, and how this relates to her intention to immerse herself within her characters. These techniques, I suggest, allow the reader to witness the self-conceptualisation of her characters. I have also examined how some scholars relate Mansfield's concepts of the self to the pressures placed upon women's sense of self as a result of modern living or patriarchy. Mansfield's own quotations about the constituents of the self were examined to reveal the kinds of analogies for the self she uses in her notebooks and letters, for example, that of a telephone exchange.

Finally, in the last section of the chapter I described the relevant aspects of the psychological theories of James and Freud to begin to explore how 'the central concerns of [Mansfield's] fiction resonate powerfully with the landscape opened up by psychology and psychoanalysis' (Hanson, 2016, 23). The purpose of this chapter was to summarise the approach that the rest of the thesis will take by reviewing existing criticism of Mansfield's writing, particularly where this relates to her beliefs about the self. The forthcoming chapters will build upon the opinions discussed here to provide a chronological examination of Mansfield's notions of the self to explain how she developed her literary techniques to accommodate those ideas.

## Chapter 2

### **‘Would you not like to try all sorts of lives?’: Mansfield’s Early Stories 1903 to 1909**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter 1 I outlined how William James and Sigmund Freud were proposing new and radical ideas about the self in the early twentieth century. My discussion considered how Mansfield herself may have been indirectly influenced by new modes of thought about the self, reflecting upon how Mansfield’s own ideas may have been expressed in her fiction. The first chapter also made use of scattered references from Mansfield’s notebooks and letters to lay the foundation for the longer discussion of her stories throughout this thesis. I discussed how Mansfield focused on free indirect discourse and focalisation as her methods of representation and illustrating how her own ideas about the self can at times overlap or appear contradictory as they change over time. Finally, I provided a synopsis of past and current scholarship relating to Mansfield’s notions of the self in order to lay the foundation for this longer study of her work.

In this second chapter, I will scrutinise some of Mansfield’s earliest fiction writing (between 1903 and 1909) and read it alongside the deliberations about the self in her personal diaries and letters, paying particular attention to how she exploits her enquiries about the self in her personal writing to literary ends. Throughout the thesis, I will show how Mansfield’s early experiments in her writing repay analysis because of their indication of how her literary experimentation at this early stage feeds into the later stories. I review Mansfield’s writing as a body of work in which she deliberately examines and constantly re-evaluates her techniques in order to arrive at particular ways of representing the female self. I will illustrate how her methods develop and are altered as her own understanding of the self progresses. My analysis also pays heed to the relationship between Mansfield’s writing and the psychological theories of James and Freud, as outlined in Chapter 1, as a framework for examining her ideas about

the self. The aim is to chart how Mansfield becomes more confident with her developing narrative technique and I illustrate how Mansfield's handling of narratology changes over time to accommodate her own thoughts about the self. In this endeavour, I will pay particular attention to the works of the narratological critics Mieke Bal, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan and Manfred Jahn, whom I also discussed briefly in Chapter 1. This chapter will begin with an examination of Mansfield's early life, her education and her move to Britain, and will be followed by a close reading of four of her earliest stories to highlight how some of her ideas about the self, as expressed in her notebooks and letters, manifest themselves in her fiction.

### **Mansfield's Early Life and Early Stories**

In 1903 Mansfield with her two sisters, Vera and Chaddie, were sent from New Zealand to Queen's College, Harley Street in London to study. The importance of the education that Mansfield received at Queen's College cannot be underestimated. Gerri Kimber has recently described the college as 'an unusual, avant-garde educational institution for women [...] and most definitely *not* a "finishing school"' (2016, 105). For Mansfield, the college opened up a new European literary heritage that she would not have had access to in New Zealand. An important influence on her life at this time was one of her tutors, Walter Rippmann. Kimber confirms how

it is probably not an exaggeration to state that in introducing the impressionable KM to the works of Wilde, Pater and other writers of the fin-de-siècle and Decadent movements (especially Arthur Symons, Ernest Dowson, Paul Verlaine and Nietzsche), Rippmann would alter the course of her reading – and writing – life. (2016, 111-112)

Some of the issues addressed by these fin-de-siècle authors, and of interest to Mansfield, concerned death and the affective and emotional sense of impending loss. The influence of

writers such as Wilde is evident in Mansfield's early writing,<sup>4</sup> although Mansfield would later move away from the styles of the late nineteenth century writers such as those described above. I will show throughout this thesis how she builds from those early stories to develop the much more sophisticated stories of her later career.

Following her three years of schooling in England, by December 1906 and much to Mansfield's chagrin, she was back in New Zealand and would remain there for almost two years. Whilst in New Zealand Mansfield published stories in an Australian newspaper, the *Native Companion*. She also undertook a camping trip to visit the 'beautiful volcanic region in the middle of the North Island, sparsely inhabited by Maoris and with a few settler farms' (Kimber, 2016, 220). During her journey Mansfield kept a notebook, mainly written in pencil, of which a new edition has recently been published as the *Urewera Notebook*.<sup>5</sup>

At home Mansfield also kept diaries and notebooks and in March and April 1907, she copied a series of quotations into her diary that are useful in exploring her responses to issues of the self at this time.<sup>6</sup> The first quotation is a line from *A Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, which says, 'being natural is simply a pose, and the most irritating pose I know' (*CW4*, 29). In many of Mansfield's stories a character is featured who deliberately constructs an outer self, or feels that they live as an outer self, whilst hiding another self beneath (see the characters of Beryl and Linda in 'Prelude' [1918] which I discuss in Chapter 5, for example). In some stories this is presented as a deliberate construction, a pose, and can sometimes lead to a debilitating state when the pose is exposed (see discussion of 'Miss Brill' [1920] in

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<sup>4</sup> See for example Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> See new edition of the Urewera Notebook by Anna Plumridge, *The Urewera Notebook by Katherine Mansfield*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015. Previous editions include John Middleton Murry, editor. London: Constable, 1954. Ian Gordon, editor. *The Urewera Notebook by Katherine Mansfield*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978. Margaret Scott, editor. *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks Complete Edition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> For a full discussion of the origin of these quotations see Giles Whiteley, 'The Tree of Knowledge: New Insights on Katherine Mansfield, Oscar Wilde and "A Woman."' Galya Diment, Gerri Kimber and Todd Martin, editors. *Katherine Mansfield Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017. 175-189.

Chapter 6). In another example in the story I discuss below, ‘In a Café’ (1907), both students adopt the role that is expected of them (the ‘most irritating pose’ of Wilde’s quotation) whilst Mansfield uses satire to deliberately undermine that positioning. The quotation above, copied from Wilde, is followed by a quotation from Maeterlinck’s play *Aglavaine and Selysette* which says, ‘by dint of hiding from others the self that is in us we may end by being unable to find it ourselves’ (*CW4*, 38). In discussions in subsequent chapters of this thesis, I will provide evidence of how Mansfield questioned the inner self, whether it was reachable or understandable or whether it was so mutable as to be beyond one’s grasp. Beryl as a character in both ‘Prelude’ and ‘At the Bay’ (1922), for example, exhibits a personal struggle to attain a sense of her truer, inner self (see Chapters 5 and 6). The Maeterlinck quotation here suggests that Mansfield may have been concerned that the truer, inner self may be unfathomable. The last quotation I want to discuss here is again from Oscar Wilde and says, ‘to realise one’s nature perfectly – that is what each of us is here for’ (*CW4*, 35). This quotation reappears in the story discussed below, ‘The Education of Audrey’ (1908) and is levied at the main character, Audrey, by her friend Max, who seeks to crush Audrey’s sense of self in what becomes a power game between two artists. What each of these quotations shows is that in 1907 Mansfield was already considering some aspects of the self and in some cases, already using her fiction to try to puzzle out the issues she was contemplating.

After her return to Wellington, Mansfield had close relationships with women as well as maintaining her feelings for Tom (Arnold) Trowell. Her diaries and letters are evidence of her anxiety and ambivalence about her sexual feelings. During this period Mansfield often refers to the transformative effect of heterosexual love and relates this to her thoughts on the self. For example, in August 1907 she writes to Tom Trowell:

And so this loneliness is not so terrible to me – because in reality – my outer life is but a phantom life – a world of intangible – meaningless grey shadow – my inner life pulsates with sunshine and music & Happiness – unlimited vast unfathomable wells of Happiness and *You*. (*L1*, 24)

It is clear from reading Mansfield's diaries and letters at this time that she was deeply unhappy in New Zealand and yearned to return to London. In the quotation above she calls forth an issue that will be discussed throughout this thesis, namely the acknowledgement of the duality of what she here terms 'life'. In the quotation she refers to an 'outer life' that is a 'phantom' and an 'inner life' that is 'sunshine and music & happiness' illustrating how she believes herself to have a least two selves. James expresses a similar theory:

Whatever I may be thinking of, I am always at the same time more or less aware of *myself*, of my *personal existence*. At the same time it is I who am aware; so that the total self of me, being as it were duplex, partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject, must have two aspects discriminated in it, of which for shortness we may call one the *Me* and the other the *I*. (1892, 42-3)

As I will show throughout the thesis, Mansfield refers to the self as at least a double phenomenon, a surface self that is projected to the world and an inner self often depicted as unfathomable. In the quotation above, she suggests that externally she is unhappy and lonely but within she is able to achieve 'sunshine' through her thoughts and memories of Tom.

In the stories I discuss below, these thoughts are reiterated in a number of different ways. For example, in the discussion of 'Vignettes I, II and III' (1907), I will show how Mansfield produces a symbolic depiction of the world, the mixture of sights, sounds and their apparent indistinguishability, reflecting the unhappy outer self and the longed-for inner self as a lattice work, the selves bound together. Some of the thoughts above will also reappear in her story 'The Education of Audrey', in which Audrey associates the sunshine outside with her sense of self and is depicted as presenting an outer and fragile sense of herself to the world. The concept of a dual self is played with in the story 'In a Café' in which the outer self is depicted as a deliberate pose. In 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' (1908) the design through fantasy of an alternative self is used as a comfort for a woman trapped in the misery of poverty. The stories chosen for this chapter represent a sample of some of Mansfield's thoughts on the self at this early stage in her life. These stories have often been dismissed as juvenilia, with only a

small number of scholars paying attention to them in critical works. However, I would argue that these stories provide a wealth of material evidencing Mansfield's earliest experiments with technique that will be translated later into her more sophisticated stories. The dearth of relevant critical material provides an opportunity for new avenues of enquiry particularly since the availability of the recently published *Collected Works* which provides a fuller literary context for the published stories.

In another example of Mansfield's writing on love, in October 1908 she was writing to Garnett Trowell, Tom's brother:

I was so happy that I felt I must fling myself down on the warm grass – feel one with the whole great scheme of things. You know the sun filled world seemed a revelation – I felt as tho' Nature said to me 'now that you have found your true self – now that you are at peace with the world accepting instead of doubting – now that you love – you can see' . . . I feel that the last veil between me and the heart of things has been swept away. (*LI*, 72-3)

Of this quotation, Sydney Janet Kaplan remarks that it is Mansfield's relief that is evidenced, particularly as 'nature approves of her newfound heterosexuality'. However, Kaplan exercises caution, highlighting how this was not Mansfield's 'final revelation' and may in fact, 'be no more than another impersonation' (1991, 171), a way of living vicariously through the lives of her characters. It does not signal any kind of finality or realisation but a temporary moment of fulfilment. The rhapsodic nature of the prose in her letters to the Trowells does suggest that she is posing as a woman in love, impersonating a lover or trying on a role. The connection with nature and its symbolic representation of emotion is important in the first stories discussed in this thesis, the 'Vignettes I, II and III' (see below). As noted in Chapter 1, Kaplan claims that Mansfield's adoption of multiple selves through her writing, her impersonation, was derivative of her own musings upon aspects of the self. Mansfield remarks in a letter to her cousin Sylvia Payne in 1906: 'Would you not like to try all sorts of lives – one is so very small – but that is the satisfaction of writing – one can impersonate so many people' (*LI*, 17). In my examination of Mansfield's many diary and letter entries, I will

refer to her perception of almost inhabiting another person or thing, and her expression of the inner consciousness of a character to illustrate how the external world exerts its influence upon the character's subjectivity. For example, in Chapter 5 I discuss a quotation from Mansfield's letter to Dorothy Brett in 1917: 'There follows the moment when you are *more* duck, *more* apple or *more* Natasha than any of these objects could ever possibly be, and so you *create* them anew' (*LI*, 330-1). This is what Kaplan refers to as impersonation – an imitation or personification – and it accords well with a Wildean pose, which Mansfield may have adapted from her reading of his novels when she was at Queen's College.

The stories discussed in this chapter are representative of Mansfield's early attempts to 'try all sorts of lives' (*LI*, 17) through impersonation and also to begin what would become a lifelong experimentation with narrative techniques that culminates in the assured stories of *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920) and *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922). Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, in discussing 'The Tiredness of Rosabel', draw attention to Mansfield's burgeoning ability at this early stage in her career to handle inner consciousness as a technique of revelation of character:

the story is conducted almost entirely through what can most accurately be termed indirect representation of inner consciousness. She does not use interior monologue proper, a direct transcription of a character's thought processes, or even the illusion of it. Her 'interior monologue' is indirect, stylised, filtered through third person, past tense, syntactically conventional narration. (29)

This is equally apparent in the other three stories I discuss which illustrate that even in her earliest works Mansfield shows signs of determination to develop techniques that allow her to represent the self. In each story, a liminal space allows for reflection upon life in the city, whether it is embodied as a place of excitement and promise, or as a defender of patriarchal mores. Mansfield makes use of the liminal as a dichotomous space, somewhere 'in-between', and this is fitting for four narratives that seek to decipher how the self is difficult to grasp as a

composite. In my discussion below, I will return to this interpretation of Mansfield's technique to show how my analysis links the four stories in this chapter.

### **'Vignettes I, II and III' (1907)**

I begin with 'Vignettes I, II and III', which are among Mansfield's earliest stories, published in the *Native Companion* in Australia on 1 October 1907 and which have recently been described as 'an intensely personal series [...] redolent of KM's life at Queen's College in that top-floor back room in the boarding hostel' (Kimber, 2016, 128). The autobiographical nature of Mansfield's early stories is clear, and I will indicate below how some of the stories relate to aspects of her life.<sup>7</sup> Whilst the content may have been drawn from her own life, the vignettes are nonetheless a good starting point from which to view Mansfield's natural talent for impersonation (as she outlines in her letter above to Sylvia Payne, *LI*, 17) and will serve as a benchmark from which to review Mansfield's later work throughout the thesis. The vignettes offer little in the way of plot (or syuzhet) but instead feature a homodiegetic narrator observing the outside world of the city from a bedroom window. Kimber has highlighted how in this story 'clearly present is the influence of Oscar Wilde' (2016, 213), and there is much symbolism, however, Mansfield goes beyond that in employing liminal spaces as positions for her characters, evoking the idea of the city as a place of refuge for those characters where the boundaries of convention can be questioned, and subjectivities explored.

Liminal spaces are often those that sit between one place and another either metaphorically or in the case of the vignettes, literally. In the first vignette the narrator claims: 'I am leaning far out of my window in the warm, still night air' (*CW1*, 78) and the

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<sup>7</sup> Here I am not able to address in any detail the autobiographical nature of Mansfield's stories. However, for an interesting and enlightening discussion of autobiography and 'autobiografiction' see Max Saunders, *Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

second begins with 'I lean out of the window' (79). Positioning the narrators on a threshold such as a window sill allows for 'a fleeting sense of being that renders all who experience it temporarily outside the strictures of social convention and norms of measured space and time' (Drewery, 1). In the first vignette Mansfield uses this liminal space to explore feelings of uncertainty seeking the 'answer to all your aching and cryings' where you can 'permeate your senses with the heavy sweetness of the night', in order to 'let nothing remain hidden' (79). The liminality of the window provides a position from which to explore inner emotion through symbolism. Drewery observes how liminal spaces often 'blur the boundaries between dichotomies like the spiritual and the secular, the subjective and the social, and the extraordinary and the everyday' and can often be 'categorised by ambiguity and have a disturbing, unsettling quality' (12). This quality is exploited in these three dream-like sequences to express the narrator's ambivalence and uncertainty about her future life and her desire to find herself 'in the heart of it all again' (*LI*, 20).

Maurizio Ascari has argued that the vignettes 'embod[y] an effort to reassess gender as permeable, although this self-revealing drive is simultaneously pursued and veiled through ambivalence' (2014, 34). Additionally, he stresses that the representation of an urban landscape is an opportunity for Mansfield's 'painful acknowledgement of her sexual non-conformity' (2014, 35). The narrator of 'Vignette: I' is battling with the 'forbidden' (Hankin, 1983, 224) articulated here when 'convention has long since sought her bed' and is 'sleeping and dreaming' (79) and so now under the cover of darkness, and through the liberating effect of liminality, 'the city is presented as the answer to needs which are transgressive in more than one sense' (Ascari, 2014, 34). The narrator of this first vignette seeks vindication, reassurance that she can be comfortable with a self that contravenes social boundaries, whatever form that contravention may take. The liminal space provides an apt position for a narrator who wishes to explore her sense of self, unfettered by social convention.

In ‘Vignettes: I’ the night time is used as a place of contrasts – sights, sounds, and symbols: ‘beyond the line of dark houses there is the sound like the call of the sea after a storm’ (78). Personification and ‘symbolist synaesthesia’ (Ascari, 2014, 34) are evoked in establishing an atmosphere of exploration and desire: the night air is ‘warm’, the little lamp ‘is singing a silent song’ where all is ‘impersonal, vague, intensely agitating’ (79). In the liberating space of the window, London appears in the narrator’s imagination as the ‘light of knowledge’ (79). Mansfield made her feelings about wanting to return to London at this time perfectly clear. In a letter to Sylvia Payne from New Zealand on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1907 she writes:

I feel absolutely *ill* with grief and sadness – here – it is a nightmare – I feel that sooner or later I must wake up – & find myself in the heart of it all again – and look back upon the past months as – – – – cobwebs – a hideous dream. (*LI*, 20)

The lexicon certainly leaves the reader in no doubt that Mansfield is unhappy, the ‘grief and sadness’, the ‘nightmare’ and the ‘hideous dream’. The ‘heart of it all’ translates in the vignettes to how ‘London stretches out eager hands towards me’ (79) and it is personified and able to speak: “‘in my streets”, she whispers, “there is the passing of many feet [...] there is the intoxicating madness of night music, a great glamour of darkness”” (79). Ascari discusses how the city is ‘significantly gendered as feminine, as a locus of desire and erotic fusion [and] seduces the narrator with her intensity of life’ (35). This becomes possible because the narrator stands in the liminal position of the window, standing between reality (inside) and the dream like possibilities of the city (outside). ‘While the window behind which the narrator stands in “Vignettes” symbolises a painful detachment from the world, the city experience is imagined as holistic, as a means to achieve unity with the surrounding world’ (Ascari, 2014, 35). The narrator stands on the threshold between reality and dream in a reversal of Mansfield’s own comment above: in the narrative the city appears as a dream, in Mansfield’s comment it is the life in New Zealand that she wishes were imaginary and London the reality.

Multiple contrasts combine to create a *mise-en-scène* of ‘intoxicating madness’ where the city ‘whispers’ (79). The sounds and sights are mingled and contrasted: there is the ‘passing of many feet’, ‘lines of flaring lights’, ‘night music’, and ‘the sound of laughter, half sad, half joyous’, (79) creating a kaleidoscopic index of feelings and emotions. In a letter to her sister Vera in March 1908 Mansfield articulates how:

Flowers like Tom’s music seem to create in me a diving unrest – They revive strangely – dream memories – I know not what – They show me strange mystic paths – where perhaps I shall one day walk – To lean over a flower – as to hear any of his music is to suddenly [have] every veil torn aside – to commune soul with soul. (*L1*, 43)

The synaesthesia of sounds, sights of nature and the dream memories evoked come to symbolise Mansfield’s longing. The symbolic nature of the vignettes acts as an expression of an attempt at the ‘veil torn aside’, to express through a combination of senses the desires and dream sequences she speaks of but in doing so she expresses how boundaries are fragile. Dream is mingled with reality, senses are wrapped up within one another to illustrate the ‘intoxicating madness’ that the narrator feels. In the quotation Mansfield uses the term ‘soul’, while in the earlier quotation above in her letter to Tom Trowell the same concept is called ‘life’ (*L1*, 24). Throughout her notebooks and letters, she experiments with the semantic field of the self. She uses the word ‘mind’ (*CW4*, 247): on other occasions she chooses from a lexicon that she uses interchangeably, such as ‘one’s nature’ (*CW4*, 35) ‘inner life’ (*CW4*, 52), ‘oneself’ (*CW4*, 143), ‘other self’ (*CW4*, 310) or ‘a second you’ (*L2*, 350). The homologous way in which she uses the vocabulary resonates with her own level of understanding of a complex subject. The wide-ranging lexicon indicates the instability Mansfield exhibits in grasping at the meaning of the term ‘self’ and is rich in its evocation of a variety of perspectives from which she is trying to puzzle out the term. Her comment ‘I know not what’ articulates her continuing concern that she is in fact unable to grasp what the

self is. The vignettes are littered with uncertainty and the mixture of sights, sounds and the evocation of a cacophony of emotions signal this to the reader.

The narrative viewpoint in 'Vignettes: I' is interesting and innovative. It has a homodiegetic narrator whose offline perception (Jahn, 99), a fantasy where London speaks, is invoked for the reader. The narrative has two levels of focalisation: that of the external focaliser, the 'I', and also from within the fantasy a secondary level of focalisation, that of London itself as an internal focaliser. It is from the focal point of London that the men and women 'look at each other suddenly, swiftly, searchingly, and the lights seem stronger, the night music throbs yet more madly' (79). The voice, then, moves into the second person as London addresses the reader: 'Do you not hear the quick beat of my heart? Do you not feel the fierce rushing of blood through my veins?' (79). This, however, is filtered through the perspective of the external focaliser's fantasy. It is the 'I' of the narrative who imagines these questions and therefore they spring from the narrator's consciousness. This is an illustration of 'indirect representation of inner consciousness' discussed by Hanson and Gurr but here applicable to an earlier story (29).

In 'Vignettes: III' the homodiegetic narration is again subject to a dual viewpoint: that of the narrating self and the experiencing self. The narrating self reports how 'I have suffered' and is 'weighed down with the burden of past existence, with the vague, uneasy consciousness of future strivings' (81). Nevertheless, it is the experiencing self who wraps a blanket around the 'figure in a long, soft black frock' and who writes her future imaginings on a piece of paper, watching it become 'for a moment a bright light, and then a handful of ashes' (81), a symbol of the 'burden' and the 'future strivings' articulated as the narrating self. The dual aspect of this focalisation in both vignettes is innovative and signals Mansfield's very early ability to use some aspect of internal focalisation.

By contrast with the prismatic vision and sounds in ‘Vignettes: I’, ‘Vignettes: II’ opens with metaphors of silence as the narrator once again leans out of the window examining the horizon with its ‘suggestion, a promise’ (79). The oxymoronic descriptions of a child’s cry that is silent, the ‘gigantic proportions’ of the ‘sound like the call of the sea’ and the ‘hushed sound of the fountains’ (79) surround the narrator who is leaning from the ‘window in the tower’ hearing the ‘rose petals in the garden falling softly’ (79). This mirrors the vision of the ‘old castle’ where ‘the sweet body of romance lies – long dead’ (80) and is reinforced with the moat-like description of a ‘field of blue cabbages’ that shimmer ‘like a cold sea’ (79). The impression is of being trapped like Rapunzel or the Lady of Shalott tucked away from the bustle of the city. A musician walking home hums a tune that triggers a memory for the narrator of ‘a wave of vague, agitating, bitter, sweet memories [that] enwraps my heart in a darkness profound, inexplicable, silent’ (80). In its silence, the city now offers no tangible hope of escape from convention and instead the darkness revives the sadness of a memory. Perhaps in this second vignette, Mansfield evokes only memories of censure. This leads into the final vignette, in which the narrator steps out of the liminal space, draw[ing] the curtains across the window to shut out the weeping face of the world’ (80).

The evocation of the uncanny is triggered by the covering of the window, creating a ‘perpetual twilight’. Twilight itself is redolent of the liminal – neither daytime nor night as the earth is held briefly between the two. This brings the freedom of the liminal space into the room although it distorts it, eliciting its darker aspects, an ‘uncomfortable yet subversive condition’ (Drewery, 1-2). This becomes a ‘morbid charm’ for the narrator where ‘each possession of mine – the calendar gleaming whitely on the wall, each picture, each book, my cello case, the very furniture – seems to stir into life’ (80). Whilst the liminal spaces created by the windows of the first two vignettes offered ‘interludes of revelation in which the possibilities for protagonists’ subjectivity may be recognised but not realised’ (Drewery,

120), here this subjectivity is achieved through the uncanny. Freud summarises the uncanny as an

effect often [that] arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolises. (1919, 150-1)

At this intersection between fantasy and reality, the narrator considers the past and the future:

‘And I listen and think and dream until my life seems not one life, but a thousand million lives, and my soul is weighed down with the burden of past existence, with the vague, uneasy consciousness of future strivings’ (80-1). The narrator acknowledges that although these thoughts and sights are uncanny and ‘fall upon my soul like the grey rain’, she ‘cannot draw the curtain and shut it all out’ (81). Freud asserts that the uncanny arises as a result of repression

if psychoanalytical theory is right in asserting that every affect arising from an emotional impulse – of whatever kind – is converted into fear by being repressed, it follows that among those things that are felt to be frightening there must be one group in which it can be shown that the frightening element is something that has been repressed and now returns. This species of the frightening would then constitute the uncanny. (1919, 147-8)

This calls into question whether, if read as a sequence, the repression here is the sexual desire hinted at throughout, articulated towards the end of ‘Vignettes: III’ when the narrator says, ‘I watched her, and thought, and longed’ for the woman ‘in a long, soft black frock’ (81). The longing to be in the city, with its ‘intoxicating madness’ is also a longing to be where ‘convention has long since sought her bed’ so that the narrator may uncover her desires.

The scene is enveloped in synaesthesia as a ‘mignonette is piercingly sweet, and a cluster of scarlet geraniums is hot with colour’ (80). The narrator explores oppositions and subversions, as if trying them on for size to see how the world could be different, a metaphoric ‘groping to and fro in a foolish, aimless darkness’ (80). The narrator experiments with words, sounds, emotions and positions to test out the stability of these ‘boundaries and

binarisms' (Ascari, 2014, 34). It is a dream of wish fulfilment; that the world could be other than it is, and in that sense all suggestions of boundaries could be negated and acceptance of the 'other' or subversive may be possible. Encompassed in these vignettes is also Mansfield's yearning to return to London where there is the 'light of knowledge', exploring her longing and her concern over her sexuality through aspects of the liminal and the uncanny. These literary devices will be employed many times in narratives throughout her writing career and the poetic evocation of Wildean symbolism will soon give way to more adept handling of the perceptual and temporal aspects of a story, using free indirect discourse and focalisation in place of symbolism.

The restriction of social codes, particularly in relation to the subjectivities women are forced to adopt, was a preoccupation for Mansfield. In these vignettes her symbolism suggests entrapment for the narrator, and this is coupled with the subtle undertone of questions of sexuality and of the inherent feelings of iniquity that this gives rise to. In Mansfield's later fictional and personal writings, she will formulate opinions on the prescribed roles that women are forced to adopt and she takes the stance that women can often be complicit in this endeavour. She remarks:

Talk of our enlightened days and our emancipated country – pure nonsense. We are firmly held in the self-fashioned chains of slavery. Yes – now I see that they are self-fashioned and must be self-removed [...] to weave the intricate tapestry of one's own life it is well to take a thread from many harmonious skeins, and to realise that there must be harmony. (*CW4*, 91)

The symbolic imagery of the three vignettes would seem to comprise a musing upon the idea of this harmony. The images of darkness, the symbolism melding sounds and sights together, expresses the discomfiture of entrapment in New Zealand and also within the restrictions of social mores. In wanting to 'weave an intricate tapestry' Mansfield articulates a desire to have many experiences, spatially as well as artistically. Whilst this passage rings with Jamesian connotations of the stream of consciousness it also resonates with a youthful desire

to be ‘emancipated’ in a number of different ways: spatially, intellectually (to be amongst the intelligentsia of London – the ‘light of knowledge’ (79)) and, perhaps, sexually.

The next story I discuss, ‘In a Café’ (1907), shows that Mansfield turned toward satire in order to begin an exploration of social roles for women, a technique she would employ in many subsequent stories. Indeed, Kimber has argued that in ‘In a Café’ Mansfield ‘offers us a glimpse of the kind of writing [she] would develop as a mature artist, with its dialogue form exposing the personalities of the two protagonists, one of them clearly KM herself’ (2016, 213-4). From the Wildean symbolism of the early vignettes above, Mansfield begins to establish how satire can be used to undermine the ‘self-fashioned chains of slavery’ by showing up the hypocrisy underscoring patriarchy.

### **‘In a Café’ (1907)**

The genres of the late nineteenth century are not entirely cast away in Mansfield’s story ‘In a Café’, and although it has been seen as ‘something more skilfully made than anything she had done before’ (Alpers, 54) it ‘infuse(s) the symbolist structure of the vignettes into the form of the psychological sketch’ (Hanson and Gurr, 29). Published in the *Native Companion* in December 1907, the story features two protagonists, a man and a woman, who meet each day in a café for a discussion over lunch. In its structure, a brief interlude between two people, it stands almost as a prequel to later stories like ‘A Dill Pickle’ (1917) (see discussion in Chapter 6), and ‘Psychology’ (1920).

‘In a Café’ features a young woman who is ‘a pale, dark girl, with that unmistakable air of “acquaintance with life” which is so general among the students in London’ (*CWI*, 86) establishing from the outset the autobiographical undercurrents to the narrative. The woman, however, has ‘an expression at once of intense eagerness and anticipated disillusion’ (86). She is well read enough to believe that life is often ‘no longer complex, but a trifle obvious’

(86). This pretension, with a touch of intellectual snobbery, sets the tone for the narrative which becomes a tongue-in-cheek social commentary on gender roles.

The man is introduced as ‘slightly taller than she [...] but to her he walked in a great light, and she knew that genius had traced the laurel wreath round his brows’ (86). The hyperbolic nature of the description and the apotheosis exalts him to the rank of a god. This is coupled with her body language: ‘she with her elbows on the table, her chin in her hands, watching him while he talked’ (86) and exhibits the kind of enamoured mesmerisation of a woman in love. Nonetheless, the sardonic tone and the structural irony of the story (see discussion below), suggests that this is not felt but instead is an expectation of feeling. For example:

Sometimes he criticised the people. Then she would throw back her head, and make the most keenly witty remarks; but for the most part it was Art, Art, Art and youth, scarlet youth, and mortality and life, and the Ten Deadly Conventions – with a glorious irresponsibility, and intoxicating glamour. (86)

Whilst the first half of this extract is the voice of the narrator, the ‘perception, cognition, and thought’ (Jahn, 98) of the latter half seems to be that of a character but there are no ‘attributive signs’ (Bal, 162) to indicate which character’s consciousness these words spring from. The use of modal verbs (‘would’) suggest that this is a repeated verbal patterning engaged in often, and so it would appear to follow that the lexicon in the latter half represents a mutual understanding between the two students. Enveloped in their own intellectual importance and ‘irresponsibility’ they are in a position to play with ‘conventional’ roles and Mansfield uses them as players on the patriarchal field to expose the duplicity inherent in social relationships. The students adopt the ‘pose’ of Wilde’s quotation above, the ‘most irritating pose I know’ (*CW4*, 29).

As stated earlier in the chapter, aspects of the self and the concept that within all of us there may be an inner, truer self was a question to which Mansfield dedicated some of her

thoughts. 'In a Café' would seem to exemplify some of these musings, suggesting especially that artifice plays a significant role in our relationships with others. In Mansfield's later stories such as 'Prelude' (see discussion in Chapter 6), she will establish how the search for the inner, truer self can lead to heterogeneity and isolation, even amongst members of a family group, in particular in relation to the characters Linda and Beryl. The inner self, however, remains elusive and the subjectivities we adopt to function in society are often the result of pre-prescribed roles that can have lasting and detrimental effects for women.

Mansfield's sentiments in 'In a Café' have some affinity with James's ideas about the self and our adoption of multiple selves. As discussed earlier in the chapter, James records the self as a duality, 'the total self of me, being as it were duplex, partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject, must have two aspects discriminated in it' (1892, 42-3). James poses the notion that the self is an organic concept that 'changes as it grows and so the identity found by the *I* in its *Me* is only a loosely construed thing, an identity "on the whole"' from which we seek 'the true, the intimate, the ultimate, the permanent Me' (71). To add to this complexity, James identifies how 'a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognise him', (45) and that, 'from this there results what practically is a division of a man into several selves' (46). What this foregrounds is the self as a creative project, an artifice, as the quotations Mansfield copied into her diary would suggest. It also speaks to the self's fragility and mutability if one can adapt it to many social situations. Furthermore, whilst James explains this as 'many selves' in many social situations (1892, 45), Freud asserts that consciousness believes that the body has submitted itself to socialisation, emphasising that this is a form of self-deception, the wearing of a mask (1915, 3-9). What these theories seem to suggest is that life is artifice, 'simply a pose' as Wilde articulates above. 'In a Café' provides a good example of two characters who adopt such social posing in their interaction.

The conversation between the man and the woman centres around marriage. For the woman, this seems inevitable, a role already set out, although she wishes for ‘a little more certainty’ (87). Whilst she ‘imagined she read in his face all that had never been there for her, and never would be’ (87), her question ‘Do you think I shall ever marry?’ seems a tease. The sardonic tone of the narrative, its discussion of a vicar’s wife needing to make ‘tea and buns’, that he affirms is ‘not your vocation’ (87), indicates that marriage is not in fact her goal and her question gives rise to a dissonance between what is expected of her and what she wishes she could have. Mansfield provides a social commentary suggesting that despite the woman’s evident education and erudition, marriage is (or should be) her primary preoccupation. It would also suggest that her reading of his intention not to marry her: ‘she imagined she read in his face all that have never been there for her, and never would’ (87), is a question she has raised as a result of his proximity rather than his suitability as a marriage partner. He declares that ‘I certainly shall marry’ (87) and his certainty of the future is deliberately juxtaposed to her uncertainty, especially as she only ‘imagined’ his rejection of her. The sentiment expressed is a difference of expectation. Marriage means something different for a woman and a man. She expects it to be a life of drudgery, the ‘dispensing of tea and buns’ and therefore intellectual paucity; he believes that it ‘need not mean that’ (87), and both views are shown up as naïve particularly when he remarks ‘who could do better than marry a problem?’ (87).

The exploration of these pre-set roles and responsibilities is underscored by the modal verbs and speech forms of the text. The narrative is representative of a body of conversations rather than a single incident. It begins, ‘each day they walked down Bond Street together’ and is followed by a series of modal expressions such as, ‘she would throw her head back’, ‘he would say’ (86) representing a pattern of dialogues, a repeated refrain of discussion on these issues. It suggests a circularity of argument: they have discussed this before and will discuss

it again and again, each time coming to the same conclusion. The modal is evidence of possibility rather than reality and strengthens the sense of the dichotomy between what the woman wants and what is expected: what she wants is London with its 'adorable life' (87) and what she will probably get is marriage.

The violets that the woman carries, and eventually gives to the man, become symbolic of decadence (this motif reappears in 'The Tiredness of Rosabel', see discussion below). The conversation whilst discussing meaningful issues is, however, light and flippant. Purchasing violets is an extravagance for a student when she has to ask whether they can 'afford one portion of red currant jelly between us?' (87). The woman indulges a brief, momentary fantasy of marriage with this man (the 'danger of the conversation' [87]); the tone and register, nevertheless, undermine the subject matter. This is a game, a commentary on assigned roles and responsibilities. Marriage is a serious topic, a lifetime commitment and one that is inevitable for women but here this is subverted by the flippancy and arrogance of the two students. The woman says, 'I hardly see myself settling down to sentimental domesticity and discussing the price of mutton' (87), and the man's rejoinder is, 'marriage need not mean that'. The reader is left to question what marriage does mean: as neither have any experience the conversation seems naïve. This is a 'young person's eye view' of social mores and codes. Whilst later narratives (see discussion of 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' [1910], for example, in Chapter 3) will emphasise the detrimental nature of marriage for a woman, and even in some circumstances its violence, here we are treated to a sardonic view, a comic one in which the concept is merely played with, tossed around in the air for a while and then, like the violets, thrown away with a laugh. Here, Mansfield's mood is light, her touch sardonic, and the underlying currents waft towards her later stories that question the viability of prescribed roles and the effect they have on a women's sense of her 'self' (See for example, Linda in 'Prelude' or Vera in 'A Dill Pickle' [1917]). In this

narrative, the overall message seems to be no harm done as ‘she, too, laughed, and continued laughing all the way down the street’ (88).

As in the vignettes, London features again in ‘In a Café’ as a place of happiness and excitement where the woman says, ‘Oh! the infinite possibilities. Listen; can’t you hear London knocking, knocking?’ (87). This re-emphasises how the woman wants more than marriage in the future as she says herself, ‘I want and want things which are out of the question’ (87). However, her sense of her future self includes the ‘danger of the conversation’ and this is all part of the game, it is the danger that she enjoys, the ‘infinite possibilities’. It would be easy to link this to Mansfield’s personal situation and to suggest that what she expresses here – the ‘things which are out of the question’ – is her desire to return to London. Nonetheless, in examining Mansfield’s future writing this narrative relates closely to the issues she will raise in many subsequent stories; that women’s lives and prescribed roles prevent them from realising their potential. In later narratives Mansfield will reinforce how expectations for women problematise their sense of self and trap them within confined roles. In my discussion of ‘A Dill Pickle’ in Chapter 6, for example, I will show how the ‘infinite possibilities’ become unrealised for women, and as suggested above, ‘In a Café’ could almost represent a prequel to that narrative. The young woman here could easily represent the younger, more idealistic Vera of ‘A Dill Pickle’ whose dreams of travel go unrealised.

The game between the two protagonists continues, and the violets are exchanged with a whiff of ‘a subtle, unmistakable, joyous significance’, although in reality they represent merely a ‘sudden sentimental impulse’ (88). The juxtaposition of perspectives between the man and woman and the sardonic tone serve to underline the verbal duel they engage in, trying out the roles of sexually mature adults whilst they are infected with ‘scarlet youth’ (86). As the woman leaves, she ‘took a slip of paper from her pocket and wrote a date’ reminding us of the note written in vignettes about the future, burned to ashes in the fire.

Why the woman writes down a date, what date it is or what it signifies goes unarticulated and we can only speculate that it may be a plan for the future. As she goes outside, sees the violets in the gutter, a fleeting moment of anger and loss grabs her as ‘she felt herself grow white to the lips’. However, this is quickly dismissed as she ‘laughed, and continued laughing all the way down the street’ (88). Mansfield here seems to compress a range of emotions into this one moment. The throwing away of the violets represents a betrayal of the gesture of togetherness that seems to have been established inside the café. The casting away of the violets shows up the brittleness of this perceived togetherness but the woman’s reaction is equally brittle. She is initially shocked, although this quickly gives way to laughter, brushing off the shock. Mansfield’s use of emotion and anti-emotion is modernist, suggesting a betrayal of the self, a quick change from one stance or pose to the next and a refusal to let emotion rule. The reader is left with no finite conclusion about the relationship depicted in this story and I would argue that Mansfield uses this to represent the equally indefinite nature and changeability of the self.

The next story I will review below is ‘The Education of Audrey’ which also posits the self as a construct. Mansfield explores again how the self is indefinite and changeable, the result of a deliberate construction. For the main character, Audrey, this construct is fragile and easily dissipates in an exchange with an old lover, Max.

### **‘The Education of Audrey’ (1908)**

‘The Education of Audrey’ depicts a female singer going to visit a former lover, Max, whom she has not seen for four years. Kimber highlights how

[i]t is a displacement tale, where KM imagines herself in London, rich, happy and with the sort of musical and artistic friends she desired. KM is clearly Audrey, a singer, and the male protagonist, Max, an artist, is a make-believe version of Tom Trowell, with a touch of Rippmann thrown in for good measure. (2016, 239)

It begins with Audrey receiving a letter from Max, bidding her to visit him. It opens with Max's words, entreating Audrey to call on him, 'I have a thousand things to show you, and as many again to talk about [...] I'm hungry for you, here, this very minute with me' (*CWI*, 102). The lexicon is reminiscent of Little Red Riding Hood's wolf, hungry for the child sent by her mother to visit her grandmother and suggests that Audrey will be eaten, metaphorically at least, when Max devours her sense of self in his wish to return her to the childlike woman he loved four years earlier. It is a narrative exploring how fragile a woman's sense of self can be and introduces another idea: that we rely on others for that sense of self. Audrey's sense of self is shown to be as much a construct as the selves of the students in 'In a Café'.

The narrative begins inside Audrey's room, where she 'stood by the open window' (102) and her excitement is represented in the scene outside, which is 'full of sunshine', 'singing' and flowers that Audrey would like to 'bury her face in' (102). Liminality is employed that is both spatial and temporal. By examining the world outside the window, Audrey suspends her excitement at receiving the note from Max and allows herself a moment of reflection on it. The liminal experience also stretches the time it will take her to return the 'wire' he has asked her for. Already having 'looked daggers' (102) at Max at a concert and ignored him in a restaurant, she wishes to project nonchalance towards him. Drewery indicates how 'incursions into the liminal state invariably reveal profound conflicts of identity' (12) and for Audrey this is poignant. The letter from Max is disruptive, bringing his space into hers, indicated by her 'faint flush' on reading the note a second time.

The structure of the narrative is used to provide contrast and to augment our understanding of the fragility of Audrey's sense of self. Audrey becomes an internal focaliser, the scene outside the window becomes the focalised and the description is reflective of Audrey's excitement. She sees 'shining, waving palms', a boy singing in a

'rough, vigorous voice' carrying 'the fragrant dainty blossom' (102). As Audrey cannot smell the flowers from her window, the olfactory experience is imaginary. All of the senses combine in a cacophony of sights and sounds coloured by Audrey's mood. When Audrey enters Max's flat later in the narrative she will again become an internal focaliser, seeing his room as 'full of gloom' (103) and 'quite dark' with 'silver rain beat(ing) softly upon the windows' (106). The transition between the external narrator as focaliser and Audrey as focaliser is swift and allows the reader access to Audrey's inner processes as her mood colours the scene. However, Mansfield still relies upon the use of attributive signs or reporting clauses by the external narrator (Bal, 162), such as 'she watched' (102) suggesting that her grasp of this technique in this early story is tentative.

Mansfield strengthens her attempts to reveal Audrey's sense of self by making use of a mirror as a literary motif. In her room, Audrey speaks to her mirror image: 'We'll go, my dear, and enjoy ourselves' (102). Jenijoy La Belle's revealing work on the role played by mirrors in women's self-conceptions gives some insight into Mansfield's use of the mirror in this short story. La Belle highlights how mirror scenes often reveal 'an intimate and significant relationship between the mirror and a woman's conception of what she is [...] creating the self in its self-representations to itself' (2). This suggests that both the inner and outer self are represented in the mirror; both subject and object. In Jamesian terms, Audrey sees both the 'Me' and the 'I', the self as a duality (James, 42-3). Hankin has argued that Mansfield's 'ability thus to divide and personify aspects of her own psyche would appear to be a natural outcome of her habit of conversing with the 'mirror face', of seeing herself, in effect, as two separate people. Audrey is a similarly divided personality' (1983, 49). Although the notion here is of the self as a dualism, I would contend that Audrey does not represent two separate people, but two separate selves of one person. These selves are interdependent, one objective, one subjective.

Later in the narrative Audrey's confidence in her sense of herself as the successful singer will be destroyed by Max and the idea that her conceptualisation is fragile is indicated here when she has to reassure herself by addressing the objective self of the mirror image. Her actions confirm James's assertion that the self is a 'loosely construed thing' (1892, 71). In a moment of structural irony, Audrey celebrates how 'I am the happiest woman on this earth [...] I have youth – oh, divine youth [...] and my beautiful voice, and freedom, absolute liberty' (102-3). This becomes ironic when Max later suggests that Audrey is not only youthful ('you have not spent one atom of the gold of your youth' [106]) but repeatedly asserts that she is in fact only a child ('you are still walking along the little road of childhood' [106]). As Audrey uses her youthfulness to reassure herself, Max will use it to destroy her sense of self completely.

Mansfield illustrates how fragile Audrey's sense of self is by showing how it is contingent upon her own subjectivity. Audrey relies on the reassurance provided by the perceived objectivity of the catoptric (mirror) experience. La Belle refers to the mirror as oxymoronic, 'a mode of figuration or figuring forth an image which, like metaphor, is inscribed with both identity and difference' (La Belle, 42). This is the duplicitous nature of the mirror image: it is both subject and object but being at the same time neither, and in that sense it represents a liminal space whose power of reassurance is delusionary. Mansfield here suggests that for Audrey the inner and outer selves are mutually dependent. The mirror therefore represents a polarity: both the inner and outer self, both of James' knower and the known (1892, 42), whilst questioning whether Audrey is assured of her own sense of either.

Cherry Hankin further argues that '[t]he mirror face was literally a reflection of the separation of personality into two distinct selves; into the ego and the alter ego; into the self who wilfully engaged in daydreaming, and the self who stood aloof, observing and criticising' (1983, 51). However, the narrative seems to advocate that the two selves, rather

than exhibiting separation, intermingle, existing within one another. Audrey, prompted by a child skipping past her, laments how it is uncomfortable to ‘possess a spirit that persists in hoop-bowling at my mature age, when the flesh must plod the pavestones of convention’ (103). La Belle emphasises how ‘since the self is never fully achieved, it is necessary to look in the glass to see how one is doing in the process of constantly reinventing the self’ (17). This would indicate, as James does above, that the ‘loosely construed’ nature of the self allows not separation but blurred edges. Audrey is able to simultaneously feel youthful, wanting to hoop-bowl, whilst projecting a sense of self to the world that ‘plod(s) the pavestones of convention’ (103).

Hankin’s biographical reading of Mansfield’s ‘ability thus to divide and personify aspects of her own psyche’ (1983, 49) mentioned above is, however, notable in relation to this story, and provides a useful link between ‘Vignettes I, II and III’, ‘In a Café’ and ‘The Education of Audrey’. In a diary entry of 1907 Mansfield remarks: ‘I lean out of the window – the breeze blows, buffeting and friendly against my face, and the child spirit, hidden away under one thousand and one grey ‘City wrappings’, bursts its bonds & exalts within me’ (*CW4*, 59). She reiterates Audrey’s point that within us there are multiple selves, or versions of oneself, one of which retains the playfulness of childhood. Mansfield relates this here to the city and to a liminal space. It is while she leans out of the window that she is able to release the ‘child spirit’ that is trapped under the ‘City wrappings’, metaphorically the conventions of an adult existence.

Drewery argues that liminality is ‘a state antithetical to structure’ (34) and here the city stands in for that concept of structure, both metaphorically as it represents the boundaries of patriarchy, and also literally in its formulated and regulated design. The city in the vignettes and in ‘In a Café’ is exalted as a place of excitement and possibilities and here is adopted as a site of entrapment. The ‘loosely construed’ nature of the self is adeptly

reflected in the liminal, a non-place where the 'City wrappings' are undone, linking the child like spirit of Audrey to the city space she inhabits. It is whilst walking through the city streets that she makes her observation that she is unable to act like the child hoop-bowling, the city metaphorically trapping the 'child spirit' within her (103). In Mansfield's later story, 'Bliss' (1918) this suppressed child-like spirit will reappear as Bertha Young expresses a desire to 'bowl a hoop' (*CW2*, 141). The connection between the stories serves to show how Mansfield re-uses imagery that best illustrates her own understanding of the self, whilst also suggesting that these early thoughts continued to be of importance to her in later life.

Audrey is still in an exultant mood when she arrives at Max's house saying, 'I am bringing you summer!' (103). She provides Max with a history since their parting four years earlier and this sets off a verbal power game between them. Max delights in her story until she reveals that his leaving her has launched her career saying, 'I owe you!' and asking him 'can it ever be repaid?' (104). At this, Max's mood shifts as he 'faced her swiftly' (104). Audrey speaks to him in hyperbolic rhetoric, using figurative language more fitting to a story:

You must have been tossed upon the very sea of passion, and if you can escape free in body and soul, there lies before you such a wide, wind-swept waste of freedom, such promise of happiness in this freedom that you run forward, your arms outstretched to take the whole world into your embrace. (105)

Audrey's apparent confidence in her sense of herself as a successful singer is undermined by the hyperbolic language as if she is justifying her status to herself rather than to Max. He is dismissive of her confidence and mocks her with her own rhetoric saying, 'how can the laughter of a mere man disturb the freshness of your wind-swept spaces?' (105). When Audrey admires a portrait of herself, he remarks that he was 'a little off-colour' (105) when he painted it and he quickly establishes himself as the worldlier, the more knowing. His need to assert his own sense of self, ironically, would suggest that it is as fragile as Audrey's.

The liminal space of the window provides a spatial link between Max's flat, Audrey's home and the fragility of her sense of self. Audrey looks out of the window in Max's flat and instead of the sunshine of her earlier reflections she sees 'it is pouring with rain' (106) and she 'trembled so much she could not fasten the collar' of her coat. She remarks to Max, "'Do you know how I feel?'" She said painfully – "as though my philosophy was a thing of sunshine and daylight – and, it is raining now. You have made me believe Max that I have been playing with life'" (106). Audrey's words foreground the idea of the self as a construction, a creative activity that she has indulged in. It also speaks to the reliance on others for a sense of self and that this sense is easily threatened.

The self as a construction is underpinned by the ending of the narrative, despite its appearance of finality. Max declares that Audrey's 'experience of life is based upon [...] a little literature and a great deal of morbid imaginings' and that if she is to 'realise one's nature perfectly' she must no longer walk 'the little road of childhood' (106). This Audrey accepts with her final entreaty, 'teach me, Max' (107). However, the sense of self that Max asserts as Audrey's truer one, the one that must exercise 'slavish obedience' in order to 'become an artist' is merely his construction of her. Monika Fludernik confirms the link between construction of the self and relationships with others, arguing that 'identities cannot be upheld without the cooperation of others' (261). Audrey's sense of herself relies upon Max's cooperation, as Fludernik argues, releasing her from her past self and his acceptance of the confident singer she now wishes to project to him. His rejection of this offering means that her sense of self quickly dissipates. Mansfield exaggerates the reliance on one another for a sense of self in order to show the brittleness and threat that go with such relationships. Audrey cannot maintain her sense of self when faced with Max's determination to return her to being the woman he knew four years ago.

This story serves to show how Mansfield illustrates the fragility and mutability of the self and how she develops narrative techniques to achieve this. As in James's theory, Mansfield shows how the self is not a fixed structure but an organic entity subject to the delicate nuances of personal perception and contingent upon reification provided by others. In the final story I consider, 'The Tiredness of Rosabel', Mansfield builds on the narrative techniques outlined in the stories above, specifically beginning to experiment with free indirect discourse as a method of allowing access to inner thought processes.

### **'The Tiredness of Rosabel' (1908)**

'The Tiredness of Rosabel' is the story of a millinery assistant travelling home after a day's work and reflecting on her day. When she reaches her flat she sits by a window and fantasises about a life of riches and marriage. Although written in June 1908, unlike the other stories discussed in this chapter, it was not published in Mansfield's lifetime. I have included it in this chapter, however, because it provides an interesting example of Mansfield's early attempts to recount inner consciousness by focalising the narrative viewpoint. I will show how Mansfield achieves this by repeating her use of liminality, which is evidenced as a site of unfettered cerebration for a character, giving rise to fantasy of an alternative existence. I will also signify how this relates to her figuration of the self of Rosabel, and how '[t]he text communicates an overwhelming sense of how draining the world is and how stifling other people can be to one's sense of self' (Meghan Marie Hammond, 94).

The narrative opens with the statement that the purchase of 'a bunch of violets [...] was practically the reason why she had so little tea' (*CWI*, 133). For Rosabel, this immediately establishes her poverty and provides a syntactical (and symbolic) parallelism with the story 'In a Café', where violets represented an exchange between the man and woman, something seemingly endowed with significance which is later disregarded. As such

they come to represent the relationship between the two students. For Rosabel, they represent a sacrifice, flowers instead of food but form part of her fantasy later in the narrative. They reappear as a symbol of love and wealth in Rosabel's fantasy of her alternative life; 'Harry bought her great sprays of Parma violets, filled her hands with them' (136). In reality, they represent Rosabel's poverty, being the cheapest flowers one could buy. The violets also provide a link to symbolism of nineteenth-century literature and the psychological sketches discussed above, as purple violets are often depicted as a symbol of love.<sup>8</sup>

Mansfield's narrative schema in 'The Tiredness of Rosabel', however, does not confine itself to the psychological sketch of the nineteenth century but instead pioneers the modernist techniques she would later become celebrated for (Wilson, 2014, 209). I would like to return to Hanson and Gurr's comment about the stylistic features of this story, to open a dialogue on how Mansfield's use of focalisation in this narrative is evidence of a growing appreciation of techniques which could engender a realistic impression of the female self.

Hanson and Gurr summarise how

[t]he story is conducted almost entirely through what can most accurately be returned indirect representation of inner consciousness. She does not use interior monologue proper, a direct transcription of a character's thought processes, or even the illusion of it. Her 'interior monologue' is indirect, stylised, filtered through third person, past tense, syntactically conventional narration. (29)

If I take Gerard Genette's ideas about 'mood and voice' (186) as a starting point, much of 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' is about the mood of Rosabel, whilst the voice is more often the narrator's, supporting Hanson and Gurr's point that there is 'indirect representation of inner consciousness'. This passage is a good example:

Rosabel looked out of the windows; the street was blurred and misty, but light striking the panes turned their dullness to opal and silver and the jewellers' shops, seen through this, were fairy palaces. Her feet were horribly wet and she knew the bottom of her skirt and petticoat would be coated with black greasy mud. There was a sickening smell of warm humanity – it seemed to be oozing out of everybody in the bus. (133)

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<sup>8</sup> See for example 'The Language of Flowers', Smithsonian Botany Library (2018).

On the bus home Rosabel sits amongst her fellow passengers staring out of the window. With the appropriation of another liminal space in a narrative, Mansfield allows the character a momentary interlude of the 'other', and here Rosabel's fantasy takes her from the dirty world 'where she felt almost stifled' to a place of wonder and beauty. In this passage, there are explicit perception indicators, narrative reporting clauses that guide the reader ('Rosabel looked'; 'she knew'), and the statement that the shops 'were fairy palaces' suggests that we have been given access to Rosabel's inner consciousness, her 'offline perception' (Jahn, 99) or the narration of fantasy or memories.

The movement back into the narrator's perspective is swift and subtle, 'her feet were horribly wet and she knew', and then the focalisation becomes again 'delegated' (Bal, 162) to Rosabel, and the 'sickening smell of warm humanity' seems to be an olfactory experience narrated directly from her consciousness, the people around her the focalised objects of her vision. Bal expresses how 'when the external focaliser seems to "yield" focalisation to a character focaliser, what is really happening is that the vision of the character focaliser is being given within the all-encompassing vision of the external focaliser' (161). This is not 'internal monologue proper' as Hanson and Gurr point out, and is instead the expression of the focalised objects as Rosabel perceives them, through the focalisation of the external narrator, delegated to Rosabel.

Later in the story the distinction between narrative viewpoints becomes more important when the description of the day's events is focalised through Rosabel. In this instance, the focalisation adopts a further level where the focaliser becomes both Rosabel in the present (the narrating self) and Rosabel in the past (the experiencing self). Again, Mansfield employs liminality as a site of autonomy to permit psychological insight. Rosabel 'pulled the blind up and put out the gas, it was much more restful, [...] knelt down on the floor, pillowing her arms on the window sill' (134). From this vantage point the narrating self

is able to launch a fantasy of riches and marriage, triggered by the narration of the day's events from the experiencing self's point of view. The passage begins

She began to think of all that had happened during the day [...] a girl with beautiful red hair and a white skin and eyes the colour of that green ribbon shot with gold they had got from Paris last week. Rosabel had seen her electric brougham at the door; a man had come in with her, quite a young man, and so well dressed. (134)

Again, the focalised, 'that green ribbon' and a man 'so well dressed', has the hallmarks of Rosabel's perception, although in this instance it is the narrating self who colours the description which is overlaid on top of the original perception of the experiencing self. In the liminal space of the window Rosabel is reflecting on the day's events as they have occurred to the experiencing self, and the liberating effect of the liminal space allows her the creative freedom to manifest her fantasy. It has already been established on the bus journey that Rosabel has creative faculty, evidenced by her ability to conjure the 'fairy palaces', although this is grounded in what is probably a familial love of fairy tales.

Rosabel's imaginative ability also signifies her poverty as she imagines the street from the bus as Venice:

Westbourne Grove looked as she had always imagined Venice to look at night, mysterious, dark; even the hansoms were like gondolas dodging up and down, and the lights trailing luridly – tongues of flame licking the wet street – magic fish swimming in the Grand Canal. (134)

In a much later narrative, 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' published in 1920, Mansfield uses creative imagination and fantasy to illustrate how confining the daughters' lives have been as they attempt to create a fantasy of delivering their father's watch to their nephew in Ceylon (see discussion in Chapter 6). A lifetime's lack of freedom means that they have no real perception of anything beyond their own parlour, and this has a direct effect on their own sense of self and of their future. The fantasy they each create is symptomatic of that effect and comical in its execution. Here, Rosabel's fantasy of the streets looking like Venice is equally symptomatic of her poverty. Her understanding of Venice probably comes from

cheap magazines or from her customers talking of their adventures, as she cannot have had any real experience of it herself. She has no more claim to veracity in her description of Venice here than the girl on the bus has of a 'voluptuous night' (133), or the daughters can have had experience of life in Ceylon.

The fantasy Rosabel summons in the liminal space of her bedroom window is equally misappropriated, partly from the fictional narrative read by her fellow passenger on the bus, of the 'girl with lovely white shoulders' (133 and 136) and partly from the handsome young man's treatment of her in the shop. He asks her: 'Ever been painted?' and his voice carries 'the slight tinge of insolence, of familiarity' (135). His question reduces her to an object and in spite of Rosabel's reaction as the experiencing self, answering him 'shortly', Rosabel the narrating self cannot help but acknowledge 'how handsome he had been!'. As she remembers, she has to 'push[ed] the hair back from her face' because 'her forehead was hot' (135) indicating her flush of excitement and sexual arousal, as she imagines 'if those slim hands could rest one moment!'. This free indirect discourse leads the reader into Rosabel's fantasy of becoming his girlfriend, adorned with riches and his love. Wilson has argued that '[a]lthough Rosabel's dreams and illusions are subordinated to the reproduction of male-dominated stereotypes of female luxury and privilege, Mansfield's representation of fantasies of an alternative dream-identity is innovative in its privileging of a transformed female subjectivity' (2014, 209). Mansfield's use of the liminal space of the window for Rosabel's fantasy speaks to the confining nature of her life, allowing her freedom of expression only in this space. She is recognised 'only as a body, specifically an attractive one, which serves to drive home her invisibility as a feeling entity' and this forces Rosabel to 'retreat into the privacy of her own mind to seek redress' (Hammond, 95). Fantasy is the only opportunity that Rosabel has to imagine a life, and a self, as the rich, loved woman.

Liminality also provides spatial and temporal unity to the narrative through the image of stairs and mirrors. In the shop the girl asks Rosabel to try on a hat and Rosabel turns to the mirror to put it on, seeing herself momentarily as the rich girl able to afford the luxurious item. This image reappears in her fantasy when she ‘would sit down before the mirror, and the little French maid would fasten her hat’ (136). In the fantasy, the mirror provides a reification of the self that Rosabel adopts, transported from her reality into her fantasy. Within the fantasy, Rosabel provides us with a glimpse of ‘the reciprocal interchanges between interiority and exteriority as these create what a woman is to herself and to her culture’ (LaBelle, 9). It is the experience in the shop, Rosabel’s exterior identity, that is the impetus for the fantasy, conjured from interiority in her unconscious day dream. This also provides spatial connectivity between Rosabel’s flat (fantasy) and the shop (reality). Furthermore, Rosabel’s sense of self is firmly established throughout the narrative as the poor shop girl who is acutely aware of culture and social class, though in many instances she separates herself from that class. On the bus she does not identify herself as one of the others all wearing ‘the same expression, sitting so still’ (133) and yet this is exactly what she is doing. In her fantasy she has a maid who carries up her hatbox, a butler to open her door, (136) and as much as this signifies the status she wishes to achieve, it nevertheless acknowledges her lack of intention to rid everyone of the bounds of servitude, only herself. Whilst Hammond has argued that ‘The Tiredness of Rosabel’ is ‘largely to do with the imaginative processes that work in response to class consciousness’, Rosabel’s engagement with this consciousness does not extend to democratisation but rather to better herself.

Stairs also provide spatial and temporal links between Rosabel’s fantasy world and that of her reality. In a letter of 29<sup>th</sup> July 1921, Mansfield expresses how

stairs do fascinate me when I think of it. Waiting for people – sitting on strange stairs – hearing steps far above, watching the light *playing* by itself – hearing – far below the door, looking down into a kind of dim brightness, watching someone come up... *Must* put them in a story though! People come out of themselves on

stairs – they issue forth, unprotected. And then the window on a *landing*. Why is it so different to all other windows? (*L4*, 256)

Stairs offer liminality, a situation where one is between the everyday goings on of the ground floor, and the possibilities of the upper floor. Here Mansfield suggests that stairs offer the opportunity to wait for those below whilst hearing those above, giving one access to both worlds and their associations simultaneously, whilst actually being a part of neither. From this vantage point she submits that we ‘issue forth, unprotected’ allowing one to ‘come out of themselves’. Stairs feature on all three time-frames in ‘The Tiredness of Rosabel’. Rosabel has to ascend four flights of stairs to enter her flat, she must ‘run up’ (135) to get the hat for the girl in the shop; and in her fantasy the hatbox must be carried upstairs in the day scene, and in the evening Rosabel ‘went upstairs to dress’ (136). In each instance, a transformation takes place. In her flat, Rosabel carries up the stairs the images of the ‘fairy palaces’, the ‘magic fish swimming in the grand canal’ incorporating fantasy into her reality. Sprung from this and from the images of the day’s work in the shop, is the fantasy of herself as a rich lady. In the shop, the ‘run up’ the stairs results in Rosabel trying on the hat and transforming herself in the mirror image into a rich lady. Finally, in the fantasy upstairs in her bedroom Rosabel transposes the ‘opal and silver’ (133) of the bus window panes to ‘white tulle over silver, silver shoes, silver scarf, a little silver fan’ (136).

At the end of the narrative, Rosabel ‘slept and dreamed, and smiled in her sleep, and once threw out her arm to feel for something which was not there, dreaming still’ (137). The fantasy day dream of the day passes over into Rosabel’s dreams. Freud distinguishes the dreams of night time from day dream by establishing that at night asleep we believe our dreams to be real, in the day the day dream is merely a conscious creative activity, a deliberate construction of something wished for (Freud, 1913, 62). Rosabel’s day dream, then, establishes a link with some of Mansfield’s early thoughts on the self, that it is ‘simply a pose, and the most irritating pose I know’ (*CW4*, 29). By creating a life for herself as

someone else, a kind of impersonation, Rosabel ‘tries on’ (*LI*, 17) another life, an activity Mansfield herself found so fascinating.

## **Conclusion**

It is noticeable from a number of diary entries and letters written between 1903 and 1909, that Mansfield was concerned with issues of the self and attempted to puzzle out some of those issues in these early stories. What also becomes clear from reading Mansfield’s diaries and letters of this period, is the desire to return to London, to be in the city that is the ‘light of knowledge’ (79). This desire also manifests itself in the stories discussed here, the city symbolised at once as a place of ‘infinite possibilities’ (87), and equally a place that entraps one’s sense of self in a metaphor of silence or bound by one’s class status.

The literary quotations copied into Mansfield’s diary mark a starting point from which to examine the stories she wrote during this period, and each of the quotations appears in some way in the stories I have discussed. In her early explorations, Mansfield may have found comfort in the words of others, particularly Wilde, to express her thoughts, appropriating them and using them as a springboard from which to produce narratives that reflect on the enigmas they present. Her industry as a writer was then to decipher how she could manipulate the tapestry of a narrative to produce fiction that could offer some response to those enigmas. In the stories appraised in this chapter, Mansfield’s artistry has included use of liminality, the uncanny, symbolism and synaesthesia. She has also begun to explore the possibilities of perspectival filters (Jahn, 94) and how the focaliser in a narrative can be used as a manipulating agent to access, and show to the reader, some inner thought processes.

The 'Vignettes I, II and III' are framed by liminal spaces, each one taking place on the edge of a window and from this vantage point, the homodiegetic narrator considers the city. The liminal is used as a site of cerebration for a character, an opportunity to let the imagination roam freely over inner desires and to express them through the synaesthesia of multiple senses. This mixology serves to symbolise the narrator's apparent 'intoxicating madness' (79). Darkness in the city is used as a symbol of freedom, where 'convention has long since sought her bed' (79), although it is equally engendered as a place of entrapment in Vignette II, trapping the narrator in a metaphorical castle.

The narrative structure of the vignettes is innovative despite its apparent simplicity. The 'offline perception' (Jahn, 99) of the homodiegetic narrator of 'Vignette I' provides focalisation on two levels: the narrating self of the narrator, and the personification of the city which 'speaks' to the narrator. The personification of the city is within the narrator's fantasy and springs, therefore, from the narrator's consciousness. The vicarious expression serves to add another layer to the liminality of the experience. The narrator, experiencing the momentary freedom of the liminal space, then covertly expresses inner desires through the 'voice' of the city. That voice is once removed from the level of narration, distancing the homodiegetic narrator from what is expressed.

In the third vignette, the twilight created by the covering of the window shuts out the liminal and exchanges it for the uncanny. This creates a space in which the lines between fantasy and reality are blurred, offering freedom of expression of a different kind. The synaesthesia suggests that the narrator wishes to imagine how a world could be, with many contrasts and subversions. Mansfield achieves a dual aspect of focalisation again in this vignette in the dichotomy of the narrating and experiencing selves of the narrator, this time through an 'offline perception' of analepsis.

In my discussion of 'In a Café', I considered how the use of modal verbs delivers a verbal patterning, a repeated conversation of which this day represents a typical exchange. Whilst much of the text is reported dialogue, there are instances where the lexicon would suggest interiority, adopting the discourse of the two critical students, allowing Mansfield to express inner thought indirectly. Once again, the focaliser is the external narrator but the adoption of the rhetorical style of the students suggests a momentary 'delegation' of the perception to one of them. Furthermore, the use of modal verbs adds to the perception of the scene as staged which underscores the commentary of life as a pose, acted out for others. 'In a Café' serves as an interpretation of life, gender roles and expectations, as a series of creative stances adopted and then discarded.

Whilst in 'In a Café' the students 'try out' roles for themselves that are revealed to be false, Audrey in 'The Education of Audrey' is a character whose sense of self is brittle and easily threatened by an exchange with a previous lover. The characters in 'In a Café' explore different roles tentatively and the narrative tone is sardonic. Audrey, on the other hand, tries to maintain her persona and this story anticipates later narratives like 'Miss Brill' where a character's sense of self and its destruction is hurtful. In 'The Education of Audrey' nevertheless, the fragility of the self is dissected and again Mansfield employs the liminal, and also a mirror motif, in highlighting how Audrey requires constant reassurance of her sense of self. Audrey examines both the inner and outer self by exploring the subjectivity and parallel objectivity of her mirror image. The outer self is revealed as a construct that relies on the verification of others, and this is quickly destroyed as Audrey accepts the judgement of Max in his assessment of her. Mansfield adopts Audrey as an internal focaliser and this colours much of Audrey's description of place, underlining her sense of initial confidence in her self and finally in the revelation of her self deception.

In the final story, 'The Tiredness of Rosabel', there are layers of focalisation beginning with the external focaliser, the narrator. The perception is delegated to Rosabel but on two distinct levels: that of Rosabel as narrating self, and of Rosabel as the experiencing self. With each case, however, the focalisation is not acute in the sense that it is a stream of consciousness narrative; it is instead the focalised scene as the subject of Rosabel's perception, whilst the narrative voice remains that of the external narrator. The liminal space of Rosabel's window serves as a place from which she has unfettered access to her own fantasies, which begin in her day's work and are transformed by the journey home, the journey itself having the transformative effect of a liminal space.

Whilst each of these narratives could be related to Mansfield's life in some way, and some of the material is clearly drawn from her experiences, they are equally valuable as examples of Mansfield's efforts as a writer to turn those experiences into meaningful exploration of aspects of the self. What links these stories together is the use of fantasy, the liminal and Mansfield's attempts to structure the narrative with mobile perspectives that shift into and out of the perception of the characters. In each of these stories Mansfield exploits these techniques to reveal aspects of the self, whether it be to explore it as a pose or role, or to imply its mutability. Mansfield's techniques, particularly in attempting to give the reader access to inner consciousness, are underdeveloped in these stories. In her endeavour to use focalisation for example she relies on perception indicators ('she thought' for example) but it is possible to envision in these early stories how Mansfield's constant determination to try out different techniques would lead to the more adept handling of narrative perspectives, focalisation and free indirect discourse that she achieves in the later stories.

In the next chapter I will move forward to the period in which Mansfield published in the *New Age*, reviewing the relationship between Mansfield, A. R. Orage, the editor of the *New Age*, and his partner and co-editor, Beatrice Hastings. This period marks the first

publication by Mansfield in book form, *In a German Pension* (1911), and I will assess Mansfield's continuing exploration of the self in the stories of this volume.

## Chapter 3

### **‘A frantic desire to write something really fine’: Stories in the *New Age* 1909 to 1911**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter 2, I examined some of Mansfield’s earliest stories along with her diaries and letters from the period 1903 to 1909. I highlighted how Mansfield’s engagement with issues over the self in her personal writing is reflected in some of those early stories. From these preliminary stories it is also evident that Mansfield had a keen desire to exploit narrative structures in order to explore aspects of the self. In this chapter, I will continue the chronological analysis of Mansfield’s fiction writing examining the period between 1909 and 1911, to survey the development of her narrative techniques and how this relates to her aims for capturing the female self in fiction.

#### **Mansfield’s life between 1909 to 1911: disruption and writer’s block**

The disruption of Mansfield’s life between 1909 and 1911 seems to have generated a period of writer’s block; writing in her diary, in 1909 she describes how she has ‘a perfectly frantic desire to write something really fine, and an inability to do so which is infinitely distressing’ (*CW4*: 103). The unsettled nature of Mansfield’s life at this time could account for her experience of a temporary check on her creative output. There was a marriage, two pregnancies, visits to Brussels, Bavaria and Geneva, and several house moves in London which included a brief spell of living with the editors of the *New Age* magazine, A. R. Orage and Beatrice Hastings. Having achieved her goal of returning to England, Mansfield was now trying to get a foothold in literary London, seeking an outlet for her writing. In 1909, Mansfield’s mother took her to Wörishofen, Bavaria. Initially they stayed in a hotel but when her mother left, Mansfield moved to the Pension Müller where she suffered a miscarriage

after lifting her trunk on to the top of a cupboard. Despite the disquiet of her life, Mansfield remained dedicated to her writing, and her visit to Bavaria resulted in her first collection of stories, published in 1911 as *In a German Pension*. Her ‘frantic desire to write something really fine’ (*CW4*, 103), however, speaks to Mansfield’s need to perfect her writing, and her ‘inability’ as she phrases it, could have resulted from her own exacting standards as well as the turmoil of her life. Extant diary entries and letters from this part of Mansfield’s life are notably limited, as she destroyed almost all records from this period, and those that remain give little voice to her efforts to develop her writing at this time.

In February 1910 Mansfield sent a short story to the editor of the *New Age* magazine, A. R. Orage, at the suggestion of her then husband, George Bowden<sup>9</sup>. After the recent events of her life, and the expressions noted above about her writer’s block, Mansfield’s courage in sending in the story was rewarded and Orage accepted it, encouraging her to produce more. The *New Age* was a magazine that had ‘established its position as one of the most important weeklies of the time’ (Todd Martin, 120) and was a ‘key site for recognising the dialogic formulations at work within early modernism in Britain’ (Faith Binckes, 8). In his introduction to Volume 6 of the *New Age*, which began in November 1909, Sean Latham outlines how the magazine managed to successfully bring together ‘the work of cultural luminaries with contributions from a motley collection of lesser known writers, thinkers and activists’ (Latham, 2012a). Mansfield, it seems, had been introduced to a literary establishment with a diverse portfolio of writers. This ‘motley collection’ was recruited and managed by Orage, whose editorial flair would have some bearing on Mansfield’s development as a writer between 1910 and 1912.

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that ‘husband’ refers to her few hours of marriage to George Bowden whom she left on the day of their wedding.

Orage purchased the *New Age* magazine with Holbrook Jackson in 1907<sup>10</sup>. His editorial policy, as explained by John Carswell, was that ‘unknowns were delighted to see themselves in print, and even the famous would provide copy if they were allowed to say exactly what they liked’ (36). The affectionate nickname the ‘no wage’ stands as testament to Orage’s persuasive ability, drawing writers who were prepared to publish for no fee. The *New Age* could count amongst its contributors authors such as George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc and Arnold Bennett. It introduced to the world Ezra Pound, Edwin Muir, T. E. Hulme, Dylan Thomas, Herbert Read, and of course, Mansfield herself.

Whilst Mansfield did not write exclusively for the *New Age* in this phase of her artistic career, it has been noted that ‘her apprenticeship at the *New Age* was crucial to her development as a writer’ (McDonnell, 16), and her contributions are indicative of a writer ‘struggling to find a new fictional idiom and structure’ (Latham, 2018b). Indeed, between 1910 and 1912 Mansfield contributed to the magazine poems, pastiches, letters to the editor, parodies and prose poems, along with her short stories (McDonnell, 17). Whilst McDonnell comments that Mansfield’s contributions to the *New Age* could be considered an ‘apprenticeship’, the exact nature of this ‘training’ is difficult to quantify. Carswell remarks how ‘Orage took immense trouble with his new story-writer, and there is no knowing how much those first stories owe to his tutelage’ (Carswell, 59). Martin further asserts that

Orage’s consideration in dealing with young writers, many of whom had never before appeared in print, is one of the most important aspects of his editorial methods [...] no contribution was rejected without some indication of its faults and virtues [...] he obtained from the contributors the best work of which they were capable. (1967, 48)

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<sup>10</sup> The funding for the magazine actually came from George Bernard Shaw and Lewis Alexander Wallace (Carswell, 33). It is important to note that Lewis Alexander Wallace would become (unwittingly) instrumental in Mansfield’s life, when her reading of his book, *Cosmic Anatomy and the Structure of the Ego* (1921), would contribute to her decision to go to the Gurdjieff Institute at Fontainebleau. It is likely, as he was a regular contributor, that she met him in the offices of the *New Age*.

It would seem that Orage's editorial policy included a certain element of mentoring or coaching and it is clear that Mansfield learned much from joining the *New Age*. That being said, Mansfield was writing for other magazines at this time<sup>11</sup> and could equally have absorbed aesthetic guidance from the intellectual and literary environment she now found herself in. Although as Martin contends, it was the 'individual attention that Orage gave to countless writers, correcting their prose, sharpening their minds, suggesting themes and methods of treatment congenial to their particular abilities' that is notable (1967, 59).

Whilst there is no certain evidence that Orage had any direct influence on Mansfield's writing, being in a new literary environment with an eclectic mix of contributors Mansfield was in a position to absorb new ideas and writing skill. Indeed, looking back upon her early writing life in 1921, Mansfield wrote to Orage revealing to him: 'you taught me to write, you taught me to think; you showed me what there was to be done and what not to do [...] yours in admiration and gratitude' (*L4*,177). By 1921, Mansfield was very ill with tuberculosis and the feelings towards Orage expressed here could be interpreted as a need to ameliorate any animosity that had passed between them in the intervening years. Her withdrawal from regular contributing to the *New Age* in 1912 had been far from amicable, although she did return to the *New Age* to publish some short stories in 1917 (for a full discussion of the move to *Rhythm* see Chapter 4).

Mansfield's relationship with Orage, and his co-editor and partner, Beatrice Hastings, was both professional and personal. Mansfield lived with Orage and Hastings briefly in 1910, and the relationship between Hastings and Mansfield has been considered a kind of 'tutelage', with Hastings having some influence over the subject matter of Mansfield's stories

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<sup>11</sup> 'Mary' (1910) was published in *Idler*, 'A Fairy Story' (1910) was published in *Open Window*.

(Gray, 2004, 221). In my discussion of Mansfield's stories below, I consider where there may have been connections between the work of Hastings and Mansfield at this time.<sup>12</sup>

Orage's relationship with Mansfield extends beyond his place as editor and publisher of her work and it is important to note here how his passion for mystical modes of thought played a part in her decision to go to the Gurdjieff Institute in 1922. Gerri Kimber has discussed Mansfield's own 'deep fascination with the Orient and its traditions' and how this 'eventually linked up with her attraction to Ouspensky and Gurdjieff' (2016, 11). Orage would be instrumental in that process, sending Mansfield's husband, John Middleton Murry, a copy of *Cosmic Anatomy and the Structure of the Ego* (1921), the digestion of which would be partly responsible for Mansfield's decision to go to Fontainebleau at the end of her life.

Before taking up his editorial role at the *New Age*, Orage had established himself as a spellbinding orator (Robert Scholes, 2018), delivering lectures at the Theosophical Society in Leeds where he later established the 'Plato Group'. Phillip Mairet describes the group as 'a small informal society, which was in origin and effect a circle for the reception of Orage's expositions of Platonic philosophy' (16). Interested in mystical and esoteric ideas, the group led Orage to the 'Bhagavad Gita and introduced him to the Mahabharata – vital and permanent influences in his mental life' (Mairet, 16). As the editor of the *New Age*, Orage had the opportunity to introduce discussion of philosophy and psychology in order to 'bring art, economy, and esotericism into a public harmony' (Beekman, 329). Orage's interest in mysticism earned him the title of 'the Mystic of Fleet Street' (Beekman, 578) and in 1907, he published his own extended essay entitled *Consciousness: Animal, Human and Superman*. This work provides a 'general framework for psychology, the *cadres* of which are here and

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<sup>12</sup> I consider the relationship between Beatrice Hastings and Mansfield further in my paper: Louise Edensor. "'Une Profession de foi pour toujours": Katherine Mansfield and Beatrice Hastings in France', in *Katherine Mansfield's French Lives*, edited by Claire Davison and Gerri Kimber, Leiden: Brill, 2016, pp. 23-39.

there already pregnant with suggestions of the psychological discoveries of the next quarter of a century' (Mairet, 17).

The stories discussed in this chapter will illustrate how Mansfield continued during this period to experiment with narrative voice, utilising this experimentation to extend her dialogue around representation of the self that had begun in her earliest stories. The paucity of diary entries and letters for this phase of Mansfield's life is an unfortunate lacuna, although she may have continued to achieve some expansion and digestion of her ideas on the self in her personal writing. This chapter will review four stories from this period: 'Germans at Meat' (1910), 'At Lehmann's' (1910), 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' (1910) and 'The Swing of the Pendulum' (1911). Each story has been chosen as a good example of the way that Mansfield was working at this time, particularly in her endeavours to pay attention to the structural aspects of a narrative and how this can be choreographed to allow the reader some access to the inner consciousness of characters. For example, although still using perception indicators, Mansfield makes use of both focalisation and free indirect discourse to allow access to characters' inner thought processes. She also controls the points at which the reader is given access to these thoughts (see discussion of 'At Lehmann's' for example) so that ambiguity about a character's motives can be realised. In the discussion below, I will illustrate with examples how Mansfield makes use of focalisation and free indirect discourse in her attempts to represent the female self.

In this chapter, I draw on a range of academic studies including some early studies from the 1980s and 1990s that are most relevant to my discussion. Until recently, there has been little scholarly attention paid to Mansfield's early stories, and this allows for a reinterpretation of Mansfield's fiction of this period particularly drawing on the most recent publications of Mansfield's diaries, letters and the creation of a database of little magazines<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'The Modernist Journals Project' available from Brown University. Available at <http://modjourn.org/>.

from the early twentieth century, that were not available previously. I begin my discussion of the stories, with a review of *In a German Pension* of 1911. This is followed by an examination of the four stories detailed above; interwoven, where applicable, with some of the writings of Orage and Hastings to illuminate any links that may have been evident when Mansfield contributed to the *New Age*.

### ***In a German Pension (1911)***

Many of the stories collected together in *In a German Pension* had already been published in the *New Age*.<sup>14</sup> Mansfield later rejected this collection, however, writing to her husband in February 1920: ‘I cannot have the German Pension republished under any circumstances. It is far too immature & I don’t even acknowledge it today. I mean I don’t “hold” by it. I can’t go foisting that kind of stuff on the public – *its not good enough*’ (L3, 206). Notwithstanding this statement, she did later concede to its republication provided that she could ‘write an introduction saying it is an early work’ because ‘it’s nothing to be proud of’ (L3, 218). Mansfield’s hesitation here relates to her tighter grasp of narrative technique by 1920 but could also be representative of a concern over misinterpretation. When Mansfield discussed her writing with Orage at Fontainebleau she expressed how ‘my old stories have come to look different to me, but life itself looks different. I could not write my old stories again, or any more like them’ (1924, 4). Kate Fullbrook has highlighted how ‘after World War I, the stories were open to simple nationalist readings that could identify the Germans alone as guilty of the abuses she savages’ (Fullbrook, 53). She describes the *German Pension* collection as a ‘bête-noire’ characterised by a style that Mansfield ‘outgrew’ (52).

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<sup>14</sup> Of the thirteen stories in the collection only three were newly published stories: ‘The Advanced Lady’, ‘The Swing of the Pendulum’ and ‘A Blaze’.

More recent scholarship has indicated how Mansfield ‘was ‘packaged’ as a chronicler of German life at a time at which it could only be profitable to do so’ (McDonnell, 33), and that ‘she capitalised on local tendencies of nationalism and anti-German sentiment’ (Martin, 2013, 78). As Latham argues, the *New Age* was operating within a ‘market-driven culture’ after all (2012b) and *In a German Pension* would, therefore, seem to be apposite to the *zeitgeist* of pre-war Britain. The *New Age* was a political and social weekly magazine that ‘became a vehicle for independent and competing discussions of German life, culture and politics, as well as much else, including cross-cultural articles on avant-garde art and literature’ (Isobel Maddison, 45). Mansfield’s experience in Bavaria placed her in a unique position to marry together the elements of politics, culture and social comment in the *German Pension* collection. Martin argues that *In a German Pension* ‘reveals a greater complicity with the Empire’ because Mansfield had ‘accepted the notion that England was the seat of culture [...] and longed to be part of what she perceived was the dominant cultural milieu’ (2013, 77). My discussion of Mansfield’s earliest stories in Chapter 2, illustrating how Mansfield longed to return to London in 1908 as the ‘light of knowledge’, supports Martin’s point (*CWI*, 79). Viewed in light of these comments, Mansfield’s hesitation over the stylistic features of the collection has some traction, although the collection can also be perceived as having cultural, social and literary relevance.

Maddison has recently argued that *In a German Pension* ‘reflect[s] a typical and complex process of distillation in which imagination, topicality, literary influence, context and editorial input combine’ (50). Martin also points out how the stories ‘reveal the hegemonic influences on Mansfield, but many of the stories in the collection provide a corrective, subverting the dominant cultural perspective of the English’ (2013, 78). Mansfield’s stories, then, represent her absorption of both editorial mentoring and political discourse in the *New Age*. The *New Age*, whilst political, was careful to provide balanced

argument (the ‘competing argument’ of Maddison’s point above) and favoured satire as a vehicle for such conversation. In his ‘Readers and Writers’ column in 1913, Orage defends the use of satire:

To profess that satire is dead, or even dying, today is to confess a thorough-going ignorance of the new currents of critical thought. Practically every writer of any originality is now a satirist in private if not in public; and the number who are publishing is growing. (1913, 234)

Mansfield’s *Pension* stories fed into Orage’s ‘critical thought’ by adapting satire as a medium to provide a social commentary that both panders to, and subverts, current discourse around the Germans and Germany.

In my discussion of the stories below I begin with ‘Germans at Meat’ published in 1910, which is a good example of Mansfield’s manipulation of satire and narrative perspective to subvert, and therefore demean, common stereotypes by using the idea of the self as a construct.

### **‘Germans at Meat’ (1910)**

‘Germans at Meat’ depicts a conversation over a meal between the narrator and the German guests at the Pension. The conversation revolves around food; the Germans are depicted as crude, vulgar and greedy, the narrator as typically ‘English’, naïve and, at times, overawed by the Germans’ remarks. Sylvia Berkman discusses how ‘[c]haracter is drawn with quick strokes through excellent dialogue and compressed minor action’, additionally arguing that the first-person narrator is intrusive as ‘[t]he reader is constantly distracted by the supercilious British voice condemning the gross stupidity of German Burgher life, which is already sufficiently condemned by the very harshness of the presentation’ (42). More recent scholarship, however, has pointed to the uncanny nature of the characterisation of the

narrator, highlighting how ‘the text cultivates a feeling of familiarity and sympathy with the first-person narrator which consistently, but erratically, gives way to a sense of her strangeness and animosity: an uncanny dynamic, then, shapes our reading’ (Andrew Harrison, 54). This extends to our understanding of the ‘supercilious British voice’ of Berkman’s comment in so much as the nationality of the narrator is never clearly defined but in fact becomes part of the ‘pose’ (see discussion below).

Building on Harrison’s point, I would argue that the uncanniness arises from the gap between the two selves of the homodiegetic narrator depicted in the narrative. In Chapter 2, I examined stories that foreground the concept of the self as a construct, a deliberate pose or role (see discussion of ‘In a Café’ and ‘The Education of Audrey’). In ‘Germans at Meat’, Mansfield muses upon this interpretation again and uses it to address both the stereotyping of the Germans and the pressures placed on women under patriarchal regimes. She presents a narrative that is dual layered; the narrator as external focaliser and the narrator as experiencing self, and also as an internal focaliser, who is a deliberate construct of the external narrative voice. The ‘supercilious British voice’ seems to be a pose, evident from the self-conscious control mechanisms placed in the text. Mansfield uses the idea of the construction of this experiencing self within the narrative to attack typical stereotyping of the Germans.

From the outset, the narrator establishes that she is playing a role, acting in a stereotypically English way which panders to the expectations of the other guests. The narrator begins for example, “‘how interesting”, I said, attempting to infuse just the right amount of enthusiasm into my voice’ (*CWI*, 165). The attempt to ‘infuse just the right amount of enthusiasm’ sounds like an actor trying out a role in a rehearsal. This is a deliberate endeavour by the narrator as character to express sentiment that is expected by the other guests at the Pension. Initially, this could represent the narrator’s desire to ‘fit in’

(Martin, 2013, 84), although it could also signal the narrator presenting a persona, the role of the English female guest at the Pension. The use of a dual narrative voice, both the narrating self and the experiencing self, provides a commentary on the stereotyping of the Germans in Britain at the time of publication.<sup>15</sup> The focalised become the Germans, perceived from the internal focalisation of a deliberately constructed persona. The narrative voice therefore, exists on two levels: the external narrative voice, overlaid with the internal focaliser of the 'posed' English persona.

Whilst on the surface the detail would suggest that the Germans are vulgar and crude, the layering of the narrative in this way allows for irony in that depiction. The narrator simply acts out a typically stereotyped conversation between the Germans and an 'English' lady, to undermine the hackneyed depictions of the Germans. This may be the reason that, as Fullbrook points out, the stories were open to 'simple nationalist readings' (53). It would also explain the uncanniness of the stories. The reader is unable to get a firm grasp of the narrative voice with the presentation of both the narrating self and the experiencing self simultaneously.

Harrison argues that

we are left wondering whether this central consciousness in the stories is a vulnerable female outsider, retaining her privacy to protect against the aggressive nationalistic and sexual forces at play in the Pension, or whether she deliberately manipulates her acquaintances in order to exert and maintain power over them. (53)

The idea that the narrator 'manipulates her acquaintances' is interesting and suggests that it is the fact that the narrator is female that allows for that manipulation, granting the narrator agency. Harrison's suggestion of this manipulation could be based on Mansfield's images of women as manipulators in other stories. In many of Mansfield's narratives, women have little

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<sup>15</sup> See for example, the satirical 'Prophetic Paragraphs VII' in the *New Age*, vol. 6, no. 13, 27 January 1909, 300. Available: <https://library.brown.edu/pdfs/1140813900781395.pdf>.

agency but on occasion she shows how women can use their femininity to gain some advantage. For example, in 'A Cup of Tea' (1922) Rosemary Fell seduces her husband into allowing her to buy the box she wants; in 'New Dresses' (1912) Frau Binzer resorts to similar persuasive techniques to prevent an argument over the purchasing of expensive material (see discussion in Chapter 4). In 'Germans at Meat', the nomenclature adds to the notion that the female narrator is engineering the responses from the German man. He is aptly named Herr Rat which translates into English as advisor or counsellor. The narrator allows Herr Rat to believe he is instructing her, thus manipulating his perception of her.

Mansfield's narratives have often been viewed as presenting 'notions of the self [...] in forms consistently resistant to definition' (Gray, 2011, 81) and Harrison's point above would seem to support this opinion. The exchange between the narrator and Herr Rat provides a good example. The narrator remarks, 'he fixed his cold blue eyes upon me with an expression, which suggested a thousand premeditated invasions' (165). This comment offers two levels of interpretation: that the narrator is being objectified by Herr Rat and is therefore in danger of his unwanted attentions; or that this is simply the perception of the internal focaliser in an ironised dialogue. A caricatured reading would suggest the former, evidenced by the discourse of war and the depiction of a German man with a huge gustatory appetite that extends to women from whom he has 'had all I wanted [...] without marriage' (165). Of course the focalised is the German man, the focaliser is the narrator playing the role of the naïve, 'English' lady. It is through this constructed self that the narrative is focalised. The vocabulary is then that of the constructed self, the 'cold blue eyes' and the 'premeditated invasions', adding subjectivity to the encounter. The fact that his eyes are 'cold', or that he is insidious, is simply the perception of the internal focaliser. Because this voice is a construct the narrative becomes ironised: the voice is simply 'playing out' the expected dialogue of a

typically 'English' person averse to the Germans, and therefore, showing up that it is erroneous.

The revelation that typical representations of Germans are hackneyed is also addressed by allowing the Germans in the narrative to stereotype the so-called 'English' narrator. The widow says to the narrator, 'but you never have large families in England now; I suppose you are too busy with your suffragetting' (166) suggesting that all women in Britain are represented by the suffragette movement. The narrator, in her constructed role, contributes towards her own caricature with phrases like, 'Ah, that's one thing I can do,' said I, laughing brightly, 'I can make very good tea' (165), again a stereotypically English occupation. Beneath this commentary on the 'tit-for-tat' stereotyping, however, is the subtle undertone of a commentary on patriarchal values and their damaging effects. Herr Rat's remark that he has had 'all he wanted from women without marriage' (165), is used both as a comment on the vulgar, greedy appetites of the Germans as represented in caricature, and also as a social expression of the dangers of patriarchal values for women. It is ironic that a set of rules established by his own sex, that relations outside of marriage are forbidden, is broken with impunity and with a flourish of pride in his voice.

The construction of the English self extends to the expected but make-believe husband. When asked about her husband's favourite food the narrator simply replies, 'I really never asked him; he is not at all particular about his food' (167). Again, this is a pose deliberately antithetical to the Germans who have been depicted as gluttonous. Gluttony is also used euphemistically as a reference to sexual appetite. This will be repeated in 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', where the bride is depicted as an 'iced cake all ready to be cut and served in neat little pieces to the bridegroom' (see discussion below) (*CWI*, 186). Nonetheless, it provides a subtle undercurrent that a woman alone must invent a husband to feel secure. Herr Rat asks the narrator if she will visit Munich because '[y]ou have not seen

Germany if you have not been to München [...] all the Art and Soul life of Germany are in München' (166). The irony of suggesting that a woman should travel alone is implicit in this conversation, Herr Rat having already established how he has seduced women outside of marriage. It is interesting to note that Munich will reappear in 'The Little Governess' (1915) as a place where a young woman will be led astray by a predatory older man (see discussion in Chapter 5).<sup>16</sup>

Mansfield's achievement in this story then, is to manipulate the narrative perspective by adopting two focalisers: the omniscient narrative voice and the internal focaliser of the constructed English pose. This allows for a questioning of stable interpretations of race and of patriarchal values. Harrison has articulated how '[t]o respond fully to these early stories we must recognise their capacity to undermine our interpretative complacency; they show us how language itself is always likely to reveal the foreign in the familiar' (60-1). Writing of the uncanny elements of the narrative, he argues that the reader is unable to grasp with any certainty the exact nature of the narrative voice. I would propose that this is a deliberate attempt to show up the unstable nature of the self and our ability to construct a persona. It highlights our tendency or our determination to construct a persona where one does not exist. This chimes with William James's theory that we 'have as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion [w]e care[s]' (1890, 294). In 'Germans at Meat' this idea is illustrated by creating a satirical narrative that attacks typical depictions of the Germans through the dialogic exchange between the English internal focaliser and the Germans at the Pension. Pamela Dunbar has argued that 'the discourse is double, and again it is on the figurative level that the narrator, generally worsted in open conversational skirmish, gains her victories' (21). It is through the 'pose' of being inferior,

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<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that Mansfield's story points to the regionality of its depiction. Mansfield was unfamiliar with Germany, having only travelled to Bavaria for a few months. Bavaria is shown as typically conservative and Catholic in the sentiments expressed in this story.

both as female and as 'English', that the internal focaliser is able to provide irony, acting up to the expectations imposed on her.

In establishing an internal focaliser as a deliberate construct of the narrative voice, the relationship between the reader and that narrative voice is manipulated. Harrison further argues that our sense of affinity or sympathy with the narrator is undermined:

The text cultivates a feeling of familiarity and sympathy with the first person narrator which consistently, but erratically, gives way to a sense of her strangeness and animosity: an uncanny dynamic, then, shapes our reading of the volume. (54)

On the surface, the narrator's self-construction as English appears to reinforce the opposition with Germans when in fact Mansfield is undermining it. We read the narrator's subtextual 'premeditated invasions' (165) on one level but are simultaneously made aware that they are subject to irony. We cannot, of course, be sure that this is her position or that in fact she does reinforce the stereotypes, and this speaks to the nature of the self as equivocal. For Harrison, the narration and narrator seem uncanny according to Freud's explanation of the uncanny as the unfamiliar in something that had once been familiar (1919, 124). This may also account for why the volume was rejected by Mansfield; that she felt concern that the volume as a whole would be misinterpreted and read on a superficial level. As I argue above, though, when with Orage at Fontainebleau Mansfield expressed how her early stories no longer fitted with the 'pattern' of life as she now experienced it (Orage, 1924, 4).

'Germans at Meat' is characterised by uncertainty, asking the reader to question established stereotypes about both women and nationality. The unfamiliarity and, as Harrison suggests the uncanniness of the narrator seek to underscore this reading by creating an ironical distance between the narrator as external narrative voice and the internal focalisation of the 'English' pose. This in turn allows for a questioning of the self as a construct. In the next story I discuss below, 'At Lehmann's', uncertainty is again exploited in the rendering of

a young female encountering her first sexual experience. Mansfield deliberately creates an unstable narrative space in order to highlight how this mirrors aspects of the self.

### **‘At Lehmann’s’ (1910)**

‘At Lehmann’s’ depicts a young woman who works in a shop observing the events around her as preparations take place for the birth of her employer’s forthcoming baby. She has a brief encounter with a Young Man<sup>17</sup> which places her in a position of danger and he sexually assaults her. Some scholarly interpretations of this story examine it as a narrative that ‘looks closely at the intersection of psychology and biology in men and women’s reactions to women’s fertility’ refusing ‘to see women as agents of reproduction’ (Fullbrook, 57). More recent scholarship has analysed this story as one among others in the volume that is framed by ambiguity, establishing ‘our uncertain response to a young girl who seems curiously suspended between childish and adult identities’ (Harrison, 58). In my discussion, I build upon this recent approach to discuss how the narrative voice is orchestrated to bring about the ambiguity of the self in Sabina, the main character.

Sabina is depicted from the outset as young: ‘Pink colour still flew in her cheeks; there was a little dimple on the left side of her mouth that even when she was most serious, most absorbed, popped out and gave her away’ (*CWI*, 178). She also attends to her work ‘with that magical child air about her, that delightful sense of perpetually attending a party’ (179). This is reinforced by the ambiguous phrase: ‘Certainly Sabina did not find life slow’ (178). Slow in the sense that she has much work to do but also hinting at the ‘fast living’ of someone who is ‘perpetually attending a party’. She is, however, overworked and carries out the work that others can foist upon her, ‘Anna blessed that dimple. It meant an extra half-hour in bed’ (178). As the youngest of the workers (she ‘was new to her work’, 178) she has

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<sup>17</sup> The capitalisation of ‘Young Man’ is copied verbatim from the text.

to get up first, and very early, as she ‘groped her way downstairs into the kitchen’ in the dark still half asleep. Sabina is exploited as the youngest staff member and the narrative sets out to secure the idea that this will be the pattern of her life; first because of her youth, and then as a married woman who bears children.

Although there is an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator who reports Sabina’s thoughts: ‘He was the son of a butcher – a mean, undersized child very much like one of his father’s sausages, Sabina thought’ (178), the narrative moves between consciousnesses allowing the perspective to be given briefly to Sabina, focalising the goings-on in the shop.

For example:

Frau Lehmann’s bad time was approaching. Anna and her friends referred to it as her ‘journey to Rome’, and Sabina longed to ask questions, yet, being ashamed of her ignorance, was silent, trying to puzzle it out for herself. She knew practically nothing except that the Frau had a baby inside her, which had to come out – very painful indeed. One could not have one without a husband – that also she realised. But what had the man got to do with it? So she wondered. (179)

The use of euphemisms for the Frau’s confinement (‘bad time’, ‘journey to Rome’) suggests that Anna, who had ‘grown so fat over the summer’ (178), may have little understanding herself and Sabina’s shame at being ignorant leaves her in good company. It also highlights the need to capture these issues within a lexicon of ignorance rather than understanding. There is no ‘real’ discussion of the pregnancy or of childbirth, except where wrapped in symbol or indirectness and when the Frau is tucked away upstairs out of sight. The Frau has been confined to life upstairs because her husband says she ‘looked unappetising’ (179). The semantic field of food is (as in ‘Germans at Meat’ discussed above) evocative of the consumption of women; inherent and natural, but also redolent of greed and, therefore, sinful. It once again equates men with appetite and women as those who must satiate those appetites. In ‘At Lehmann’s’ this theme is extended to muse upon the consequences of those appetites for the women of the household, the ramifications of looking ‘unappetising’.

The narrative perspective is delegated to Sabina as focaliser and it is her inner thought process that orientates the narrative viewpoint. Perception indicators are still prevalent ('she knew', 'she realised', 'she wondered') although Mansfield manipulates the narrative texture to incorporate Sabina's voice, highlighting for example that the birth process will be 'very painful indeed' (179). The delegation of the narrative perspective, as Mieke Bal terms it (162), to Sabina and the forthcoming event as the point of focalisation, allows for the sense of ignorance and shame at that ignorance, to be accentuated. The narrative pivots around the paragraph above, establishing from this point onwards the frame of reference within which subsequent events will unfold. Jahn has designated this frame of reference as 'apperception' (101), an individual focaliser's subjective experience of events. Sabina's 'apperception' guides the way that she will interpret the overtures of the man in the café, placing herself in danger through her ignorance but also responding to her own sexual impulses that she little understands. Using Sabina as focaliser, but only at certain points in the narrative, controls the reader's view of events as they unfold.

Whilst the Frau is confined upstairs, Sabina works in the shop below serving a Young Man. Sabina experiences sexual desire for the first time but is unable to comprehend what it means (see discussion below). Sabina is unlikely to have received much schooling from her mother on sexual matters, and in the shop these matters are cloaked in mystery. It is interesting to note that Hastings, co-editor of the *New Age* and Mansfield's friend, was much concerned with issues of female education. She published a number of articles and works of fiction attacking women's ignorance and commenting upon issues of childbirth. Writing as Beatrice Tina in July 1909, she published a pamphlet entitled 'Woman's Worst Enemy: Woman', in which she describes women as 'doubly cursed, both with original sin and with

the penalty of maternity' (Gray, 2004, 197).<sup>18</sup> This had been preceded by a short, serialised novella entitled 'Whited Sepulchres' in which she depicts the marriage of a woman, Nan, who is ignorant of sexual matters. In the story, Nan's mother has little to offer in terms of marital advice, simply telling her that

marriage is not romantic at all in actual fact. There is a great deal of – er – disagreeableness to be encountered, and probably much pain, but you must put up with it. It is natural and ordained by Providence. It is the lot of all women, and I'm afraid, you will find Thomas just as exacting as other men. There my dear, I hope you understand me. I speak for your good. (1909, 35-6)

Hastings considered childbirth 'the ugliest fact in human life' (1908, 169), causing 'much pain' as in the quotation above. Mansfield's story 'At Lehmann's' would seem to fit squarely alongside Hastings's writings in the *New Age*, and both Hastings's biographer, Stephen Gray and one of Mansfield's biographers Antony Alpers, have asserted that Hastings had some influence over Mansfield's writing during this period.<sup>19</sup> However, the affinity noted here may simply have been a consequence of their friendship. Indeed, Mansfield did not meet Hastings until February of 1910 when she first approached the *New Age*. 'At Lehmann's' was published in July 1910 but could well have been written any time during, or after, Mansfield's sojourn in Bavaria between June 1909 and January 1910. It is documented that the two women did enjoy a close relationship, but equally at times a volatile one. They had much in common: both were colonials (Hastings was from South Africa, although she had been born in the UK) and both had lost a child. They were each, then, acutely aware of the horrors of childbirth and its implications for unmarried women. Hastings had been married twice, and during the time Mansfield contributed to the *New Age*, Hastings was Orage's

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<sup>18</sup> The text of 'Woman's Worst Enemy: Woman' is out of print and the author was unable to obtain a copy. The references to it here come from Beatrice Hastings's biographer, Stephen Gray.

<sup>19</sup> Alpers remarks that 'At Lehmann's' and 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' were 'probably the consequence of "female" sessions with Beatrice Hastings' (116). Kaplan further asserts that Hastings 'helped Mansfield to see where [her writing] needed shaping and emphasis' (142). Stephen Gray concludes that 'Hastings was unquestionably the woman writer with the most power to affect the development of Mansfield in finding her own voice' (208).

lover. Mansfield's knowledge of the horror of childbirth then, informs the story of Sabina observing the act of childbirth.

The relationship between the two women may have been more symbiotic than has previously been claimed. In Chapter 2, I discuss this diary entry of Mansfield's from 1908:

I feel that I do now realise, dimly, what women in the future will be capable of achieving. They truly, as yet, have never had their chance. Talk of our enlightened days and our emancipated country – pure nonsense. We are firmly held in the self-fashioned chains of slavery. Yes – now I see that they are self-fashioned and must be self-removed. (*CW4*, 91).

Writing under her pseudonym, D. Triformis in May 1910, Hastings would offer a similar sentiment: 'physical freedom may be given from without. Mental freedom must be begotten from within [...] our own minds must free us since our own minds enslave us' (1910, 29). Despite the similarity in sentiment offered above, Mansfield's and Hastings's only known collaboration in print was an entry in the *New Age* entitled 'A.P.S.A.' ('A Pleasant Sunday Afternoon'), published as a letter in 1911. It is a parody of the writing styles of several contemporary fiction writers. Of this piece, McDonnell has remarked that it 'provides an implicit, albeit exaggerated and parodic, judgment on Edwardian literary convention' and is 'implicitly located within the development of a modernist aesthetic in terms of renegotiation of narrative technique' (39). Nevertheless, as McDonnell argues, by 1911 Mansfield 'was beginning to distance herself [from the *New Age*] with her formal experimentation' (39). Whatever relationship Mansfield and Hastings had enjoyed between 1910 and 1911, it floundered when Mansfield began writing for *Rhythm* at the end of 1911.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the affinity noted between Hastings and Mansfield cannot be considered proof that their relationship was one characterised by tutelage, but more likely simply a meeting of minds.

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<sup>20</sup> Mansfield did see Hastings again in 1915, staying with her when she travelled to France. For a discussion of that meeting and a continued commonality in their writing output see Louise Edensor. "‘Une profession de foi pour toujours’: Katherine Mansfield and Beatrice Hastings in France", *Katherine Mansfield's French Lives*, edited by Claire Davison and Gerri Kimber, Leiden, Brill, 2016, pp. 23-39.

Sabina's ignorance in 'At Lehmann's' reflects a dearth of openness surrounding matters of marriage, sex and childbirth extending to her inability to understand her own feelings. The narrative voice conveys her thoughts when she sees the Young Man for the first time: 'She thought she had never seen anybody who looked so strong' with 'his restless gaze wandering over her face and figure [giving] her a curious thrill deep in her body, half pleasure, half pain' (180). This is reminiscent of Rosabel in 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' (discussed in Chapter 2), who thinks of the man in the shop as handsome, despite his objectification of her: he says for example, 'You've got such a damned pretty little figure' (135). But Rosabel responds not with indignation but with, '[h]ow handsome he had been!', and as she remembers she has to 'push[ed] the hair back from her face' because 'her forehead was hot' indicating her flush of excitement and sexual arousal, as she imagines 'if those slim hands could rest one moment!' (135). Rosabel's innocent encounter is mirrored here, although where Rosabel's feelings are patterned by her fantasy, Sabina's encounter with the man in the shop is depicted as real. The description of her feelings as 'half pleasure, half pain' adds a touch of irony and is a warning: that the sexual act may be pleasurable (the 'curious thrill') but what follows will certainly be painful, both emotionally and physically: shame, and then the pain of childbirth.

Throughout the narrative the juxtaposition of innocence and experience and what Kaplan has termed 'scenic simultaneity' (1991, 138), is used to reinforce the opposition:

She wanted to look at him again – there was something about him, in his deep voice, even in the way his clothes fitted. From the room above she heard the heavy, dragging sound of Frau Lehmann's footsteps, and again the old thoughts worried Sabina. If she herself should one day look like that – feel like that! Yet it would be sweet to have a little baby to dress and jump up and down. (180)

Perception indicators are used such as 'the old thoughts worried Sabina' but the sound of Frau Lehmann's footsteps become an aural stimulant for free indirect thought: 'If she herself should one day look like that – feel like that!', but Sabina's apperception of motherhood

involves an idealised understanding of what having a baby would be like. The diction moves into that of a very young, naïve woman as the heterodiegetic narrative voice recedes and allows the reader to penetrate Sabina's inner monologue. The juxtaposition of reality (Sabina's feelings and emotions towards the man) and fantasy, the idealised perception of motherhood, provide Sabina with an ambivalent positioning between adult and child. She responds to sexual impulse like an adult, but the consequences of that response she can only imagine in childish terms.

Mansfield will later engage in this kind of innocence and experience juxtaposition in 'The Little Governess' (see discussion in Chapter 5), where a young woman is placed in a position of danger resulting from her lack of knowledge about men and their likely motives. In the later narrative the manipulation of the narrative texture to reveal inner consciousness is more adeptly handled, and here Mansfield's ability to toy with the innocence/experience dichotomy is represented through 'scenic simultaneity', as Sydney Janet Kaplan claims (1991, 138), which is at times clumsy and transparent. The footsteps above Sabina take place at the exact moment when she seems to want to give way to her sexual impulses; this then runs parallel with a shift in the narrative perspective, the heterodiegetic narrator delegating the voice to Sabina. The passage begins with Sabina's perception of the man, his 'deep voice' and 'the way his clothes fitted' and then returns to the narrative voice. Finally, free indirect discourse plunges the reader into Sabina's thoughts so that the fantasy of the bouncing baby can be realised. The outcome of these shifts in perspective and the evocation of sights and sounds simultaneously, allow for the juxtaposition of innocence (the bouncing baby) and experience (the 'old thoughts') to be achieved. Using Sabina as focaliser permits the events to be subject to her 'cognitive and emotional orientation' (Rimmon-Kennan, 80) as the reader catches glimpses of her sense of self and her inability to grasp it as the child or the adult woman.

There is a further link with 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' when the Young Man asks Sabina, 'How would you like to have your picture taken that way?' (181). This reminds us of Rosabel's encounter with a young man in the milliners, asking if she has '[e]ver been painted?' and his voice carries 'the slight tinge of insolence, of familiarity' (135). Although a photograph and a painting are different, both represent an objectification of the woman to which the question is posed and show the man's lasciviousness. In 'At Lehmann's', however, the objectification is escalated to include a more explicit sexual reference; the picture the Young Man shows to Sabina is of a naked woman which he covers with his hand. Sabina's response, 'I haven't got a hat like that' (181), invites comedy and evokes again the dichotomy of (his) experience and (her) innocence. Subsequently, this is qualified by an interjection from the narrator: "'What do you mean?" she asked, knowing perfectly well' (181). The narrator comments upon Sabina's actions, indicating omniscience but also alluding to Sabina's playful behaviour.

Both the narrator's and Sabina's apperceptions seem at odds, and the narrator playfully suggests that Sabina knows more than she gives away. This seems inconsistent with the depiction of Sabina thus far as the child struggling to understand what is going on around her. Harrison reminds us that 'her naivety should not distract us from recognising her willing manipulation of the Young Man and her excitement at being with him' (60). However, the nature of the narrative scheme allows for more than one reading. The narrator's comment is deliberately placed within a narrative that permits some access to Sabina's consciousness, setting up an imbalance in the reader's understanding; it invites ambiguity. The narrative structure, as a tapestry of Sabina's thoughts and the narrator's commentary, solicits a sense of uncertainty that mirrors Sabina's responses to her surroundings. She struggles to maintain any clear sense of her self; at one moment the innocent and in another a tease, a point of contact

between child and adult. The narrative viewpoint, shifting between narrator as external focaliser and Sabina as internal focaliser is manipulative in that respect.

Other scholars have also commented that Sabina courts her own downfall. Dunbar suggests that 'it is her own desires – for sexual experience, and to mother a child – which finally seal her fate' (Dunbar, 30). I would argue, however, that there is room for doubt. Whilst Sabina does admit that 'it would be very sweet to have a little baby to dress and jump up and down', she does nevertheless remark that she 'wouldn't be the Frau for one hundred marks – not a thousand marks. To look like that' (182). Although there is some evidence that Sabina courts maternity and Dunbar argues that this is 'possibly innate' (Dunbar, 30) I would assert that Sabina's revulsion outweighs her desire. She does, in fact, reject the advances of the man in the shop, pushing him away from her.

There is a heightened sense of ambiguity in the final scene where Sabina enters the cloakroom alone with the Young Man. The narrative perspective throughout moves between the external narrative voice and Sabina as focaliser. This delivers a range of contrasting statements declaring Sabina's innocence and suggesting her willingness to court the Young Man. When she goes to the cloakroom to take his coat, he says, "'I'll come with you'" (183). This is followed by 'and that did not seem at all extraordinary' (183). Whilst this is the heterodiegetic narrative voice, the Young Man's spoken words become the subject of the statement, and it is Sabina's focal point that is represented. It is to Sabina that the words do not seem 'extraordinary', and not the narrator. This would suggest that she is ignorant of any forthcoming danger.

Conversely, in the cloakroom she stokes the fire with more wood, 'laughing at her own wicked extravagance' (183), and as he holds out his hand to help her up from the floor, 'that strange tremor thrilled Sabina' (183), clumsily symbolising a 'stoking' of desire. Although the 'wicked extravagance' relates to the use of too much firewood, the symbolism

is ambiguous. The words could be interpreted as the narrator commenting on Sabina's behaviour and indicating that she is not as guileless as she appears to be. The 'strange tremor', however, seems to come unbidden, an innate response to the touch of his hand. Neither of these statements is focalised from Sabina's viewpoint, but are from the external focaliser of the narrative voice. This means that we are not privy to Sabina's internal response to these stimuli. This is where the ambiguity is laid out for the reader, as the reader struggles to interpret the mixed signals.

This is equally so for the Young Man who asks: "Look here [...] are you a child, or are you playing at being one?" (183). She responds by 'breathing like a frightened little animal' (183). The scene bristles with ambivalence as the initial focalisation in which 'the Frau was forgotten, the stupid day was forgotten' and all 'seemed the most exciting adventure in the world' gives way to the narrator as external focaliser, relating how Sabina 'wrenched herself away, tightened herself, drew herself up' (183). In the final section, in which the Young Man makes his advances, the narrative perspective shifts to maintain the level of ambiguity and the focalisation moves away from Sabina. The reader is left wondering whether Sabina proceeds with any real sense of what has taken place, or whether she has achieved any realisation of her 'self' at all.

Her expression of 'Achk' (183) at the end of the story is equally puzzling and results in our inability to pin down whether Sabina is in fact a woman or a girl. Harrison remarks of this exclamation, it is 'expressive of a more urgent sense of disturbance. We might understand it as identifying her disgust at the Young Man's sexual advances, but it might equally signal her despair at being forcibly drawn out of her 'most exciting adventure' (60). I would argue that it could also be a signal of her own inability to decide on a firm sense of selfhood as a woman or a girl. She could be identifying with either of the two points of Harrison's comment, or both at the same time, leaving her in a kind of limbo. In 'At

Lehmann's', Mansfield achievement is to make use of the ambivalent positioning of a young woman, on the cusp of adulthood, to explore how 'unstable narrative spaces' (Gray, 2011, 81) can be exploited to test out how a woman comes to an understanding of the self. Sabina is unable to obtain a firm grasp of her 'self' as either girl or woman. I would like to return to Gray's point quoted above, expressing how Mansfield:

puts unresolved tension – in use, in the characters, in the text – into play in such a way that it becomes itself a site of meaning. The notion of self that we encounter on Mansfield's pages comes to us in forms persistently resistant to definition. Nor does Mansfield set out to pin down or redefine this creature anew, but instead creates unstable narrative spaces where we are invited to catch sight of it as if out of the corner of the eye, register its effects, and let it go. (2011, 81)

Mansfield creates a narrative that at one point reveals all by delegating the narrative viewpoint to Sabina, only to snatch it away again and return to the external focalising voice. The dual aspect provides two levels of narrative intuition, and these are in conflict. The dynamic nature of the narrative tapestry reflects the nature of the self; conflicting, untenable and mutable, supporting Gray's point that it comes in 'forms persistently resistant to definition'.

In the next story discussed, 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', Mansfield again visits marriage and childbirth as underlying themes that allow for an exploration of a woman's sense of self. In a much darker narrative, Mansfield yet again manoeuvres the narrative viewpoint in order to explore how patriarchal regimes are detrimental to a woman's sense of self.

### **'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' (1910)**

'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' tells the story of a family as they prepare for, and then attend, a local wedding. As in 'At Lehmann's' the narrative is dynamic, allowing for the delegation of perception to characters within the story. The strong external narrative voice is used to establish a pattern of behaviour and to provide an appraisal of that behaviour. The

heterodiegetic narrator rather than remaining neutral, colours the narrative with a commentary that is located in opposition to the events it describes. The narrative begins: ‘Getting ready was a terrible business’ (*CWI*, 184). The adjective ‘terrible’ is provided by the narrator, adding subjectivity to the description of Frau Brechenmacher’s actions in preparing for her husband’s arrival. The description of shining buttons, ironing a shirt and polishing boots would not seem so ‘terrible’ without the narrator’s direction. The pattern of behaviour is quickly established as we are told that ‘[d]ressing in the dark was nothing new to Frau Brechenmacher’ (185), indicating that this is a regular occurrence. When the Herr arrives home, he stands in the kitchen ‘puffing himself out’ with ‘the buttons on his blue uniform shining with an enthusiasm which nothing but official buttons could possibly possess’ (185). The focaliser for this initial scene in the Brechenmacher household is the heterodiegetic narrator, guiding the reader’s perception of the action of the scene.

The narrator does concede the focalisation to a character at various points in the narrative to add depth to the critique of this family’s way of life. When the eldest daughter is given her instructions for the night, the narrative perspective is briefly delegated to her: ‘After all, she reflected, if she had to go to bed at half-past eight she would keep the shawl on’ (184). Despite the perception indicator, ‘she reflected’, this adds an additional focaliser to the scene, seeing the events from the child’s point of view. Rosa adopts her mother’s role unquestioningly when her mother goes out, and this is better portrayed from the child’s point of view. Later in the narrative the lack of protest from the women at the wedding over their prescribed roles will be evidenced; here it is implicitly established that the indoctrination of women into those prescribed roles begins in childhood. This theme is accentuated by the enthusiasm that the child displays in adopting the role of mother and caregiver: ‘But let me stay up – the “Bub” may wake and want some milk’ (184). Her eagerness is perhaps because her mother goes out so rarely: ‘She had not been out of the house for weeks past’ (185).

Once the Frau and her husband arrive at the wedding, the focal viewpoint moves to that of the Frau. 'Frau Brechenmacher [...] knew that she was going to enjoy herself. She seemed to fill out and become rosy and warm as she sniffed that familiar, festive smell' (186). Although it is the narrator who speaks, relating how she felt, the focalised, the wedding room, the sights, sounds and smells, are from Frau Brechenmacher's 'cognitive and emotive perception' (Rimmon-Kennan, 80). The description of how she 'fill(s) out' (186) mirrors the husband who 'puff[ed] himself out' (185) at home. This creates a syntactical parallelism, and at the same time a juxtaposition, as the Frau can only achieve this feeling in the wedding hall. The vocabulary to describe her is kinder, she 'fills' out whilst her husband 'puffed out', suggesting that the narrator colours the commentary. The vocabulary is also feminised in the description of the Frau; she 'fills' out as she would if she were pregnant.

The scene in the wedding room is filtered through the Frau's consciousness and we are invited to see the 'oil lamps hanging from the ceiling, shed[ding] a warm bright light on the red faces of the guests in their best clothes' (186). The Frau 'watched the couples going round and round; she forgot her five babies and her man and felt almost like a girl again' (187). These bright images of festivity are, nonetheless, tainted by the darker imagery that pervades the narrative. The Frau's hands are 'clasping and unclasping themselves in the fold of her skirt' (187), the white tape of her petticoat is revealed to be showing and the other women laugh at her, whilst the bride is a figure of mockery with 'the appearance of an iced cake all ready to be cut and served in neat little pieces to the bridegroom' (186). The brief moment of escapism is quickly washed away as the realities of marriage are revealed beneath the celebrations of the wedding.

The external narrative voice interjects to add mockery to the commentary. The parents and relations of the bride and groom are 'grouped about them, with a fine regard for dignity and precedence', which is established as ironic when the bride brings her own child to the

wedding and the groom wears ‘a suit of white clothes much too large for him’ (186). Fullbrook discusses how the story ‘is shaped by contradictory pressures’ where the ‘narrative itself [...] exists on a completely different ideological plane from that of the world it describes’ (56). Fullbrook’s comment on ideology is interesting and relates to the difference in the narrative perspective between ‘who speaks and who sees’ (Genette, 186). The heterodiegetic narrator remains an outsider in the narrative, omniscient and omnipresent as an external focaliser whose role is to provide a commentary on the events. The mocking comments above are those of the narrator’s and not Frau Brechenmacher’s. This would suggest that the narrator presents a different ideological viewpoint from the characters within the narrative. Rimmon-Kenan discusses how the ideological facet of focalisation is the ‘general system of viewing the world conceptually, in accordance with which the events and characters of the story are evaluated’ (82). When the narrative is dynamic, offering more than one focaliser, then the ideologies of those focalisers can be in conflict (Rimmon-Kenan, 82). Jahn regards this as a difference in ‘apperception’ (101) drawn from a focaliser’s belief system. In this story, Mansfield deliberately sets one ideological construct against another, the narrator’s sardonic commentary serving to throw into relief the acceptance and resignation of the women in the narrative.

Moreover, Fullbrook’s comment also raises the issue of the ‘implied author’. Rimmon-Kenan presents the construct of ‘implied author’ as a contested position, discussing the work of Wayne C. Booth and Seymour Chapman who argue that the ‘implied author’ represents ‘the governing consciousness of the work as a whole, the source of the norms embodied in the work’ (87). Rimmon-Kenan additionally summarises that ‘while the narrator can only be defined circularly as the ‘narrative voice’ or ‘speaker’ of a text, the implied author is – in opposition and by definition – voiceless and silent’ (88). However, Rimmon-Kenan argues that ‘if it is to be consistently distinguished from the real author and

the narrator, the notion of the implied author must be de-personified and is best considered as a set of implicit norms rather than as a speaker or a voice' (89). Notwithstanding the ongoing discussion of the exact nature of the 'implied author', Fullbrook's statement would suggest that the ideological position of the narrator and the 'implied author' could be different. Whilst the narrator passes a sardonic commentary, mocking some of the characters in the story, the 'set of implicit norms' established by the implied author through the sympathetic depiction of the Frau's plight as wife and mother, would seem to differ from those of the narrator.

Fullbrook further asserts that:

The method is related to irony but goes beyond it to suggest a fracturing in the realm of values that is signalled by the distance of the ethical commitment of the narration from the world it realistically describes [...] testing a kind of writing that is suited to suggesting complex responses to the reader while the narrative surface remains simple. (56-7)

Whilst I would agree that the narrative is more complex than would at first appear (as I have argued above in 'German's at Meat' and 'At Lehmann's') I would argue that the 'ethical commitment' is in fact what that difference in ideological standpoint is meant to determine. The narrator does not distance him/herself from the world described but the sardonic commentary serves to lessen the gap between narrator and events. This is achieved by creating a dynamic rather than static focalisation where the narrator concedes the viewpoint to a character to further his/her own criticism.

In the final scene at the wedding, the Frau

stared round at the laughing faces, and suddenly they all seemed strange to her. She wanted to go home and never come out again. She imagined that all these people were laughing at her, more people than there were in the room even – all laughing at her because they were so much stronger than she was. (188)

Angela Smith has argued that this story is a 'cry against corruption [and it is] unlike the brisk satire of most of the other stories, and much closer to a deep sense of hopelessness' (2000, 63). The description of the Frau's feelings here would seem to exemplify this point. The reader is left wondering why she imagines them laughing at her, or why she believes them to

have a strength she does not possess. The Frau's perception throughout the narrative provides some explanation. Despite the initial warmth that she experiences in the festive room, this gives way to the realities of the situation. The mockery of the bride serves to show the difference between a wedding (the 'familiar festive smell') and a marriage (the bride as an 'iced cake') and whilst the people in the room (the 'laughing faces') are complicit in maintaining this status quo, the Frau remains uncomfortable, evidenced by the wringing of her hands.

On the journey home, pathetic fallacy reinforces the Frau's sense of despair: 'White and forsaken lay the road from the railway station to their house – a cold rush of wind blew her hood from her face, and suddenly she remembered how they had come home together the first night' (188). 'White and forsaken' is a description of the way the Frau looks, and how she feels, reflected in the scene on the roadway, a transferred epithet that describes an animated landscape with human qualities. She feels that she is 'forsaken', by the other women at the wedding, by her mother who has effectively handed her over like the 'iced cake' in a perpetuation of the cycle of entrapment for women. The roadway also provides a liminal space between the wedding and her marriage (home), again reinforcing this dichotomy: till death us do part and happily ever after are not the same thing. Additionally, the juxtaposition of the Herr's remembrance of their first night, "'You were an innocent one, you were'" (189), mirrors the Frau as 'white and forsaken'. The 'white and forsaken road' then becomes metonymic for the life of a woman trapped within the confines of patriarchy.

The Frau articulates her frustration and despair, "'Na, what is it all for?" she muttered, and not until she had reached home, prepared a little supper of meat and bread for her man did she stop asking herself that silly question' (188). To whom this question appears silly is unclear. The voice here is the external narrator, and although omniscient and, therefore, able to express the Frau's thoughts, it could also be interpreted as the narrator's comment. This

would suggest a more ubiquitous response to the Frau's actions, indicating that it is the patriarchal system that gives rise to such a question rather than the Frau's individual situation. 'Silly' indicates irony when her comment is actually one of despair.

The Herr remarks that it was '[n]ot much of a wedding' (188) and the Frau stumbles on her answer: 'N-no' (189). She mutters these words as she moves the boots that he has flung across the room. Her external actions and speech contribute toward understanding her feelings as downtrodden, resigned and exhausted. She is so exhausted there is no fight left. The narrative suggests that the real self is so far immersed within the roles of housewife and mother as to be unfathomable. The Frau briefly glimpses the self, the woman who wants to dance who 'filled out' in the bright warm room, but this is quickly allayed by the laughing people, her husband drinking too much and making a crude mockery of the bride. The Frau understands that this is no joke. Compared with the view of marriage depicted in 'In a Café' (1907), the subject of a flippant, satiric conversation, the vision here is far removed. Here is desperation, loneliness and drudgery in a far darker and more brutal narrative. The final words of the story leave the reader in no doubt that within this Frau's existence there is also violence, 'even the memory of the wedding faded quite. She lay down on the bed and put her arm across her face like a child who expected to be hurt as Herr Brechenmacher lurched in' (189).

'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' is a dark, rather than a sardonic narrative, the 'cry against corruption' of Smith's comment. The comment originates from Mansfield herself, writing to her husband John Middleton Murry in February 1918 about her inspiration for writing:

The other 'kick-off' is my old original one, and (had I not known love) it would have been my all. Not hate or destruction (both are beneath contempt as real motives) but an *extremely* deep sense of hopelessness – of everything doomed to disaster – almost wilfully, stupidly – like the almond tree and 'pas de nougat pour le noel' – there! As I took out a cigarette paper I got it exactly – *a cry against*

*corruption* that is *absolutely* the nail on the head. Not a protest – a cry and I mean corruption in the widest sense of the word. (54)

This story certainly seems to have originated from the ‘deep sense of hopelessness’ of Mansfield’s comment as it offers no relief from the strictures it describes. Whilst characters in other narratives, like Sabina in ‘At Lehmann’s’, or Rosabel in ‘The Tiredness of Rosabel’ have little chance of escape from their situations, it is communicated with a lighter touch. Whilst Sabina has the opportunity to garner a sense of self in the future that is more stable, and Rosabel escapes hers through fantasy, Frau Brechenmacher is offered no such relief and her sense of self is tethered firmly to her role as wife and mother.

In the final story I discuss, ‘The Swing of the Pendulum’, an opportunity for escape presents itself, and causes a momentary crisis of morality for a woman trapped in poverty. In this story, Mansfield returns to the concept of the self as a construct but in this situation rather than a role deliberately created, a woman is forced to develop a persona through fantasy that offers the possibility of that escape.

### **‘The Swing of the Pendulum’ (1911)**

‘The Swing of the Pendulum’ tells the story of Viola, a poverty-stricken woman in love with the penniless Casimir and on the verge of eviction from her apartment. She sees an opportunity to ‘re-invent’ herself as a prostitute, desperate as she is to escape her poverty. She enters into a brief and sexually charged exchange with a man, realising at the last moment that the sacrifice would not be worth it. Unlike the other stories discussed in this chapter, ‘The Swing of the Pendulum’ was not published in Mansfield’s lifetime. A note in the *Collected Works* indicates that the story was probably offered to the *New Age* and rejected (*CWI*, 250), and this could be indicative of a growing tension between Mansfield’s literary

stylisation and the editors of the *New Age* magazine. In Chapter 4, I will discuss how Mansfield moved away from the *New Age*, joining John Middleton Murry at *Rhythm* and subsequently at the *Blue Review*.

‘The Swing of the Pendulum’ begins with a heated exchange between the protagonist Viola and her landlady. Mansfield again uses a heterodiegetic narrator, although in places Viola becomes the focaliser:

[She] could not understand why she even worried about money, nor why she sneaked out of the house on tiptoe, not even daring to shut the door after her in case the landlady should hear and shout something terrible, nor why she spent nights pacing up and down her room. (243)

Faced with the landlady, she feels ‘immensely calm and indifferent’ and this is because the panic is noted only internally; the repetition of the negative ‘nor’ in her inner thoughts reflects her internal turmoil, whilst outwardly she remains perfectly calm. Her poverty is imagined as a ‘huge dream-mountain’ when she is alone, but when it comes to ‘definite action’, as in her confrontation with the landlady, she manages to project it only as ‘a beastly “hold-your-nose” affair’ (243). This is indicative of an inner and outer projection of the self. In company, Viola can remain stalwart in the face of eviction, whilst internally, here imaged in the mirror as the ‘tragic reflection’ (243), she cannot escape the reality and worry of her poverty. The reader’s understanding of this dichotomous world that Viola inhabits is visible only at moments of focalisation when the omniscient narrator delegates the angle of perception to Viola.

Perception indicators are still evident – ‘she felt’ for example – but the slippage between the external and internal focalisers is deft. It also develops a close relationship between the reader and Viola, allowing the reader to sympathise with her plight. For example: ‘The landlady bounced out of the room, banging the door, so that it shook and rattled as though it had listened to the conversation and fully sympathised with the old hag’ (243). From the initial external detail of the landlady leaving and the door banging, the point

of perception and the lexicon becomes Viola's calling the landlady 'the old hag' and in her imagination, personifying the door. The landlady is simply demanding what is her due, but the narrative schema is engineered to engage the reader as supportive of Viola's inability to meet her obligations as a tenant and pay her rent. The fantasy is also important, indicating Viola's capacity to use her imagination in perceiving her situation as well as escaping from it. This will gradually be heightened as the narrative progresses and has a direct impact on Viola's ideation of her sense of self.

It is interesting to note at this point Orage's thoughts and ideas on concepts of the self. In his publication, *Consciousness: Animal, Human and Superhuman* in 1907, he remarks, 'we are in search of ourselves. And remember that all the steps of our journey are surely mental. Wherever we find ourselves, it must be by a series of acts of imagination. It is an imaginative quest' (13). In several of the stories discussed in this thesis, fantasy and imagination play a lead role in the establishment of concepts of the female self. In 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', the Frau's imagination and perception of her surroundings give the reader a sense of the self the Frau now occupies, and the innocent (and in her thoughts 'forsaken') self that led her into her marriage. In 'The Tiredness of Rosabel', Rosabel's fantasy of a life with a young, rich man reveals the self that she wishes for, throwing into relief the self she must adopt as a millinery assistant. In 'Prelude' (1918), which I discuss in Chapter 5, both Linda and Beryl engage in fantasy to escape the self they must maintain to function within the family. In each case the narrative is coloured by the characters' interior processes of self-construction through focalisation, allowing the reader access to their inner thoughts. It is through the characters' imagination, as Orage says above, that the characters are able to find themselves.

In 'The Swing of the Pendulum', Viola's imagination and her fantasy give rise to three levels of narration. There is the heterodiegetic narrative voice; Viola as narrating self in

the memory of the exchange with the man on the doorstep and its transformation through fantasy, and the experiencing Viola who belongs to that exchange. In her initial conversation with the man on the doorstep, Viola is curt and he is described as a 'strange man' to whom she responds, 'in a sharp voice' (244). She subsequently turns this exchange into fantasy, triggered by the aroma of cigarette smoke:

She heard him walk down the passage and then pause – lighting a cigarette. Yes – a faint scent of delicious cigarette smoke penetrated her room. She sniffed at it, smiling again. Well, that had been a fascinating interlude! He looked so amazingly happy: his heavy clothes and big buttoned gloves; his beautifully brushed hair . . . and that smile . . . 'Jolly' was the word – just a well-fed boy with the world for his playground. People like that did one good – one felt 'made over' at the sight of them. (245)

The narrative voice of the external focaliser here gives way to Viola as the narrating self, as she finds the interlude 'fascinating'. Viola's perception then becomes 'offline' (Jahn, 99) as she begins to create a fantasy of the man, enhancing the real exchange and embroidering it with a completely different perception. The meeting with the man is transformed into a fantasy of him and highlights the dichotomy between Viola as the experiencing self and Viola as the narrating self.

Mansfield augments this embellishing of reality by using pathetic fallacy and symbolism to create a patina of emotion and contrasts in the narrative: the room is initially 'tumbled and grimed' (243) and is set against the image of the hyacinths, described in the semantic field of growth and plenty: they have 'plump petals' and 'rich buds unfolding' (244). This plenty originates from the landlady's daughter and is used as a symbol of the riches of the landlady contrasted with Viola's poverty. It could also signal sexual excitement, marrying Viola's perception of the scene with the phallic symbol of the cigarette. When she allows the man to enter her room, 'a miracle had happened. Her room was quite changed – it was full of sweet light and the scent of hyacinth flowers' (247). The flowers that had

previously smelled 'sickly' (244) are now transformed, reflecting Viola's mood of excitement.

As Viola enjoys the 'delicious cigarette smoke' she conjures an image of the man as 'sane and solid' who 'you could depend on [them] never having one mad impulse from the day they were born' (245). The man stands in the liminal space of the stairway, waiting and smoking. Viola is aware of his presence there and this is the stimulus for the fantasy and the violation of her memory of Casimir:

Of course that had been the mistake all along. What had? Oh, Casimir's frightful seriousness. If she had been happy when they first met she never would have looked at him [...]. Misfortune had knocked their heads together: they had looked at each other, stunned with the conflict and sympathised. (245)

As the focalisation is delegated to Viola, the memory becomes tainted by the fantasy of the man outside her room; the narrating self of this fantasy and the experiencing self of Viola when she met Casimir are in conflict. The focalised becomes the episode in the hospital when they met, but the perception of Viola as the narrating self overlays the perception of the experiencing self, perverting it. This is stimulated by the fantasy of the strange man standing in the liminal space of the landing. Viola appropriates the experience of the liminality, using it vicariously, as if the door to her room is still open. The smoke penetrates her room despite the door being closed, and in reaching her, undoes her defences. Irony also patterns this fantasy: she was unhappy when she met Casimir, a situation she here laments and she is deeply unhappy now and frightened of her poverty, the 'dream-mountain' (243); this unhappiness is the stimulus for the fantasy of the man. She will, of course, come to regret her actions with the man and her fantasy will be reversed as she decides that Casimir's poverty 'was her fault as much as his, and he, just like her, was apart from the world, fighting it' (250).

The focalisation returns to the external narrative voice and Viola's thoughts are delivered verbatim. It is not clear whether these thoughts are articulated aloud as there are

initially no expressivity markers. Viola appears to want to convince herself of the fantasy she has created. She rejects Casimir and invites the strange man into her room, reinventing herself as a 'great courtesan' for 'a man without a care – who'd give me everything I want and with whom I'd always feel a sense of life and of being in touch with the world' (246). Joanna Kokot discusses how Mansfield's art lies in her ability to reconfigure fantasy as if it were reality, collapsing the gap between the real world of the story and the one imagined by a character:

The narrator presents the world metamorphosed in the observer's vision as equally substantial as that which exists objectively. As a result, the character's vision of the world does not come across as a deformation of what really exists – but the shape of reality has a quasi-solipsistic dependence upon the observer, as the factual and the imagined attains some equivalence. (70)

In 'The Swing of the Pendulum' this 'deformation' is crucial to understanding the conceptualisation of Viola's self that arises out of her fantasy of both the man and herself after their initial brief meeting. The man could well possess the qualities that Viola describes but the reader is keenly aware that the man is a focalised object, seen from Viola's solipsistic imaginings. Her poverty and desperation have driven her to re-imagine her reality, to find comfort in a fantasy of herself as a great courtesan and the man as her rescuer. Viola's conceptualisation of her 'self' is entirely dependent upon her focalised vision of the world. As she says herself, in describing the childish game of charades, she would 'act a word – just what she was doing now' (247), and the word is 'courtesan'. This narrative operates in reverse of Linda's fantasies in 'Prelude' (discussed in Chapter 5) where the acting outer self is the one that accepts the role of wife and mother, whilst the inner self conjures private fantasies of escape to comfort herself. Here, Viola acts out her fantasy (however briefly) of her self as a great courtesan, realising ironically, that it offers no comfort at all.

Kokot further observes that it is the manipulation of the narrative viewpoint that allows Mansfield to bridge the gap between fantasy and reality:

The border between reality and fantasy may thus become blurred in the observer's consciousness. And again the fusion of both worlds has an equivalent at the level of the description: through the use of free indirect discourse, the scene is presented as it appears to the protagonist. (68)

Delegating the focal point to Viola in 'The Swing of the Pendulum' allows the fantasy to be realised for the reader, and enables the reader to witness Viola's self-delusion. As Viola colours the memory of her first meeting with Casimir, and she generates her fantasy of the man outside her door, the self that she generates through fantasy becomes real to the reader.

When Viola invites the man into her room, the space is 'curiously lighted by pale flashes of sunshine' (243) and provides a taste of reality that goes beyond the fantasy of being 'drugged with happiness' (246). Her expectations are thwarted when she must go beyond her 'mysterious, voluptuous glance' (246) with 'any amount of nursing in the lap of luxury', to physically sitting in the strange man's lap. The implicit comedy and irony are tainted however, by the very real danger Viola places herself in resulting in 'great red marks on her arms' (250). Regardless, Viola is triumphant in her escape from the man as 'she'd won – she'd conquered the beast – all by herself' (250). Viola's situation of desperate poverty remains unchanged, and so she may have vanquished the real man and perhaps her shame at her poverty, but she will still have to face the eviction from her flat.

'The Swing of the Pendulum' sets out to establish a series of dichotomies that underscore an implicit questioning of issues of the self. Viola initially establishes how she creates an exterior, confident self that hides her inner panic and desperation. This is augmented by the visions of the man and her fantasy of herself as a courtesan. Captured within this is the illusory nature of the self and its inherent fragility. A self, generated through reality or fantasy, is fragile especially when the line between fantasy and reality is thinly drawn. Mansfield's achievement is to exploit narrative viewpoint in order to allow the reader access to Viola's consciousness and thus witness the generation and subsequent dissipation of her 'self' as courtesan. The need for this self-generation is firmly established through the

depiction of her poverty. The juxtapositioning of poverty/plenty is still achieved via the use of symbolism; but Mansfield proves that she is working towards the more complicated narrative structures of her later works. The engineering of the narrative texture here provides a brief glimpse of where her later sophisticated narratives have their source.

## **Conclusion**

Whilst there are few extant diary entries and letters for the period 1909 to 1911, it is evident from Mansfield's fiction of this time that she continued to experiment with narrative viewpoint as a method of exploring issues of the self. Each of the stories examined in this chapter exhibit some form of control over perception to bring to the fore different aspects of the self.

The *New Age* gave Mansfield an outlet for her stories, and I have shown briefly where there are similarities between her work and that of both Orage and Hastings. I do not wish to suggest however, that these connections were deliberate, nor that Mansfield needed the relationship with them in order to further her own aims with the development of her writing. Nevertheless, there is some maturation of Mansfield's aesthetic in the stories discussed in this chapter. They build upon the earlier stories, some of which were discussed in Chapter 2. There are similarities in technique, for example, between 'At Lehmann's' and 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' where an innocent girl experiences a sexual desire she is unfamiliar with. There are an equal number of connections with Mansfield's later stories, for example, 'The Little Governess' which also features a young protagonist at the mercy of an older man, much like Viola in 'The Swing of the Pendulum'.

Fantasy plays a role in these early stories, particularly in 'The Swing of the Pendulum' and this will reappear in many later narratives as a measure of a woman's conceptualisation of the self, for example in 'Prelude', where both Linda and Beryl fantasise

an escape. The fantasies occur under very particular circumstances creating pressure on the woman's current sense of self. The connections found between Mansfield's stories show how she is experimenting in these early stories with different genres like fantasy, and with narrative structures, to allow access to inner consciousness which becomes more adept later on in her career. In the stories discussed in this chapter, Mansfield is testing perspectives by focalising the narrative through different characters and at different points in the narrative to restrict access to the characters' inner processes. In these stories these shifts in perspective are still supported with the use of perception indicators, revealing Mansfield's tentative facility with this technique at this early stage.

In 'Germans at Meat' the reader's uncertain response to the narrator is borne out of the presentation of two narrative personas: the external focaliser of the narrator and the staged persona of the 'English' lady. Mansfield anticipated that the volume, *In a German Pension*, might later be misunderstood and scholars have suggested that anti-German sentiment may have been read into the stories when it was not necessarily there. The true achievement in these stories is their ambiguity. In 'Germans at Meat', the reader is never truly sure whether the narrator is the vulnerable 'English' female or if she simply uses the pose to her advantage. The ambiguity underscores Mansfield's aim of exhibiting a self that, despite being a constructed persona, is nevertheless still obscure.

In 'At Lehmann's' the uncertain nature of the self is examined by witnessing a young woman experiencing sexual desire for the first time. The use of a dynamic narrative structure that allows some access to Sabina's consciousness provides the reader with an inside view as Sabina struggles to gain a firm grasp on her sense of self. The access to Sabina's consciousness, however, is carefully controlled and in places is deliberately obscured by the heterodiegetic narrative voice. This juxtaposition of openness and secrecy builds a level of

uncertainty in relation to whether Sabina consciously flirts with the Young Man, or merely responds to an innate desire.

‘Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding’ carries a different tone to the other stories discussed in this chapter. Its darkness and pervading sense of hopelessness offers no relief to the Frau whose sense of self is stifled beneath the burden of patriarchal mores. The narrative viewpoint is again dynamic and, in places, prioritises the perspective of the Frau to allow a glimpse of a previous self. It also furnishes the reader with the fear associated with sexual relations with the Herr; not the fear of childbirth that Linda feels in ‘Prelude’, or that Sabina estimates in ‘At Lehmann’s’, but the real fear of the sexual act itself.

In ‘The Swing of the Pendulum’ fantasy is the driving force for the sense of self adopted by Viola, imagining herself as a courtesan lovingly cared for by a rich man. The dichotomy between the voice of the experiencing self and the narrating self serves to show how fragile a constructed persona can be. It also evidences the nature of perception as coloured by those selves. Memories are amended; patterned by recent experiences and the fantasy of that experience with the man on the doorstep. Mansfield will utilise this misremembering in later narratives, such as ‘A Dill Pickle’ ([1917] discussed in Chapter 6) where Vera’s memories of her relationship with the man become tainted by his remembrance of events.

The stories discussed in this chapter affirm Mansfield’s continued consideration of methods of representing the self and the trialling of narrative techniques that perpetuate that enquiry. In the next chapter, I will review the stories Mansfield wrote for *Rhythm* and its successor, *The Blue Review*. In those stories, Mansfield will draw on her New Zealand heritage to extend her experimentation in fiction and I will show how she becomes more confident in the handling of perspective, particularly in relation to the effect environment has on issues of the self for women.

## Chapter 4

### **‘Before art can be human again, it must first learn to be brutal’: *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review* 1912 to 1913**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter 3 I examined Mansfield’s development as a writer during the period 1909 to 1911, whilst she contributed to the magazine the *New Age*, and in particular I analysed some of the stories in her first published volume *In a German Pension* of 1911. Chapter 3 outlined how Mansfield achieves a firmer control over the narrative voice in those stories than she had displayed in the very early stories discussed in Chapter 2. I explored how this increased assurance with her writing may have been partly borne from the intellectual and artistic milieu of the *New Age* and its editor, Orage. I showed how Mansfield uses her developing narrative control experimentally to explore issues of the self, particularly in relation to the self as a pose or as a concept that is shifting and fragile. Mansfield also employs fantasy as an opportunity to develop a sense of self, or versions of the self, such as Viola in the unpublished story, ‘The Swing of the Pendulum’ (1911) imagining herself as an elegant and cossetted courtesan. The stories discussed in Chapter 3 evidence Mansfield’s growing confidence that builds towards the more polished stories of her later collections, *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920) and *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922), which I will discuss in Chapters 5 and 6.

In this chapter, I move into the period in Mansfield’s life when she wrote for *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review* between 1912 and 1913.<sup>21</sup> I consider how Mansfield’s writing published in *Rhythm*, and its successor, the *Blue Review*, both aligned with and helped to shape the

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<sup>21</sup> Some elements of my discussion in this chapter are considered at greater length in Louise Edensor. ‘Before art can be human again, it must first learn to be brutal’: Katherine Mansfield, the self and *Rhythm*’. *Tinakori: Critical Journal of the Katherine Mansfield Society*. Issue 2 (July 2018), pp. 4-13.

modernist aesthetic propounded by those magazines, particularly her first story published in *Rhythm*, 'The Woman at the Store' (see discussion below). I show how Mansfield's developing modernism was attuned with that of *Rhythm*, in particular their emphasis on brutality in art forms. In the stories for *Rhythm* Mansfield revisited her New Zealand roots to experiment with style and narrative voice, whilst advancing one of the key concerns of her writing thus far: the effect on women's selfhood of being subjected to patriarchal regimes.

In this chapter I analyse three of Mansfield's stories published in 1912 and 1913: 'The Woman at the Store', (1912), 'New Dresses' (1912), and 'Millie' (1913). Each of these stories stands as a prime example of Mansfield's handling of the self as fractured or problematic where women are envisioned in a moment of tension or disruption which places pressure on their sense of self. At first glance, 'The Woman at the Store' and 'Millie' have much in common. They are both narratives set against a background of a barren and socially deficient society in the backblocks of New Zealand, a society in which gender boundaries are polarised and where social encounters are at a minimum. 'New Dresses', on the other hand, is a very different narrative, a return to the domestic middle-class sphere of earlier stories. However, despite the Teutonic names in the story there is evidence to suggest that this is also set in New Zealand and that Mansfield simply altered the names to German ones for publication purposes (Fullbrook, 40). All three stories align in their treatment of female subjectivity, highlighting the plight of women as subjugated and objectified, illustrating how their treatment by men has a direct impact upon their self-conceptualisation. In each case, Mansfield utilises story setting and interruptions to women's understanding of their situation to force them to question their self-conceptualisation.

Each of these stories illustrates how concepts of selfhood are reliant upon perceptions that are individual and unstable and can also be the result of constructions determined by others. I will show how Mansfield's story, 'The Woman at the Store' demonstrates ideas

about the mutability of perception through the use of an unreliable narrator. Mansfield also employs the uncanny to showcase the difference between the experiencing self and the narrating self of the unreliable narrator. In keeping with *Rhythm*'s aims of embracing 'the principle of flux itself (1: 1, 2, see discussion below) the text of 'The Woman at the Store' is full of contrasts and oppositions that illustrate how some boundaries, particularly those relating to gender are questionable. For example, throughout the narrative the reader is led to believe that the narrator is male, and it is only revealed towards the end of the story that the narrator is female; a child says that she has been drawing the travellers whilst hiding and remarks, 'I looked at her where she wouldn't see me from' (273), therefore revealing that the narrator is female. The construction of selves for the woman the travellers encounter results from a series of fantasies which quickly dissipate. The multiplicity of these selves is evidence of the fluctuating perceptions of the woman by the travellers. 'The Woman at the Store' also addresses issues of the self through the contrast of European ideals of colonial settlement and its reality and I briefly discuss Mansfield's own precarious positioning as outsider in a European literary environment.

In 'New Dresses' Mansfield also addresses issues of the multifarious nature of the self through the character of Anna Binzer, in particular in relation to the interchangeability of selves that rely on contextual clues for their development. The establishment of these selves is grounded firmly in interaction with others, with what Meghan Hammond has termed 'intersubjective experience' (4). Indeed, my discussion of 'New Dresses' centres around Mansfield's use of focalisation and free indirect discourse which enables access to Anna Binzer's consciousness and that of her daughter. Mansfield presents Anna's selves as she interacts with her family, a narrative schema that Mansfield later develops and presents with more sophistication in 'Prelude' (1918) which I discuss in Chapter 5.

In the final story to be discussed in this chapter, 'Millie', Mansfield returns to New Zealand to reintroduce some of the themes explored in 'The Woman at the Store' such as the unstable nature of gender boundaries. She also re-utilises the colonial/western dichotomy of 'The Woman at the Store' to suggest that the conceptualisation of self is equally bound up with environment. In 'Millie' Mansfield illustrates how the self as a construct can be represented as interchangeable and how, as discussed above in 'New Dresses', as the characters' perception changes based on environment and interaction with others so does the construction of the self. The story is also connected to 'The Woman at the Store', not just in its setting but also through the notion that a crisis experienced by a character can force them to reassess their concept of self. In 'The Woman at the Store' the selves of the woman are revealed through the narrator's commentary and the child's drawings, whereas in 'Millie' the eponymous character is forced to explore feelings and issues of the self through the disruptive influence of an escaped alleged murderer who arrives on her farm.

In terms of Mansfield's manipulation of narrative structure, my analysis of these stories demonstrates how much more assured her capability as a writer became during this period, particularly in charting certain aspects of the human experience. The commonality amongst these stories lies in their response to *Rhythm's* aims and ideals by making use of the genre of psychological realism. *Rhythm's* intention to merge the boundaries between art and literature, its 'will to transcend conventional boundaries between the arts, its fluid movement between drawings and text' (Smith, 2000, 81), demonstrates a close relationship between painting and literature which Manfred Jahn has indicated, crystallises in the psychological realism genre:

Modernists perfected a style that came to be called 'psychological realism' or 'literary impressionism'. Just like the French Impressionist painters of the 1870s and 1880s, the Modernist writers were not interested in realistic representations of external phenomena but in presenting the world as it appeared to characters, subject to beliefs, moods and emotions. (94-5)

As I will also show, the underlying themes for *Rhythm* of brutality in art forms, the blurring of gender boundaries and the need to compete for the accolade of promoting the ‘new’, by exploring new ways of representation are all captured in these three narratives by Mansfield.

Beginning with an outline of *Rhythm*’s manifesto and its deliberate opposition to the *New Age*, I will show how, away from the influence of Hastings and Orage, Mansfield gained confidence in the depiction of the self in her writing particularly by drawing on her New Zealand heritage as the locus for developing character and examining aspects of the self. The stories discussed in this chapter reveal a more assured use of free indirect discourse and experimentation with perspectival filters (Jahn, 94) that were akin to *Rhythm*’s aims and ideals for new meaning in art forms and illustrate how Mansfield’s ability to conceptualise the self during this period is united with those aims and ideals.

### ***Rhythm***

In his article ‘The New Thelema’ in the first edition of *Rhythm* in the summer of 1911, Frederick Goodyear proposes that ‘[m]en have always sought for a permanent stable reality in this world of flux. At last they have found it in the principle of flux itself. Change, the old enemy, has become our greatest friend and ally’ (1911a, 2). Whilst this could be comparable with a comment made in 1910 by A. R. Orage, the editor of the *New Age*, that ‘the business of artists is [...] to mould the chaos of the present into the cosmos of the future’ (1910, 204), Orage’s concept of ‘moulding the chaos’ did not extend sufficiently towards embracing what Goodyear refers to as the ‘principle of flux itself’. Orage’s siting of Mansfield’s vignette or ‘prose poem’, as Vincent O’Sullivan describes it (*LI*, 109), ‘Along the Gray’s Inn Road’, in the letters section of the *New Age* in October 1911 (551), would suggest that Mansfield’s thirst for formal experimentation was misunderstood at the *New Age* (McDonnell, 42). Whilst McDonnell argues that ‘Along the Gray’s Inn Road’ ‘resists formal categorisation’, and may

therefore, have simply confounded the editors of the *New Age*, it has nonetheless been described as ‘the most formally innovative of all of Mansfield’s *New Age* work,’ (McDonnell, 42), implying that Mansfield’s artistry was beyond the comprehension of the *New Age* editors. The extract below of the opening of the story gives some indication of the innovative nature of the narrative:

Over an opaque sky grey clouds moving heavily like the wings of tired birds.  
Wind blowing: in the naked light buildings and people appear suddenly grotesque---too sharply modelled, maliciously tweaked into being. A little procession wending its way up the Gray’s Inn Road. (9: 23, 551)

The brevity of the piece and its amalgamation of poetic imagery and prose structure suggests that Mansfield was allowing herself to experiment freely with style. The quarantining of ‘Along the Gray’s Inn Road’ within the letters page seems insulting and a deliberate attempt to quash such free and innovative experimentation. McDonnell asserts that it became the ‘prime motivating factor’ for Mansfield to ‘seek alternative sites of publication’ (42) and was confirmation that the *New Age* was a magazine that ‘favoured the development of an experimental aesthetic in theory rather than in practice’ (44). Timing was also a contributing factor to Mansfield’s defection from the *New Age*. The newly launched *Rhythm*, a more experimental magazine advocating an aesthetic that would be ‘vigorous, determined, which shall have its roots below the surface, and be the rhythmical echo of the life with which it is in touch’ (John Middleton Murry, 1911a, 36), might have been more amenable to Mansfield’s developing sense of an experimental aesthetic. What *Rhythm* certainly provided was the ‘stimulus there to shape the trend [Mansfield] wished to pursue’ (Rice, 77) away from the controlling influence of Orage and Hastings. The ‘trend’ of Rice’s comment refers to Mansfield’s tighter grasp of narrative techniques to secure the kind of fluid interpretation of the self she sought – resulting in a more impressionistic approach. The important step of moving to *Rhythm* would also place her within a new literary community and would lead to

her life-long relationship with John Middleton Murry, as well as to an important editorial role in the little magazine.

Embracing Fauvism and Bergsonianism, *Rhythm* was ‘most notable for its visual arts’ featuring work for the first time by Pablo Picasso, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and André Derain (Carey Snyder, 1). Contributors to the magazine included Frank Swinnerton, Hugh Walpole, Gilbert Cannan and Wilfred Gibson, all of whom challenged the *New Age*’s manifesto to provide the ‘new’ (Snyder, 2) by turning to *Rhythm*, which embraced more ‘brutal’ and experimental forms of art. Indeed, the launch of *Rhythm* provoked severe criticism from the *New Age* in the unattributed column ‘Present Day Criticism’:<sup>22</sup>

The cover raised a slight feeling that all was not right there [...] heroic ideas, broken up, sometimes produce some strange forms, not to say some strange monstrosities [...] there is no single page that is not stupid, or crazed, or vulgar – and most are all three. (Anon, 519)

In a later joint statement as co-editors, Murry and Mansfield attempt to account for the *New Age*’s lack of understanding of *Rhythm*’s aims and ideals, explaining that ‘[f]reedom, reality and individuality are three names for the ultimate essence of life. They are the three qualities of the artist’, whilst, the journalist on the other hand, ‘cannot even dream of freedom, for he is the slave of the unreality of his own making. The artist frees himself by the reality he creates’ (1912, 19). Despite the deliberate attempt to cultivate differentiation Murry and Mansfield’s positioning of *Rhythm* is ambivalent according to Binckes who remarks that they ‘bolster the most fragile distinctions between their position as editors of *Rhythm* and both journalists and established arbiters of literary taste, despite their continued involvement with the former and ambitions towards the latter’ (117). The indeterminacy of *Rhythm*’s aims and ideals was also the subject of some scrutiny, with Arnold Bennett remarking in the *New Age* that the aspiration to ‘be the rhythmical echo of life’ (Murry, 1911a, 36) ‘flaps in the vague’

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<sup>22</sup> Faith Binckes notes that ‘the consistent antagonist of *Rhythm* and *The Blue Review* was the *New Age*’ (8).

and has a ‘meaning [that] is not precise’ (1911, 327-8). Indeed, Murry himself, in accepting Mansfield’s first story ‘The Woman at the Store’, admits that it ‘realised my vague idea of what an appropriate story for *Rhythm* should be’ (1935, 184). Binckes argues, however, that ‘it would be more accurate to conclude that, rather than imitating decadence or pioneering modernism, the element *Rhythm* reproduced most accurately from one avant-garde generation to another was a sense of the mutability of such defining categories’ (50). This would seem to echo Goodyear’s assertion that *Rhythm*’s embracing of the ‘principle of flux itself’ (1911a, 2) was key to the editors’ underlying strategy. To grasp at the ungraspable ‘implies a textual culture with an almost infinite capacity to renew itself’ (Binckes, 55) and therefore, the provision of any definitive categorisation, or clear outline of aims and ideals, would be both paradoxical and self-defeating.

Murry does assert, however, that Mansfield’s story ‘The Woman at the Store’ relates to ‘a phrase picked up by J. M. Synge: “Before art can be human again, it must first learn to be brutal”’ (1935, 184). Scholars have illustrated how Mansfield’s story can be ‘identified with the savage spirit of the land’ forming part of the story but also that ‘it included that feral, savage side of [Mansfield’s] being, symptomized by her restlessness’ (Wilson, 2011, 177) corroborating how her own artistic effort was indeed aligned with the ideologies of the new magazine, however vague they might have been. Mansfield herself, in her story ‘In the Botanical Gardens’ (1907), remarks how she is ‘old with the age of centuries, strong with the strength of savagery’ (*CWI*, 85).

Regardless of its suitability for *Rhythm*, the *New Age* editors found ‘The Woman at the Store’ to be ‘wilfully defiant of the rules of art, for it ploughs the realistic sand, with no single relief of wisdom or of wit’ (Anon, 1912, 519). This coupled with Mansfield and Murry’s final, but necessarily vague, statement in their joint article that their new magazine ‘is a splendid adventure, the eternal quest for rhythm’ (1912, 20) stresses the contesting

ideologies of the two little magazines and how they ‘instigate or are drawn into debates. They deliberately appropriate, dismiss, or reformulate the aims of competitors or predecessors alike’ (Binckes, 55). Both *Rhythm* and the *New Age* fought for their place in representing the ‘new’, ‘a newness consistently contested, competitive and remade’ (Binckes, 55). But what is clear, is that Mansfield’s first contribution to *Rhythm*, ‘The Woman at the Store’, has precedence in establishing the kind of avant-garde artistry *Rhythm* wished to promote by bringing to the fore some of the magazine’s key themes. I shall argue below for example, how Mansfield’s stories destabilise gender boundaries. Smith has established how ‘[j]ust as *Rhythm* expresses in its physical appearance its contributors’ will to transcend conventional boundaries between the arts, its fluid movement between drawings and text embodies its rejection of conventional gender, social and academic identities’ (2000, 81). I will also show how Mansfield’s narratives reflect the blurring of these boundaries by embracing more brutal forms of art.

### **‘The Woman at the Store’ (1912)**

‘The Woman at the Store’ provides an insight into how *Rhythm*’s aspiration to embrace the ‘principle of flux itself’ (1911, 36) can be envisioned in a modernist aesthetic. The modernists’ reliance upon new methods of representation to capture human consciousness in fiction and to show the individuality of perception, is evoked through the use of unreliable narration. In ‘The Woman at the Store’ Mansfield thwarts the reader’s expectations at every turn, creating a lexicon of the uncanny which enables a disruption of expectation, and disables the reader’s sense of certainty. This speaks directly to *Rhythm*’s manifesto of ‘embracing the flux’ by creating a narrative which questions the stability of perception. The narrative also speaks to *Rhythm*’s conscious ‘rejection of conventional gender, social and academic identities’ (Smith, 2000, 81) by providing a female narrator, something that is not

revealed to the reader until the end of the narrative (see discussion below), becoming part of the uncanny atmosphere of the story. As McDonnell has outlined, the narrative disruptions and uncertainties in ‘The Woman at the Store’ and the ‘instability of the narrative persona [...] call into question the authenticity of his/her representation of the Woman’ and are a move away from the formal restrictions placed on Mansfield by the *New Age*. *Rhythm*, however, had ‘expressed a commitment to formal experimentation in literature and the arts’ encouraging Mansfield in her attempts to find an ‘authority of voice and form’ (52-54). Mansfield’s methodology in the ‘The Woman at the Store’ is to subvert the reader’s expectations in order to highlight how aspects of the self are subject to other people’s perceptions. Mansfield deliberately sets up these expectations in order to show how they are unstable, and therefore how the self is a construction.

‘The Woman at the Store’ depicts a woman living alone with her daughter in what used to be a store where travellers could stop for supplies. The narrative reveals a woman brutalised to such an extent by both her environment and the treatment by her husband, that (it is revealed at the close of the narrative) she has been driven to murder him. Whilst Mansfield used elements of her own New Zealand life in stories like ‘A Birthday’, Saikat Majumdar summarises how in many readings of Mansfield’s work the

raw colonial elements of Mansfield’s work are seen to occupy a negligible and marginal portion of her oeuvre, while her true aesthetic complexity is seen to come out either in European contexts or in colonial settings domesticated and diluted to the point where they become weak versions of middle and upper-class English society. (122)

In redressing this imbalance, Majumdar argues that the ‘raw colonial elements’ of Mansfield’s writing represent far more than ‘a marginal portion’ of her work; stories like ‘The Woman at the Store’ denote a move away from the Eurocentric aesthetic of the stories written for the *New Age* and afford Mansfield an opportunity to examine her own positioning within the colonial/European literary dichotomy. Indeed, this extended beyond her literary

aspirations to more personal feelings of belonging. Anna Snaith has convincingly argued that ‘fiction-making, in as much as it was a negotiation of homelessness for Mansfield, articulated the unsettled position of exile that results from a creole perspective, without a stable claim over either colonial or metropolitan space’ (113). Whilst Mansfield had not experienced at first hand the brutal environment described in stories like ‘The Woman at the Store’ and ‘Millie’ she did not belong to the European culture in which she lived either, and her experimentation with a culturally embedded aesthetic as an outside observer, allows her to puzzle out her own sense of belonging as well as her literary positioning.

This quotation from Mansfield’s notebooks is illustrative of her feelings about her outsider status:

And I am the little colonial walking in the London garden patch – allowed to look, perhaps, but not to linger. If I lie on the grass they positively shout at me. Look at her lying on our grass, pretending she lives here, pretending this is her garden & that tall back of the house with the windows open & the coloured curtains lifting is her house. She is a stranger – an alien. She is nothing but a little girl sitting on the Tinakori hills & dreaming: I went to London and married an englishman & we lived in a tall grave house with red geraniums & white daisies in the garden at the back. Im–pudence! (*CW4*, 277-8)

The lexis in Mansfield’s comment establishes a ‘them and us’ relationship between herself and the ‘London garden patch’ affirming her sense of being an outsider, ‘the little colonial’. The first stories that Mansfield wrote for *Rhythm* allow her to address her own displacement as a colonial living and writing in London, by using her New Zealand heritage as the impetus for her creative activity. Elleke Boehmer identifies how Mansfield’s stories present ‘both city and colony [as] places of discomposure and disruption: something that powerfully suggests the extent to which Mansfield’s bifurcated colonial/metropolitan positioning is integral to her modernism’ (62). I will show how Mansfield’s use of ‘discomposure and disruption’ as Boehmer argues, in stories like ‘The Woman at the Store’ and ‘Millie’ enables Mansfield to explore the effect of the savage rural environment upon a woman’s self-perception. Majumdar views the stifling domestic drudgery described in the New Zealand stories as ‘an

index of the socio-cultural inadequacy that the colonial periphery comes to identify in itself (120). Mansfield shows how this paucity of social and cultural stimulation has a direct impact upon a woman's sense of her self-identity. Within the pages of *Rhythm*, Mansfield is afforded the opportunity to explore the self in ways that perhaps had not been permitted at the *New Age*, finding a voice to exemplify the 'violence of colonial rule, and particularly as it impacts on women' (Snaith, 131) in more extreme ways since this aligned with *Rhythm's* advocacy of more brutal art forms.

Mansfield's methodology in the 'The Woman at the Store' is to subvert the reader's expectations in order to highlight how aspects of the self are subject to other people's perceptions. Mansfield deliberately sets up these expectations in order to show how they are unstable, and therefore how the self is a construction. Three people travelling together, through the backblocks of New Zealand, discuss a store they will stop at and its inhabitants. From the outset, the evocation of the uncanny serves to highlight how each individual's perception of the world creates their own reality. Sigmund Freud describes the uncanny as evidence of 'the excessive stress that is laid on psychical reality, as opposed to material reality – a feature that is close to the omnipotence of thoughts' (Freud, 1919, 150-1). The opposition between 'material reality' and 'psychical reality' speaks to *Rhythm's* aims of 'embracing the principle of flux'. As William James argues, perception of the streams of consciousness (the flux) are individual. He asserts that each person's consciousness 'is interested in some parts of its object to the exclusion of others, and welcomes or rejects – *chooses* from among them, in a word – all the while' (author's italics, 1892, 18-19) suggesting that this provides a very individual experience of the world. This creates a sense of individual 'psychical reality' rather than a stable sense of 'material reality'.

The uncanny in 'The Woman at the Store' conceptualises this 'psychical reality' by showing how individual perceptions can be fallible through the use of an unreliable narrator.

What becomes apparent is the dissonance in the narrative voice between the experiencing self and the narrating self. From the outset the scene is described in sinister terms: ‘all that day the heat was terrible. The wind blew close to the ground – it rooted among the tussock grass – slithered along the road, so that the white pumice dust swirled in our faces – settled and sifted over us and was like a dry-skin itching for growth on our bodies’ (*CWI*, 268). The vocabulary is evocative of an oppressive atmosphere where these living creatures travel through a land that is dried up, decaying and dusty, where there is nothing vibrant or alive. Even Jo, whom the narrator tells us has been singing all along the journey has stopped and ‘there seemed something uncanny in his silence’ (268). The images provide a prescient tension that signifies something sinister. However, the heterodiegetic narrator is an external focaliser with knowledge of the ending of the story and is not relating the events as the experiencing self. The narrator relates what she remembers not what she sees. The narrative voice then becomes unreliable as the imagery is coloured with the knowledge of the revelation later in the story of the woman as a murderer.

The narrator’s descriptions of the environment depict everything as tainted or touched by the uncanny, a land where there is no twilight but only ‘a curious half hour when everything appears grotesque – it frightens – as though the savage spirit of the country walked abroad and sneered at what it saw’ (271). In what begins as a Halloweenesque *mise-en-scène* where ‘everyone in the story seems touched by the savage and the grotesque’ (Smith, 2000, 89), where even the beautiful things are tainted, such as the ‘purple orchids and manuka bushes covered with spider webs’ (268), the narrator relates the story not as the experiencing self but as the narrating self. Even in the narrator’s description of her travelling companions the vocabulary identifies that the descriptions are tainted by the narrator’s memory of the sinister events: Hin is ‘maliciously smiling’ at the narrator when she awakens on her horse; when he rides beside her he is ‘white as a clown’ with ‘black eyes’ (268)

evoking imagery of death. The description of the scene in the story as the travellers make their way to the store is not that of the experiencing self but of the narrating self, patterned with the memory of the later events on the timeline. The uncanny elements of the story are then part of the narrator's 'psychical reality' and not those of the 'material reality', thus confirming the narrator as unreliable.

Reliance on the narrative voice becomes important in establishing the selves of the woman the travellers meet at the store. In other stories discussed in this thesis Mansfield has shown women whose outer self is a construct (Audrey in 'The Education of Audrey', 1908) or who create a fantasy of the self (Rosabel in 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' 1908 or Viola in 'The Swing of the Pendulum', 1911). In later narratives she will show women who are forced to adopt outer selves to hide the inner self (Linda in 'Prelude', 1918 for example) or who deceive themselves in their self-conceptualisation ('Miss Brill', 1920). In 'The Woman at the Store', however, the woman's selves are revealed as constructs by others. The woman has no 'voice' in the narrative, nor does the reader gain access to her inner thoughts and so she is therefore doubly subjected to being constructed by others, both through the characters in the story who describe her, and also from the focalised perspective of the heterodiegetic narrator whose memory of events colours the narrative.

The woman is described as a sexual object, merely a fantasy of woman. Hin describes her as 'pretty as a wax doll' with 'blue eyes and yellow hair' who knows 'one hundred and twenty-five different ways of kissing' (272) and who will 'promise you something before she shakes hands with you' (269). When the travellers arrive at the store, however, they are greeted with a woman about whom the narrator says

Hin had pulled Jo's leg about her. Certainly her eyes were blue, and what hair she had was yellow, but ugly. She was a figure of fun. Looking at her, you felt that there was nothing but sticks and wires under that pinafore – her front teeth were

knocked out, she had red pulpy hands, and she wore on her feet a pair of dirty 'Bluchers'<sup>23</sup>. (270)

The evident destruction of the woman's attractive appearance does not deter Jo who remarks that she is still 'female flesh' and will 'look better by night light' (272) clinging desperately to the fantasy they have enjoyed on their journey. As Dunbar confirms the woman 'is presented less as a character than a construct – or presumed construct – of a series of macho fantasies' (47). The travellers' first encounter with the woman not only destroys the fantasy of her, but also illustrates how masculinised she has become as a result of the savage environment, and the treatment she has received from her husband. Added to her physical appearance in men's boots she also carries a rifle, she kicks the dog and she shouts rather than speaks (269-70). The masculinity fits well within an environment of a 'whare roofed in with corrugated iron [...] and a creek and a clump of willow trees' (269). The vocabulary is typical of New Zealand in this time period and places the woman firmly within the basic and rough-hewn setting of the backblocks. Smith discusses the links between this story and *Rhythm*'s aims highlighting how '[g]ender categories are unstable not because binary oppositions are being contested and undermined, as they were by *Rhythm*'s artists, but because an exhausted woman has to play the female role of bearing children, and the traditionally male one of defending herself' (2000, 90). The instability of gender roles is represented as a direct result of environment and this is addressed within the story itself but it also extends to the outer frame of the narrative voice.

Throughout the story there is the expectation that the narrator is male, travelling with two other male companions. Their jovial banter about a female barmaid, develops a perceived male camaraderie of typical patriarchal and sexual themes. Throughout our reading of the

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<sup>23</sup> The notes to the story describe these as 'Leather half boots' (*CWI*, 277). The implication here is that they are typically male dress.

story the depiction of the woman is filtered through what we imagine to be a male perspective. This enables the objectification of the woman to sit within perceived acceptable parameters of typical male behaviour. If the voice is female, then our perception of what is acceptable is unreliable and, in this narrative, therefore uncanny. A woman taking part in the objectification and sexualisation of another woman becomes uncanny in respect of subverting those things which have been ‘once well-known and [had] long been familiar’ (Freud, 1919, 124).

As noted above, there are hints throughout the story to suggest that the narrator is female. When the travellers first arrive, although it is Hin who asks for the embrocation the woman at the store turns to the narrator: ““Stop if yer like!” she muttered, shrugging her shoulders. To me – “I’ll give yer the embrocation if yer come along”” which suggests that she feels safer inviting a woman into the store, rather than a man (270). Once in the store, the woman begins a conversation about breast feeding: ““I ’ad a bit of trouble with ’er one way an’ another. I ’and’t any milk till a month after she was born and she sickened like a cow”” (271), which is an unlikely conversation to have with a man.

The expectation that the narrator is male is also built on the idea that a woman travelling alone with two men is improbable, but even this is questioned at the end of the story by the exchange between the narrator and Hin:

Through the rain we heard Jo creak over the boarding of the next room – the sound of a door being opened – then shut to.  
‘It’s the loneliness,’ whispered Hin.  
‘One hundred and twenty-five different ways – alas! My poor brother!’ (276)

Once again, our own understanding of the situation is thwarted due to the uncertainty about whether the female narrator is Jo’s sister. Within the frame of a narrative that has exploited and then subverted our expectations we are suspicious that this comment could be ambivalent. The expression and added exclamation mark could suggest a simple expression of surprise (oh, brother!), although the *Oxford English Dictionary* confirms that this

expression is recorded as being in use from 1945 onwards and may not have been known to Mansfield at the time of writing 'The Woman at the Store' (OED, 2017). The *Oxford English Dictionary*, however, records when new words are used in writing but it cannot confirm whether a term was in common use in speech before it was officially recorded. Whether or not we can be certain that the narrator is Jo's sister, the narrator as a female forms part of the narrative schema which 'destabilises our certainties with regard to the perception of sexual identity, this time in order to emphasise how in a macho colonial context the feminine makes itself over, or is subsumed into, the masculine' (Dunbar, 47).

The questioning of concepts of the female self is addressed here as an aspect of colonialism. Lydia Wevers relates Mansfield's narrative objectives to her cultural heritage:

Mansfield positions her narrative exactly at the point at which the separation of colonial identity is most evident. Here the double view, of the woman who is both object and other, destabilises and inverts the cultural identity of the colonial subject, and the gender stereotype of the woman. The woman at the store has become someone, or something, that Hin and the narrator are not expecting; the cultural separation of her selfhood which is represented as a wax doll barmaid who has become the woman in the bush with a rifle has resulted in an identity that is distinctive in its colonialism, but also distinctive in its moral otherness. She is herself colonised/appropriated, become savage, undesirable. (45)

There are several points here that relate to Mansfield's conceptualisation of the woman's selves. Firstly, the narrative sets up expectations of a woman who is pretty and flirty who is revealed to have been broken down by her situation. She is 'no longer object but subject, no longer woman but unwoman' (Wevers, 44). The woman becomes uncanny; in Freudian terms she is so objectified as to become the automaton, a 'wax doll' (272), where there is 'doubt as to whether an apparently animated object really is alive' (1919, 135). The construct of her as the pretty barmaid is an objectification that is quickly destroyed by the reality of the situation. In her objectified state, the view of her as a fantasy by the travellers, there is certainty as Hin relates having met her before. In her reality, the rough, damaged woman at the store, there is no certainty, her masculine traits blurring the boundary between male and

female. She is 'other', not the woman as the object of their fantasy but masculinised as a result of her environment.

Additionally, the description of the inside of the store places the woman at the intersection of European/colonial, as Wevers comments above 'exactly at the point at which the separation of colonial identity is most evident'. The narrator describes how 'the walls are plastered with old pages of English periodicals' and the 'mantelpiece above the stove was draped in pink paper' within which is placed 'an ironing board and a wash tub' (270). It seems incongruous for the woman to 'imagine bothering about the ironing' (271) in a space where 'flies buzzed in circles around the ceiling' and which is 'adorned with broken cane chairs' (270). The woman's positioning between the European ideal of colonisation and the colonial settler's reality calls into question idealised notions of the colonies but also points to the stress that results from the woman's sense of self being placed firmly between the two identities. The woman is no longer represented by European ideals of female but neither does she fit within her colonial environment – the 'separation of colonial identity' of Wevers's comment – and is therefore viewed as 'other', a woman beyond categorisation.

Wevers further argues that 'the visible cultural identity of the woman at the store is seen to have as much substance as her pinafore; it is a kind of dressing concealing her transformation into other, unknown, phobia; her appropriation by the savage spirit of the country' (Wevers, 44). The woman is a construct of others and this is aided by the structure of the narrative on three time scales: the immediate past of the events the narrator relates, the past of the woman when she committed the murder (although we do not know whether this is the immediate past), and the past of the woman as a wife when her husband was alive (the 'wax doll barmaid'). These timescales are overlaid by the present of the narrator as she tells the story to us. The story of travellers' visit to the farm, and the construction of the narrative

on three timescales using the memory of both the travellers and the child, work to combine the construction of a number of 'selves' for the woman.

Each of these 'selves' relates to one of the timescales: the self of the immediate past in the events unfolded by the narrator (the 'female flesh', 272) the self of the long past (the woman who knows 'one hundred and twenty-five different ways of kissing' according to Hin, 272) and the self who killed her husband ('the woman shooting at a man with a rook rifle and then digging a hole to bury him in', 276). Each of these is filtered through the narrator's consciousness and her memory, and we have no direct access to the woman's inner thought processes. The many selves of the woman are therefore, constructed by external perceptions. The mediation of the narrator's consciousness reduces the woman's three selves to 'types' rather than formed consciousnesses. Monika Fludernik argues that 'narratives construct selfhood as individuality and functional role' (260). Identity and functional role then, seem bound together but this is shown to be in conflict. The caricature of domesticity reveals how these roles are constructed from stereotypical behaviour and expectations, here bound to the colonial/European relationship. Despite the woman's situation she continues to behave in the stereotypical behavioural patterns of domesticity, even though these actions are worthless in her environment. Simultaneously, travellers' expectations of her as the saucy barmaid are exposed as specious. Each of these roles is examined and illustrated as a falsity. None of these actually define the woman except to objectify her or to reduce her to a functional role as wife and mother, sexual object and murderer. What she becomes, in effect, and in keeping with the uncanniness of the narrative, is the 'other' borne out of the dissonance of the expectation of the travellers (the fantasy) and the woman's reality.

In 'The Woman at the Store' Mansfield adopts New Zealand as a locus for exploring the pressures placed on the self by ideals of colonial settlement. The use of unreliable narration highlights how perception can be unstable, and therefore the conceptualisations of

the selves of the woman by the travellers are constructs of male fantasy. By using a female narrator, and delaying this revelation, Mansfield adds another layer to the questioning of the stability of gender boundaries. Within a narrative that is uncanny, the woman is depicted as 'other'; neither the fantasy of woman constructed by the travellers nor the settled colonial female but a masculinised version that the travellers are unable to reconcile with their notions of female. Mansfield displays the effect that these categorisations and their associated expectations have on the self of the woman illustrating how her lack of categorisation means that she can only be termed 'other'.

From the discussion of an uncanny narrative set in the New Zealand backblocks, I want to move onto a story that returns to the familiar domestic setting of some of Mansfield's earlier stories. The story 'New Dresses', published in *Rhythm* in October 1912, is a return to the satirical domestic drama produced for the *New Age*. The footnote to the story in the *Collected Works* highlights how, although the story was published in *Rhythm* it may have originally been intended for the *German Pension* collection and discarded (*CWI*, 300). However, according to Smith, its 'exploration of the hypocrisies of the Empire City is more subtly nuanced than Mansfield's early skits on British life' (2000, 65) and is more in the style of psychological realism than a simple satire, suggesting that it may have been reworked before being submitted to *Rhythm*. Its use of the 'hypocrisies of the Empire City' as an underlying theme also aligns it with the New Zealand stories presented to *Rhythm*.

### **'New Dresses' (1912)**

'New Dresses' is the story of a weekend in the life of the Binzer family. Frau Binzer, along with her mother, is making cashmere dresses for her two daughters to wear to church the following day. The dresses become the focus in the narrative and the making, and subsequent wearing of them, becomes a vantage point from which to view the family relationships. The

action of purchasing, organising and making the dresses also gives rise to a contemplation of issues of the self for the main protagonist, Frau Binzer. Whilst Fullbrook has argued that in 'New Dresses' 'the execution is uncertain – the focus wavering, the substance over ample' (Fullbrook, 40), it is nevertheless possible to envisage in this story the beginnings of the careful control of the depiction of consciousness of the later stories.

Jahn argues that in 'treating subjectivity not as a distortion to be got rid of in the interest of science and empiricism, the modernists looked at a world shaped by individual perceptions, and they were fascinated by what they saw' (95). This he relates to James's description of four friends who each provide a different description of a visit to a park (1890, 286-7). Judith Ryan, writing of Virginia Woolf, further argues how for the modernists, 'subjectivity was not itself a stable entity. Developing a single, consistent point of view no longer appeared to be a faithful way of representing reality' (19). These points represent a good starting point from which to view Mansfield's narrative schema in 'New Dresses'. In 'The Woman at the Store' Mansfield addresses issues of perception, illustrating how conceptions of the self are dependent upon others, for example how the formulation of the many selves of the woman takes place within the minds of others. However, in 'New Dresses' Mansfield addresses how the main character formulates more than one, and often conflicting, conceptions of her selves and this is achieved textually by submitting 'narrative information to a perspectival filter' (Jahn, 94). What Jahn designates as a 'perspectival filter' is the opportunity to showcase the inner processes of a character, either by focalising the narrative or by utilising free indirect discourse. In 'New Dresses' Mansfield favours the latter and the access the reader is given to Frau Binzer's consciousness demonstrates the points made by Jahn and Ryan above; that perception, when seen through the eyes of an individual, becomes unstable and can be shaped by a number of indices, such as feelings, the views of others and memories of the past. Below I will illustrate how the use of free indirect discourse

in 'New Dresses' foregrounds perception as shifting and how this can be used to examine issues around the concept of the self.

In her work on empathy in modernist writing, Meghan Marie Hammond highlights how

authors reconfigure notions of intersubjective experience; their writings mark a key shift away from sympathetic forms of literary representation toward empathetic forms that strive to provide an immediate sense of another's thoughts and feelings [...] these include interior monologue, stream of consciousness narration, narrative marked by anachrony and fragmentation, and rapidly shifting character focalisation. (4)

Hammond's statement highlights how we acknowledge that others see things differently from ourselves, by having 'an immediate sense of another's thoughts and feelings', and this allows for an empathetic rather than a sympathetic approach to the actions and views of others. I will show how Mansfield takes this notion one step further to engage with the idea that because perception is unstable we also perceive things differently at different times and, therefore, the actions and perceptions of others are open to multiple interpretations and empathetic responses.

This is often shown in Mansfield's narratives in relationships between characters. In 'Millie' discussed below for example, the eponymous character responds to the young accused man, Harrison, firstly with tenderness adopting a nurturing attitude towards him, which later gives way to the adoption of a different standpoint, relying on the convictions of her husband. In each case the nature of the narrative, with Millie's inner thoughts and processes at the reader's disposal, elicits an equally empathetic response from the reader in both cases (see discussion below). Moreover, Bruce Harding argues that in 'The Woman at the Store' 'the literary personality of Mansfield (the implied author) possesses a far greater tolerance and empathy for the woman at the store even in her violence than her narrator displays' (129). Whilst the focalisation of 'The Woman at the Store', discussed above, may explain Harding's belief in Mansfield's empathetic understanding of the woman, the notion

of the implied author adds another layer to the complexity of that story, and another avenue of exploring perception and the self. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan defines the implied author as ‘the governing consciousness of the work as a whole’ (87) and therefore separate from the actual author, Mansfield herself. Mansfield’s empathetic reaction to the woman as noted by Harding is therefore separate from the response of Mansfield as author, and this underscores the concept of perception as individual and shifting. Mansfield herself may enjoy a different response to the woman and as implied author can project an alternative, the two selves of the author (real and implied) operating as separate entities.

Hammond’s statement above also points to the importance of ‘notions of intersubjective experience’ (4) and this is a relevant aspect of the narrative schema in ‘New Dresses’. Mansfield achieves an ‘intersubjective experience’ in two ways, firstly by allowing for multiple focalisations and secondly, by illustrating how the interaction of family members affects their conceptualisations of the self. Hammond asserts that ‘Mansfield’s contribution to empathetic narrative lies in the way she moves between minds’ (92). In ‘New Dresses’, the narrative shifts between Frau Binzer’s consciousness and that of her daughter; this may not be in equal measure but is sufficient to allow an alternative perspective of events to be represented and therefore, serves to underscore the tension experienced by both women between the societally acceptable self and the inner self. These tensions are shown to arise as a result of their interaction with other members of the family, in particular the Frau’s husband, Andreas.

Through a combination of external detail, interaction between husband and wife and use of free indirect discourse, Mansfield constructs the self of Anna Binzer as a multiplicity of roles, serving to support her husband’s patriarchal values and imposing them upon her own children. Fludernik discusses how

[i]dentity should [...] be used in the plural – identities – to acknowledge the multiplicity of roles and their contextual relevance. None of these roles allows one

to establish a real self, a definite identity. Rather, identities are constituted in the interplay of individuals with other people in social contexts. (261)

This corresponds with the Jamesian psychological theory of the adoption of roles in each social context (1890, 294). In Mansfield's narratives this translates into a satirical examination of how a woman's subjugation has a direct impact on the establishment and maintenance of these identities in the form of roles. In Chapter 3, I discussed 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' (1910) in which Mansfield begins to experiment with the idea of selves as multiple but crushed under the strains of patriarchal roles for women. Frau Brechenmacher is permitted a brief respite from herself as wife and mother to envision the self she experienced before she was married. In 'New Dresses' Mansfield chooses to show this process of subjugation through the relationship between a mother and daughter.

In 'New Dresses' Anna's identity is split between a self-deceiving wife and mother, a subjugated female and, in glimpses, a young woman who is aware of her limited and frustrating position in a patriarchal household. The opening sequence depicts 'Frau Binzer and her mother sat at the dining room table putting the finishing touches to some green cashmere dresses' (*CWI*, 291). The word 'material' to describe the cashmere is presented in inverted commas in the paragraph, establishing from the outset its importance in the overall schema of the narrative. This 'material' turned into dresses, will become not only a way of establishing the patriarchal rules of the household (money held in check by Andreas), which in turn establishes the confining nature of the Frau's existence, but also the significance of the dresses symbolically as a representation of good 'maternal' values, of passing on the inheritance of patriarchal obedience and conformity. They come to stand for the self of Frau Binzer as projected to the outside world, the mother, wife, subjugated female. Nancy Gray argues that in Mansfield's stories '[o]bjects often have an almost animate presence that forms a relationship with characters' selves, one that adjusts and shifts with the contingencies generated by interactions with the socially produced spaces in which the self must encounter

its possibilities' (2011, 84). For Frau Binzer, the possibilities are confined to those acceptable to the patriarchal values of her husband. The dresses and material symbolise the Frau's obedience to those values, and the self she projects to the world as acceptor of those values. The 'material' is therefore metonymic; a stand in for patriarchal values and the rules of the household. The symbolic aspects of the 'material' therefore become the 'animate presence' of Gray's statement above, underpinning the establishment of selves under the principles of patriarchy established by Andreas. However, I discuss below how the 'material' also represents a point of conflict between Anna and Andreas and a site of a small amount of agency for Anna when she purchases material that is expensive.

Mansfield represents the selves of Frau Binzer through free indirect discourse and focalisation thus allowing the reader access to her inner consciousness, as well as providing some access to the inner processes of her mother and Elena, her unruly daughter. Additionally, she uses the names 'Frau Binzer' and 'Anna' interchangeably. What is noteworthy is that when the narrator describes the Frau working conscientiously with her mother on the dresses, she is Frau Binzer. When we are given access to her thoughts, she becomes Anna and in inverted commas we hear her say to herself: 'The way mother harps on things – it gets frightfully on my nerves' (291). The juxtaposition of the words spoken by Frau Binzer and the thoughts of 'Anna' serve to differentiate two distinct selves. The juxtaposition of these two opposing, but coexistent consciousnesses affirms Hammond's point about 'notions of intersubjective experience' being reconfigured by modernist writers (4). As I explained in Chapter 1, I do not wish to measure Mansfield against modernist principles but here she does nevertheless exemplify Hammond's point that the conceptualisation of Anna/Frau Binzer's selves is achieved through modernist representations such as free indirect discourse but is also demonstrative of the 'intersubjective' nature of those conceptualisations.

For a moment we get a glimpse of ‘Anna’, the young woman struggling to remain within the restricted role of wife and mother. When her mother leaves the room, we move from the narrator’s physical description of the ‘sharp line’ from ‘nose to chin’ (292) to Anna’s inner thoughts represented through free indirect discourse. Her inner monologue reveals her feelings of frustration and suffocation with motherhood: ‘there seemed to be no air in the room, she felt stuffed up’ (292) and like Frau Brechenmacher’s brief remark of frustration in her adherence to patriarchal rules that trap her in her role of wife and mother, ‘always the same [...] but stupid’ (188), Anna articulates how ‘it seemed so useless to be tiring herself out with fine sewing for Elena. One never got through with children, and never had any gratitude from them’ (292). Mansfield’s control of the perspectival filter (Jahn, 94) acknowledges that perception is subjective, that there is no single, stable viewpoint allowing her to demonstrate that this applies equally to one’s concept of oneself. Anna Binzer fluctuates between the role of Frau Binzer projected to the world, and that of Anna, the young woman whose inner thoughts and feelings are revealed to the reader.

Referring back to Fludernik’s point that ‘none of these roles allows one to establish a real self, a definite identity’ (261), the dual nature of Anna’s conceptualisation of the self can be read in terms of Gray’s ideas about the ‘almost animate’ dress material. The material then becomes a site of interpretation of those conceptualisations, in the forming of a relationship that ‘shifts with contingencies generated by interactions with the socially produced spaces’ (84, quoted above). The ‘material’ is only important because of what it represents and how this affects Anna’s realisation of her selves in the narrative. The self of Frau Binzer as wife and mother must produce the dresses from the material, almost as if she is casting a self from the fabric; conversely, the inner self of Anna is suffocated and bored with this role. The fleeting nature of each of these selves, and their interchangeability illustrates how they are indefinite, as Fludernik suggests.

The continuation of the use of free indirect discourse reveals Anna's feelings towards her two children and her self-deception that her son, from whom she must keep Elena at a distance, 'had all his father's sensitiveness to unsympathetic influences' (292). Anna's animosity towards Elena has already been articulated in the dialogue between herself and her mother, and this confirms that she does not fit with Andreas's sense of what a woman should be. The animosity that Anna feels towards her daughter reveals her frustration with her own situation as Elena's mother and the conflict between her many selves. She occupies the ambivalent position of feeling constricted by the roles she must play, but at the same time having a sense of her failure to perpetuate those roles within her own daughter. Elena is 'so careless about rubbing her hands on anything grubby' but when admonished for being dirty simply 'shrugged [...] and began stuttering' (291). In a paragraph that moves in and out of Anna's consciousness, Elena's behaviour is mirrored by Anna when she goes into the garden:

The blind was up, she could see the garden quite plainly: there must be a moon about. And then she caught sight of something shining on the garden seat. A book, yes it must be a book, left there to get soaked through by the dew [...] She shrugged her shoulders in the way that her little daughter had caught from her. In the shadowy garden that smelled of grass and rose leaves, Anna's heart hardened. (293)

The phrase 'yes it must be a book' indicates the subtle move into Anna's inner thoughts. When Anna realises that the book has been left by Elena her 'heart hardened' because this carelessness comes to represent Anna's own failure to instil in her daughter the sense of decorum and responsibility expected of a young lady. Elena's waywardness means that Frau Binzer's mask is slipping, she cannot maintain the persona of successful wife and mother if her daughter continuously undermines this role with her behaviour. Moreover, the hardening heart is Anna's realisation that Elena is a newer version of her the previous self she glimpses momentarily in the freedom of the garden and additionally indicated by the repetition of the shoulder shrugging gesture.

Anna's lack of empathy towards her daughter can be explained in several ways. From the very first page of the story, the animosity between mother and daughter is established, for example, the old mother wonders, 'why Anna had such a down on Elena' (291). What is also clear is how alike Anna and Elena seem to be, the old mother saying to Anna, 'you know she's always stuttered. You did the same when you were her age' (292). Anna's role as wife and mother includes having to pour Elena into a feminine mould, a self that Elena is reluctant to adopt. Anna resents the fact that Elena makes this job hard, but she also hates herself for forcing her daughter to conform to the requirements of a woman, a role she loathes herself. Maintaining the mask of wife and mother is exhausting and her lack of empathy for Elena also derives from the realisation that Elena is partly to blame for that exhaustion. Additionally, Elena reminds Anna of her youthful self and the pain of seeing her former self in her daughter brings home her complicity in re-establishing the patriarchal values that she would like to rebel against.

The scene in the garden reinforces Anna's knowledge of her previous self and is recalled by her daughter's action of leaving the book. The glimpse of this previous self highlights Walter Pater's argument in his Introduction to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, that our impressions are in 'perpetual flight' divided by time, which is 'infinitely divisible' and so all that is 'actual in it being a single moment gone while we try to apprehend it' (365). This results in 'that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves' (366). The 'mental construction' of the self 'becomes a consciously creative act' (Ryan, 28) and one that Anna struggles to maintain. In this story Mansfield shows how Anna's self-construction is directly related to the pressure she is under to maintain the mask of housewife and mother. Fittingly, Anna's thoughts are interrupted by her husband, Andreas, arriving and she immediately lays the blame for her neglect of

domestic duty and her 'moon gazing' on Elena. The self of the young, free Anna is glimpsed – and then quickly hidden – by Andreas's arrival.

Anna is acutely aware that in her role as wife and mother she is expected to raise a daughter who doesn't 'kick up a row' (295), but instead has the domestic talents a man expects of a wife. Throughout the narrative Elena is shown to rebel against these prescribed roles, for example in showing no maternal instinct towards her brother by 'the peculiar way she treats Boy, staring at him and frightening him as she does' (292). (It is interesting to note that the 'Boy' is not named because it is his gender that is important, and the lack of nomenclature reemphasises this and sets him apart from Elena and Rosa). Elena is forced to hide her new cashmere dress because she tears it and her thoughts reveal how she is aware of the correct behaviour but wants desperately to rebel against it: 'now and again she wanted to shout, "I tore it, I tore it," and she fancied she had said it and seen their faces' (298). Smith notes how '[s]he wants to remove her own mask and theirs but has learnt very early on that roles and disguises are part of domestic life' (2000, 66). As in other narratives, Mansfield uses a child's perspective (or a child hidden within an adult) to illustrate the unnaturalness of these roles and that a child, unaware of the nuances of societal play acting, does not understand why these things must be as they are. For example, in 'At Lehmann's' (1910) Sabina's naivety about matters of sex and childbirth is used as an opportunity to explore women's roles.

Although Elena's behaviour (and thoughts of behaviour) are of nonconformity, Anna also exercises small acts of rebellion. Although the cashmere dresses symbolise everything that Anna feels she must achieve in her role as wife and mother, this is tempered by purchasing the most expensive fabric for the dresses. Her act of rebellion is set against the financial strictures placed upon her by her husband to prevent her overspending (a theme repeated in 'Reginald Peacock's Day' [1917]). Anna exploits her position and her femininity

to get away with those acts of rebellion. Game playing and coyness in producing the bill for her husband, playing ‘with a button on his waistcoat’ and remarking how she ‘forgot the exact price [...] they were so cheap’ (294), illustrates her financial dependence on Andreas but also shows how, despite knowing that he will be angry, she purchased it anyway. In this act of rebellion, she shows both self-confidence in her ability to placate him but also grasps at the small amount of agency she is allowed in this relationship.

The purchase does, however, illustrate an element of self-deception. Anna convinces herself that she makes the purchase on Andreas’s behalf and for his benefit. In making the dresses she panders to the idea that it is important for the children to be seen in the dresses. This is not only a vindication of her role as wife and mother, but it also allows her to deceive herself into believing that appearances matter. This would seem ironic in a narrative that establishes from the beginning that appearances are simply masks, quickly removed and fragile. As Fullbrook highlights, Mansfield ‘satirises the major features of sexist domination’ in which ‘power is money’ (46-7) and the purchase of cashmere instead of cotton reinforces Andreas’s status but also ironically, Anna’s role as a good wife and mother.

Referring back to Hammond’s statement that there was ‘a key shift away from sympathetic forms of literary representation toward empathetic forms that strive to provide an immediate sense of another’s thoughts and feelings’ (4) and reading the passage below in light of this comment, Anna’s self-deception is illustrative of the notion that perception in Mansfield’s narratives is formulated differently by the same character at different times. The change of perception comes about when interacting with others. As Anna walks with her husband to church she revises her perception of their relationship:

Anna decided that was really generous and noble of him [...] she squeezed his hand in church - conveying by that silent pressure – it was for your sake I made the dresses, of course you can understand that, but *really* Andreas. And she finally believed it. (295)

Like Vera in 'A Dill Pickle' (1915) (see discussion in Chapter 5), a memory is revised and the perception of the experiencing self and the narrating self differ. In this passage this is achieved initially through focalising the scene from Anna's viewpoint and then slipping into free indirect style so that the reader has access to her inner monologue. Her self-deception arises because she may be married to a man who can afford cashmere, yet beneath this illusion is a woman treated as a child, not trusted to have her own money and one who suppresses the real 'Anna' as is illustrated by revealing how her daughter is a replica of her younger self. Smith summarises how 'Mrs [Binzer's] self-deception, masking the self from the self, involves an ordinary domestic cruelty which is mercilessly revealed in Mansfield's stories of family life' (2000, 64). The self-deception then, forms part of the mask wearing, an added layer where the Jamesian 'knower' is deceived by the 'known'. Smith's point interprets the narrative in one way, although I would argue that Anna's delegation of a greater degree of agency to her husband is mitigated against by the fact that she does achieve her own aims. She purchases the more expensive fabric with little consequence, as if she regains some of the agency by being extravagant. Her actions call into question why she purchased the more expensive fabric. One interpretation is that it is, as argued above, an act of rebellion that Anna justifies when she expresses how 'it was for your sake' (295), blaming her husband. However, the narrative leaves this open to another reading, that Anna wants the status associated with the more expensive fabric for herself. The rivalry between the selves of Anna and Frau Binzer is suitably represented by this ambivalence. The hypocrisies of being married, of getting what one desires but also maintaining appearances, are depicted as a necessary self-deception.

The ending of the story provides another ambivalent reading of Anna/Frau Binzer and her conceptualisation of her self. The narrator tells us, 'Elena knelt on the dusty hassock without lifting her skirt. But it did not matter – Anna quite forgot to notice' (300). We are left

wondering whether Anna has accepted that her daughter will never conform to the patriarchal rules of the household, whether Anna vicariously rebels against those societal roles through her daughter, or whether she is just worn down with the effort of maintaining the mask. Gray suggests that Mansfield

puts unresolved tension – in use, in the characters, in the text – into play in such a way that it becomes itself a site of meaning. The notion of self that we encounter on Mansfield's pages comes to us in forms persistently resistant to definition. Nor does Mansfield set out to pin down or redefine this creature anew, but instead creates unstable narrative spaces where we are invited to catch sight of it as if out of the corner of the eye, register its effects, and let it go. (2011, 81)

Our inability to conclude that Anna conceptualises herself in a single way relates to the self as unstable, as Fludernik establishes above, identity is multiple, a definite identity beyond our reach (261). What Mansfield establishes in this narrative is the interconnection of self and social situation. She deliberately places characters in positions of tension and conflict (the material too expensive, the tearing of the dress) to reveal how the mask slips to reveal a glimpse of the self below (Anna in the garden for example). The idea that the self is 'persistently resistant to definition' sits well with the story's structure according to the tenets of psychological realism, 'presenting the world as it appeared to characters, subject to beliefs, moods and emotions' (Jahn, 94-5). Mansfield achieves this through the adoption of free indirect discourse as a narrative device, allowing access to the inner thoughts of both Anna and her daughter.

In 'New Dresses' the focalisation and free indirect discourse permit the reader to observe the interchangeable selves of Frau Binzer and Anna, illustrating how we perceive things differently at different times and therefore, the actions and perceptions of others are open to multiple interpretations and empathetic responses. In discussing Mansfield's story 'Prelude', Hammond argues that Mansfield 'tackles the problem of fellow feeling by using an empathetic narrative structure that collapses intersubjective distance' (94). By empathetic narrative structure Hammond refers to Mansfield's use of focalisation and free indirect

discourse. In the story I discuss below, this ‘intersubjective experience’ (Hammond, 4) allows the reader to consider how Millie’s adoption or construction of her selves is a result of her environment and interaction with others. In this story, Mansfield returns to New Zealand as a setting, writing for the newly formed magazine, the *Blue Review*.

### **The *Blue Review***

In 1912, Charles Granville (alias Stephen Swift), who had been the financial backer for *Rhythm*, absconded leaving Murry and Mansfield in debt. Following the demise of *Rhythm* after only another five issues, they established the new publication the *Blue Review* which ran from May to July 1913. The *Blue Review*, whilst a ‘prudent investment [...] establishing the couple’s credentials in literary London’ that ‘led to them meeting the Woolfs’, was nevertheless lacking in the ‘stunning visuals that made *Rhythm* distinctive’ (Snyder, 2). It could, however, boast of contributors such as D. H Lawrence, Gilbert Cannan and Rupert Brooke and Mansfield herself published four stories in the magazine. McDonnell has suggested that towards the end of the *Blue Review*, Mansfield, growing in confidence as a writer, wanted now to extricate herself from editorial influences (75). A letter to Murry of May 1913 shows some editorial differences of opinion over Mansfield’s own story ‘Epilogue’:

I’ve nursed the epilogue to no purpose. Every time I pick it up and hear ‘youll keep it to six,’ I can’t cut it. To my knowledge there aren’t any superfluous words: I mean every line of it. I don’t ‘just ramble on’ you know [...] I feel as fastidious as if I wrote with acid . . . if you and Wilfred feel more qualified for the job – oh, do by all means (*LI*, 124)

She initially asserts her own authority as a writer, ‘I don’t just ramble on you know’, emphasising that she puts consideration and thought into every word, but then she seems to concede the point, ‘if you and Wilfred feel more qualified for the job – oh, do by all means’.

Nonetheless, I would read this comment as sardonic and at this stage in Mansfield’s

career as a writer, it reveals her increased agency over her writing. In the quotation above she continues, remarking that ‘I hate the sort of licence that English people give themselves’ (*LI*, 124). Her comment about ‘English people’ is telling, marking herself out as other than ‘English’ at a time when she was producing stories set in New Zealand. This could be indicative that her cultural misalignment may be the root of the editorial difference with Murry discussed above. For *Rhythm*, Mansfield’s search for cultural belonging (Snaith, 113) is illustrated in her use of New Zealand as the impetus for creativity, and after a brief reinstatement of her satirical sketches (‘New Dresses’, ‘Epilogue I’, ‘Epilogue II’) Mansfield returns to New Zealand as a setting for ‘Millie’ published in the *Blue Review*, in June 1913.

### **‘Millie’ (1913)**

In ‘Millie’ Mansfield returns to a woman’s bleak existence in the New Zealand backblocks to explore the psychological effect of environment and social boundaries on a woman’s self-conceptualisation. ‘Millie’ depicts a woman who hears about a murder from her husband and the escape of the alleged culprit, a young boy called Harrison. She finds Harrison when he appears on the farm, caring for him and helping him to escape, experiencing an unusual moment of maternal nurturing which quickly dissipates on the return of her husband. As with ‘The Woman at the Store’ the setting in New Zealand allows for an exploration of the damaging effects of patriarchy through extremes (extreme environment, murder).

Millie is left alone for the afternoon whilst her husband goes in search of the alleged murderer of a neighbour, Mr Williamson:

He had ridden over to the township with four of the boys to help hunt down the young fellow who’d murdered Mr Williamson. Such a dreadful thing! And Mrs Williamson left all alone with all those kids. Funny! She couldn’t think of Mr Williamson being dead! He was such a one for a joke. Always having a lark. (*CW1*, 327)

A reader familiar with Mansfield's previous story, 'The Woman at the Store', set in a similarly savage and isolated environment, could be forgiven for reading into this passage the hint that perhaps Mrs Williamson may have had a hand in her husband's murder. The links between the two stories are clear; a woman struggling to survive in the barren environment, a husband 'shot bang through the head' (327). Although there is no evidence that Mrs Williamson is brutalised like the woman at the store, whose 'front teeth were knocked out' (270), there is, however, the suggestion that having 'all those kids' and a husband who is 'always having a lark' may have had a detrimental effect on the mental stability of Mrs Williamson. Millie, meanwhile, seems oblivious to the implications of her own inner thoughts, and adopts the point of view of her husband that the young Harrison is to blame.

Millie's naïvety is suggested through her simple lexicon and the fact that she relies on others (men) for her own understanding of events. She continues:

Funny! She wouldn't think of anyone shooting Mr Williamson, and him so popular and all. My word! When they caught that young man! Well – you couldn't be sorry for a young fellow like that. As Sid said, if he wasn't strung up where would they all be? (327)

The discerning reader might ask with whom Mr Williamson was so popular. Perhaps Mrs Williamson has been subjected to her husband's infidelity, or simply that Mr Williamson's popularity kept him from home, leaving Mrs Williamson alone with 'all those kids' (327). In either case, the narrative is carefully crafted to leave room for doubt but at the same time the access to Millie's inner thoughts through free indirect discourse reveals how she relies on her husband's suggestion to interpret the events.

As in 'The Woman at the Store', the description of Millie's environment is captured within the European/colonial dichotomy. Millie is surrounded, like the woman at the store, with images of a delicate and imperial grandeur. Millie 'stared at the coloured print on the wall opposite, 'Garden Party at Windsor Castle'. In the foreground emerald lawns planted with immense oak trees, and in their grateful shade, a muddle of ladies and gentlemen and

parasols and little tables' (327). The description of the English tea party scene, with 'ladies and gentlemen' is framed within Millie's own situation where 'it was hot. Hot enough to fry your hair!' on the 'dusty road' and the 'burnt paddocks' (326), and where 'the sun hung in the faded blue sky like a burning mirror, and away beyond the paddocks the blue mountains quivered and leapt like sea' (327-8). The evocation of the shimmering and wavering heat, burning and drying everything out, is juxtaposed to the carefully manicured 'emerald lawns' and the 'grateful shade' of oak trees in England. Sitting between these two polarised geographical markers Millie

stared at herself in the fly-specked mirror, and wiped her face and neck with a towel. She didn't know what was the matter with herself this afternoon. She could have had a good cry – just for nothing – and then change her blouse and have a good cup of tea. Yes, she felt like that! (327)

The narrator's comment moves seamlessly into Millie's consciousness to show how she contemplates the mirror image with some incredulity. It is not just that she 'feels like that', it is also that she looks like that, as is implied by her suggestion that she 'change her blouse'. To Millie, changing her blouse and having a cup of tea will enable her to close the gap between what she feels and what she sees, and it highlights how her sense of self is reliant upon her physical appearance at moments of uncertainty. La Belle argues that 'since the self is never fully achieved, it is necessary to look in the glass to see how one is doing in the process of constantly reinventing the self' (17). Millie looks to the glass for reassurance. She feels that she 'could have had a good cry' but that it is 'just for nothing' indicating that she is unsure of her own feelings and the cause of her emotions. The ennui of living in the 'socio-cultural inadequacy' (Majumdar, 120) of the New Zealand backblocks is reinforced by the garden party picture and gives rise to Millie's discomfit with her self.

Mansfield often makes use of the catoptric trope, the use of a mirror image, to allow a character to contemplate issues of the self (see for example my discussion of Audrey in 'The Education of Audrey' (1908) in Chapter 2). As La Belle confirms 'the pathology of female

self-conception is often signalled not by an intense identification with the mirror image but by a fracturing of that relationship' (26). The mirror can be designated as a liminal space; it represents neither reality nor fantasy but occupies an ambivalent position between the two. The image in the mirror is just that, an image and not therefore a depiction of reality. Whilst it would appear to represent the outer self, it cannot show the inner self, and as Millie demonstrates by suggesting that she change her blouse, the outer self that the mirror shows can very quickly be exchanged for another. The 'fracturing' of La Belle's comment is represented in the mirror's ambivalence. Millie can change her blouse and the outer self she will envisage in the mirror will be changed, but that will not provide her with any certainty in her formulation of the inner self.

'Millie' is a narrative that presents the outer self as a construct, as in previous stories (see for example my discussion of 'The Swing of the Pendulum' (1911) in Chapter 3, or the discussion of 'Prelude' [1918] in Chapter 5). These constructs are interchangeable, and Millie adopts a variety of self-constructs throughout the story. When alone at the mirror, Millie is unable to grasp with any certainty her 'self' as evidenced by her shock at the mirror image and her comment that 'she didn't know what was the matter with herself' (327). Her situation, positioned between the idealistic European images in the picture and her mirror image, cause her much confusion and her only mitigation is to 'change her blouse' (327) in an attempt at a semblance of femininity. When Harrison, the young British boy, crashes into her life, she adopts 'masculine Millie' as a 'queer trembling started inside her' (328), as if to shake free from her torpor in the heat another self trapped inside her. She shouts in a 'loud, bold voice [...] "I got my gun. Come out from behind of the wood stack"' confirming to Harrison "'I'll teach you to play tricks with a woman"' (328). Millie's need to confirm that she is female is telling. She adopts a masculine stance, unafraid, loud, aggressive and the

necessity of asserting her femininity reaffirms that even in this colonial place, where masculine traits are more appropriate, Millie clings to the western ideals of her heritage.

In her interaction with Harrison, Millie becomes ‘maternal Millie’:

He was not much more than a boy, with fair hair, and a growth of fair down on his lips and chin [...] under the dust and sweat his face gleamed, white as her apron, and thin, and puckered in little lines. A strange dreadful feeling gripped Millie Evans’ bosom – some seed that had never flourished there, unfolded, and struck deep roots and burst into painful leaf. (328)

Having already articulated to herself, ‘I wunner why we never had no kids’ (327), Millie’s encounter with the boy provokes a nurturing fondness, a need to protect and mother a young person. The vocabulary of procreation, the ‘seed’, that ‘struck deep roots’ and burst into ‘painful leaf’, a reference to childbirth, and even the description of Harrison with a face that is ‘white’ and ‘puckered’ is reminiscent of a new-born. This section of the story warrants careful examination, however, as it could be interpreted in a number of ways. Millie’s feeling of dread could be indicative of regret, based on her conceptualisation of female as mother. Being childless, it could represent to her both a lost opportunity and some kind of failure on her part. Both interpretations would suggest that Millie’s concept of being female is bound up with the expectation of child bearing. Nonetheless, Millie acknowledges how she herself has ‘never missed’ having children but that she ‘wouldn’t be surprised if Sid had, though. He’s softer than me’ (327). Gender boundaries are questioned by presenting a woman who lacks maternal feeling and a man whose nature is softer than his wife’s.

Another possibility is that the ‘dreadful feeling’ is a suggestion of the pain of childbirth itself, or the life of drudgery that ensues for women trapped in an endless cycle of child bearing. The vocabulary of the narrative seeks to establish that there is nothing feminine about childbirth, the ‘burst into painful leaf’. Millie’s lack of experience, and in her isolation, lack of understanding of these matters means that she is unaware of the reality of child bearing, hence her momentary yearning for it. Millie’s encounter with Harrison means that

her maternal drive suddenly materialises but it is transient. Once her husband arrives home her feelings quickly dissipate.

The ending of the narrative reasserts how Millie's environment plays into her understanding of her self as she shouts: 'A – ah! Arter 'im Sid! A-a-a-h! Ketch 'im, Willie. Go it! A-Ah, Sid! Shoot 'im down. Shoot 'im!' (330). She reverts to her husband's perspective, hiding her tender feelings for Harrison and reverting to the inarticulate, masculinised and subjugated female. Millie is simultaneously empowered but also ideologically subordinate. Smith has highlighted how '[t]he complexity of gender identity, its heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, that is explored in *Rhythm* became one of the preoccupations of Mansfield's fiction' (2000, 80). Here Millie exemplifies the idea that 'female' can be interpreted in a number of ways, dependent on circumstances. Like the woman at the store, Millie exhibits what would be perceived as masculine traits but whilst Mansfield explores these in an uncanny environment in one story, here Millie's situation is seen in terms of deficit: lack of female company, lack of maternity, lack of European standards of living.

## **Conclusion**

'The Woman at the Store' is a complex narrative and a move away from Mansfield's earlier satirical sketches. Using New Zealand as a setting allows her to bring alive a place that would have been unfamiliar to her readers. In this unfamiliar setting she evokes the uncanny creating a narrative that uses sinister imagery which anticipates the later revelations of the story. Into this mix Mansfield adds an unreliable narrator to illustrate how perception can be unstable, providing the reader with a description of the 'psychical reality' of the narrator rather than the 'material reality'. What follows from this is the questioning of familiar constructs of female as the travellers enjoy a fantasy of the 'wax doll' they will meet on their

journey, only to realise that she is now broken down by her hard life in the New Zealand backblocks. In allowing the travellers to construct the selves of the woman, Mansfield foregrounds how self-hood often relies on perceptions of others. Murry's comment that the story realised the notions that *Rhythm* wished to express is confirmed in Mansfield's ability to play with gender stereotypes, and also in 'embracing the flux' of reality by providing an unreliable narrator whose perceptions of the events the reader has to rely on.

In 'New Dresses' Mansfield addresses how self-conceptualisation relies on interaction with others, a narrative trope she will extend and build upon in her later stories 'Prelude' (1918) and 'At the Bay' (1922). Whilst in 'The Woman at the Store' the reader has no direct access to the woman's consciousness, in 'New Dresses' Mansfield illustrates how her use of free indirect discourse and focalisation are more adept than in previous stories. Depicting the inner thoughts of Frau Binzer allows for a separation of the self of Anna and that of Frau Binzer. Frau Binzer is wife and mother, whose interactions with her unruly daughter reveal how she perpetuates the patriarchal values that the other self, Anna, seeks freedom from. Mansfield endows Frau Binzer with some agency, however, in her manipulation of her husband and her exploitation of her femininity revealing how for women the concept of self is a multi-layered one dependent upon social situation.

In the final story 'Millie' Mansfield returns to the brutish setting of the New Zealand backblocks to show how a chance encounter affects the self-conceptualisation of the main character. Like the woman at the store, Millie is a product of her environment –uneducated, isolated and positioned between polarised concepts of the settler lifestyle and its reality. The narrative registers the effects of this positioning on Millie's sense of self through careful handling of free indirect discourse and focalisation. Given access to Millie's inner thought processes the reader witnesses Millie's encounter with the fugitive Harrison whose intrusion provides Millie with a glimpse of previously undiscovered maternal instincts. Despite

Millie's adoption of a number of constructed selves, the ending of the narrative sees her accepting the stance of her husband revealing how she remains ideologically subordinate to the masculine environment in which she lives.

These stories evidence a more assured use of free indirect discourse and focalisation than Mansfield achieved in previous stories. She is better able to use these techniques to illustrate some of the important issues of the self she wishes to convey, in particular ideas about how often the self is a construction of others and also how social interaction and environment can place pressures upon a woman's sense of self. In the next chapter, I will examine the stories Mansfield wrote between 1914 and 1918, a period in which she achieved publication of one of her longest and most accomplished stories 'Prelude' (1918).

## Chapter 5

### **‘It is more or less my own invention’: Mansfield’s writing between 1914 and 1918**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter Four, I discussed Mansfield’s writing for *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review*, illustrating how the freedom afforded Mansfield, initially as a contributor and later as an editor of *Rhythm*, allowed her to produce narratives that question the reliability of perception, whilst simultaneously representing the detrimental effects of patriarchal regimes on the conceptualisation of the female self. Using New Zealand as her backdrop in some of the stories she wrote for *Rhythm*, Mansfield began to depict inner consciousness more adeptly. This chapter examines the period of Mansfield’s writing between 1914 and 1918, a time in which her work was ‘uneven in quality and uncertain of direction’ but nevertheless began to ‘move more surely towards artistic self-definition’ (Hanson and Gurr, 43). This ‘artistic self-definition’ includes a more assured use of focalisation and free indirect discourse to represent consciousness and the self. I will illustrate how these techniques are utilised to better effect in some of the stories written between 1914 to 1918 than previously, continuing my chronological examination of Mansfield’s fiction. As Chapter 4 illustrates, the ‘self-definition’ of McDonnell’s comment in fact began when Mansfield wrote for the *Blue Review*, gaining confidence in her ability as editor of her own writing, evidenced for example by the exertion of her own opinion over Murry’s with regard to her story ‘Epilogue’ (1913).

The war years are characterised by movement in Mansfield’s personal life and periods of stasis in her writing. Of the twenty-nine pieces written between 1914-18 and included in the *Collected Works*, only nine were published during this period. Frequent house moves, journeys to and from France as well as instances of illness and grief at the death of her brother Leslie in 1915, all help explain the paucity of published works during this time. This

period then could be said to be uneven in terms of her output: at times Mansfield published very little but then produced the longest work that she would write ('The Aloe' [1915] later rewritten as 'Prelude' [1918]). Constantly on the move, she was unsettled in her personal life with Murry (her affair with Francis Carco symptomatic of her crumbling relationship with him) although this rallied and, in the spring of 1918 they married. At the same time their relationship with the Lawrences waxed and waned, and the 'profound and ineradicable' impact of the Great War on Mansfield should not be underestimated (Murry, 1954, 107). On the death of Mansfield's brother, Antony Alpers comments how 'this bereavement altered Katherine's life. Her grief completely changed the balance between her cynical side and the other and so released her main creative stream' (183).

This release in Mansfield is characterised by experimentation with dialogues and longer stories, and she used 'this time to embark on an intensive interrogation of the function and form of fictional prose, at the end of which she emerged with renewed literary and commercial ambitions' (McDonnell, 86). Whilst Mansfield published some pieces in *Signature* and the *New Age* during this period, Alpers remarks how 'although she had found her "real self" in her writing, she had nowhere to publish it' (178), providing a possible explanation for the dearth of published pieces at this time. Mansfield's widening circle of literary contacts, however, led her to Virginia and Leonard Woolf who would eventually publish the revised manuscript of 'The Aloe' as 'Prelude' in 1918.

In her personal writing, Mansfield expresses her determination to revise her writing to achieve a new direction. For example, in her diary of 1916 she writes:

But no, at bottom I am not convinced for at bottom never has been my desire so ardent. Only the form that I would choose has changed utterly. I feel no longer concerned with the same appearances of things. The people who lived or whom I wished to bring into my stories don't interest me anymore. The plots of my stories leave me perfectly cold. Granted that these people exist and all the differences complexities and resolutions are true to them. Why should I write about them? They are not near me. All the false threads that bound them to me are cut away quite. (*CW4*, 191)

Mansfield articulates here how her attitude toward her earlier writing has changed, that she is 'no longer concerned with the same appearances of things' although she qualifies this with an acknowledgement that the 'complexities and resolutions are true to them'. Her urgency in finding a new form of expression can also be attributed to her reaction to the war and its aftermath, what Alpers refers to as a 'fertile paradox of destruction and renewal' (236). She seeks to repay the 'debt of love' to her brother and 'make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the old world' (*CW4*,191). Mansfield also seeks a new way of addressing life's complexities in order to be truer to their representation. She writes in 1916 of how the 'form that I would choose has changed utterly', although she does not articulate what the new form is until much later, in a letter to Dorothy Brett in 1917, stating how it would be 'difficult to say. As far as I know it's more or less my own invention' (*LI*, 330-1).

This revelation comes at the end of a long passage in which Mansfield tries to elucidate how, in order to write, she must first experience what it feels like to understand the internal mechanisms within someone or something else:

when I pass the apple stalls I cannot help stopping and staring until I feel that I, myself, am changing into an apple, too [...] when I write about ducks I swear that I am a white duck with a round eye, floating in a pond fringed with yellow blobs and taking an occasional dart at the other duck with the round eye, which floats upside down beneath me [...] There follows the moment when you are *more* duck, *more* apple or *more* Natasha than any of these objects could ever possibly be, and so you *create* them anew [...] just because I don't see how art is going to make that divine *spring* into the bounding outlines of things if it hasn't passed through the process of trying to *become* these things before recreating them. (*LI*, 330-1)

This complicated articulation of the need to temporarily inhabit the form of an object or individual, to actively become the object to perceive it and therefore depict it correctly, extends to Mansfield's conceptualisation of human consciousness and the self. Whilst Angela Smith has highlighted how 'becoming the apple or the duck [...] implies the possibility of multiple selves, of a return to the semiotic where bounding outlines dissolve' (2000, 115), I

would argue that Mansfield's suggestion here is of something more nuanced and temporary. This passage illustrates how she imagines the self as a series of interrelated but delicately nuanced states, relating more to the interplay between roles than the assumption of multiple selves. In this chapter I will show how Mansfield builds upon her discussion in the letter to Brett to illustrate the multifaceted nature of the self where the many selves occupied by her characters are evidenced as interchangeable, but more importantly designed by the characters themselves. This creation of oneself is equally reliant upon circumstances and in the stories discussed here I will show how the enduring narrative throughout Mansfield's writing is one that continues to reveal how the roles carved out for women, the 'self-fashioned chains of slavery' (*CW4*, 91), have a significant effect on the construction of the individual selves of her female characters.

Building on the writing she had published with the *New Age*, *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review*, Mansfield's testing of narrative structures, such as dialogues, drama and longer narratives,<sup>24</sup> over this period led to her inclination to relinquish the authorial voice in favour of a polyphonic perspective, allowing the creation of her characters' consciousness through free indirect discourse and focalisation. The opportunity to write in a style that foregrounds the playing of a role, like drama for example, may also have allowed Mansfield to design narrative techniques that could adopt this foregrounding whilst at the same time illustrate its complexity in the conceptualisation of the self. McDonnell discusses how Mansfield rewrote the dialogue 'The Common Round' (1917) as the short story 'Pictures' (1919), saying that '[h]er experiments with dramatic forms and attempts to translate them into the medium of prose ultimately helped to consolidate the narrative technique that characterises her mature work – that is, the erasure of an external authorial perspective' (McDonnell, 96). The 'form

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<sup>24</sup> For example, Mansfield wrote longer stories like 'Something Childish but very Natural' (1914) and 'Brave Love' (1915) as well as plays and dialogues such as 'Toots' (1917), 'Two Tuppenny Ones, Please' (1917), 'Late at Night' (1917), 'The Black Cap' (1917), 'In Confidence' (1917), 'The Common Round' (1917) and 'A Pic-Nic' (1917).

that [she] would choose', as Mansfield explains above became her 'new invention' by the time she had finished refashioning 'The Aloe' as 'Prelude' in October 1917. She writes to Murry in February 1918, from Bandol, how the 'trouble is I feel I have found an *approach* to a story now which I must apply to everything. Is that nonsense? I read what I wrote before that last & I feel: no this is all *once removed*: it won't do. And it won't. I've got to reconstruct everything' (L2, 71-2). Her elimination of the narrator in the later narratives helps her collapse the gap between reader and character, so that rather than being 'once removed' we can see clearly a character's inner life through the use of free indirect discourse. Maurizio Ascari relates this technique to the cinema discussing how

[c]inema provided writers and thinkers with a new model to conceptualise the inner life, the idea of a stream of consciousness that had developed in the late nineteenth century had, in itself, a cinematic quality, deconstructing the solidity of reality and turning it into an inner spectacle, an unceasing flow of impressions that could be easily compared with the flow of a reel. (2014, 22)

Mansfield was taking small parts in cinematic productions at this time (Alpers, 239) and from this experience, and her experiments with the dialogue and dramatic genres, she could see how the quick change of scenes and the focus on the 'inner spectacle' as a constant flow could be utilised in prose to give the reader greater access to the inner workings of human consciousness. In my discussion of 'Prelude' I will show how these kinds of cinematic techniques are employed to move between the consciousnesses of different characters and to suggest simultaneity of action and thought.

This chapter focuses on three stories that are illustrative of Mansfield's developing ability to conceptualise and represent the self in her writing by eliminating the intrusive narrator present in the early stories. I will begin by discussing 'The Little Governess' (1915) and this will be followed by an examination of 'A Dill Pickle' (1917). Finally, I will discuss Mansfield's longest story, 'Prelude' (1918). These three stories have been chosen as fitting examples of how Mansfield places characters into positions that exert stress upon their

conceptualisation of the self. The circumstances in these three stories involve a young woman travelling alone ('The Little Governess'), a woman's self of sense disrupted through a chance encounter ('A Dill Pickle'), and women whose everyday lives cause them repeated stresses as a result of the roles carved out for them in a patriarchal household ('Prelude'). The purpose of the analysis of 'The Little Governess', 'A Dill Pickle' and 'Prelude' is to review Mansfield's burgeoning technical ability between 1915 and 1918. In my discussion of 'The Little Governess' and 'A Dill Pickle' I will illustrate how Mansfield uses a perspectival filter or focalisation (Jahn, 94) to contemplate aspects of the self, particularly exploring how relationships have an impact on a woman's conceptualisation of the self. In my discussion of 'Prelude' I will consider how Mansfield advances her use of focalisation, allowing the reader access to a polyphonic consciousness which permits an understanding of the Burnell household which is at once a collective and simultaneously, a set of isolated individuals. In these narratives, I will show how Mansfield addresses her own thoughts, as evidenced in her diaries and letters, on the conceptualisation of the self, in particular the issue of dependence upon others and the recognition that the self is fluid and dependent upon subjective perception.

### **'The Little Governess' (1915)**

The first story I will discuss is 'The Little Governess' published in two parts in the *Signature* in October 1915. The story follows a young woman as she journeys from England to Germany to work as a governess. After being warned by the 'lady at the Governess Bureau' (CWI, 422) to distrust everyone she meets, the young woman makes the mistake of trusting an old man who shares her train cabin, placing herself in danger. She allows him to take her around Munich and after a delightful day with him he tries to kiss her, shattering the 'grandfatherly' illusion she has built up of him. Having spent the day with him, she has also

missed the opportunity for the job as governess and must now face the consequences of her actions.

In 'The Little Governess' Mansfield exploits two well-known genres, the governess narrative and the fairy tale, to illustrate how the adoption of a perspectival filter or use of focalisation can be employed in developing a more sophisticated depiction of the nuanced state of the self. Governess narratives were popular in the nineteenth century<sup>25</sup> along with traditional fairy tales like 'Little Red Riding Hood', both often morality tales that served as a warning to young women of the dangers of inappropriate interactions with men. Marina Warner summarises Charles Perrault's tale of 'Little Red Riding Hood' thus:

His tongue-in-cheek morality sets the scene for 'Red Riding Hood' as a fairy tale of initiation, an allegory of carnal knowledge and social prohibitions, about innocent girlhood on the threshold of maturity, with the trackless forest standing in for the dangerous world, the predator for the seducer, the abuser of innocence. (114-115)

By combining the traditional themes of the fairy tale, as here described, with the reader's understanding of the governess as a very young woman going out into the world for the first time, Mansfield is able to take up a position as accuser, not of the woman-child who, in the fairy tale at least, 'is blamed for her own violation' (Frank Zipes, 17) but instead blaming the patriarchal systems 'which make such warnings necessary' (María Casado Villanueva, 17). The governess occupied the ambivalent position of holding the status of a lady, whilst at the same time finding herself in the unfortunate condition of requiring employment (Ruth Brandon, 6). As a literary motif this standpoint is appropriated by Mansfield in order to illustrate how the young woman in the story struggles to maintain a definitive sense of self because of her occupation of the liminal position between lady and employee. I will show how it is this gap that the old man (the wolf of 'Little Red Riding Hood') seeks to exploit. He

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<sup>25</sup> For example, *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë, *Vanity Fair* (1848) by William Makepeace Thackeray and *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) by Henry James.

wants her to have the manners of a lady but also desires a liaison that would normally be courted from a member of the lower classes. The little governess then, occupies the gap between respectability and servitude which opens up the possibility of exploitation by the old man. As Nancy Gray has highlighted, Mansfield often places her characters in positions of tension that tests out their ability to maintain an assured sense of self (2011, 81). In this instance the young woman encounters men who shake that sense of self, for example examining the gap between the public and private self in the mirror after the altercation with the porter (see below). I will illustrate, through a close reading of Mansfield's story, how the combination of these two well-known genres (the governess narrative and the fairy story) can give rise to a wider discourse on aspects of the self, and how such roles for women add to their uncertainty in determining their sense of self.

Fairy tales have historically been

the appropriation of folk customs and beliefs [...] translated by the Church and civil order into forms and modes of control to legitimate the dominance of Christianity, men over women and children, and rising industrial groups, specifically among the bourgeoisie, over all other social classes. (Zipes, 74)

Morality tales such as these were used as a form of social control 'evolved from male phantasy and sexual struggle for domination' (Zipes, xi) depicting little girls, like the little governess here, 'whose virtue is threatened because she forgets to control her sensual desires and disobeys her good super-ego mother' (Zipes, 42). At the beginning of Mansfield's story, the little governess is warned by the woman at the Governess Bureau (as stand-in for the 'mother') that 'it is better to mistrust people at first rather than trust them, and it's safer to suspect people of evil intentions rather than good ones' (422). It is the acceptance of this viewpoint unreservedly as the vulnerable and gullible female traveller, which henceforth guides all her interactions on her journey. This mantra from the lady at the bureau provides in fact, the crux of the story and misguides rather than guides the little governess. She is offered no explanation of what 'evil intentions' the lady is suggesting nor an indication of the

consequences of misinterpreting her instructions. The governess distrusts the porter at the railway station who then punishes her by placing her in the carriage with the old man. The lady's 'guidance' then, is the reason the governess places herself in danger.

The little governess repeatedly reassures herself in her unstable conceptualisation of her 'self'. When she first enters the train she experiences the altercation with the porter who demands a tip from her which she refuses to give:

Oh, the relief! How simply terrible that had been! As she stood up to feel if the dress basket was firm she caught sight of herself in the mirror, quite white, with big round eyes. She untied her 'motor veil' and unbuttoned her green cape. 'But it's all over now,' she said to the mirror face, feeling in some way that it was more frightened than she. (424)

The expressivity markers indicate free indirect discourse which gives way to the narrative voice and then her dialogue. This seamless slippage between perspectives provides 'a method flexible enough to incorporate both a character's self-division and her self-deception, both her impulses toward freedom and her conditioned responses to self-denial' (Sydney Janet Kaplan, 1991, 122). With the words of the lady at the bureau echoing through her mind, the little governess experiences the nuanced state of being both proud of her ability to deny the porter his tip and frightened by the interaction. The vision of her appearance in the mirror allows her a moment of reflexivity, questioning her sense of self in the disjuncture between what she sees and what she feels. As La Belle has highlighted, '[t]he reflection in the glass is at once both the self and a radical otherness, an image privileged with a truth beyond the subjective and at the same time taken to be the very essence of that subjectivity' (9). In a similar vein to James, and his concept of the 'knower' and the 'known' (1890, 42), the little governess observes herself both as subject and object. The subjective self is fluid and unrestrainable, the 'self-division' that discloses both fear and confidence, but the objective self in the mirror reveals the projection of those inner processes, the 'white' face. The 'self-denial' that Kaplan refers to is borne out of the lady's warning at the bureau: the little

governess has made a stand against what she perceived to be a danger as she was warned, but it was simply a request of a tip for a service provided, a situation the little governess has misinterpreted. The structural irony of this exchange will be revealed later when the governess's 'self-deception', her misguided certainty in her ability to judge a person's motives, leads her to misinterpret her relationship with the old man.

Janet Wilson convincingly argues that the little governess's removal of the veil is significant and 'points to [her] increasing disconnection from her real feelings of fear and terror, and hence her "authentic" self' (2014, 211). When she looks into the mirror and sees herself 'quite white, with big round eyes' she wishes to distance herself from that self, attempting to establish it as 'object' so that she can convince herself of her own words 'but it's all over now' (424). As Wilson asserts, by removing the veil the governess 'makes herself even more vulnerable' (211) as this symbolically removes her social status as a lady, making her exposed to the old man's advances as I discuss above. The removal of the veil as an act that symbolically reveals a new self is also evident in 'A Dill Pickle' which I discuss below. Vera removes her veil to talk to the man, imagining herself as his lover in their previous life together, and then draws down the veil before she leaves, symbolically representing the return to her current conceptualisation of the self.

Mansfield's integration of narrative voice and inner monologue serves to betray the close relationship between the technique of free indirect discourse and Mansfield's conceptualisation of the self. In attempting to render the self as interchangeable and fluid, as here the little governess wavers between the positions of little girl (fear) and adult (confidence), the free indirect discourse allows for perspectival positioning that places the reader inside the mind of the character and thus able to experience her wavering first hand. The free movement between nuanced states of self is replicated in the free movement of the narrative perspective. McDonnell has argued that 'the narrative voice of 'The Little

Governess' shifts between the viewpoints of the governess herself and an external, framing, narrative voice which has access to other characters' consciousness' (84). Mansfield's manipulation of narrative viewpoint to replicate the fluidity of the self is assured and illustrates Mansfield's firm command of free indirect discourse as a narrative technique.

By using free indirect discourse, Mansfield marries her discourse on the self with the familiar tropes of the fairy tale thereby eliciting a dichotomy between the reality as perceived by the reader and the fantasy world that the governess devises (Villanueva, 14). The little governess's first encounter with the old man is enveloped in focalised narrative that foregrounds the persona of the naïve young woman that the governess motif evokes. The 'four young men in bowler hats' cause her to 'shr(i)nk into her corner' and chant to herself, 'I wish it wasn't night-time. I wish there was another woman in the carriage. I'm frightened of the men next door' (424-5). She observes how 'The train seemed glad to have left the station. With a long leap it sprang into the dark' (425) and how she can only see darkness out of the window as she listens to the noise of the young men. These fantasy elements are glimpsed through the young woman's consciousness and reinforce the portrait of her that the reader has already established from their understanding of the governess stereotype. The foregrounding of her childlike reveries knits together the strands of the two genres to reveal the little governess's sense of self through free indirect discourse. The encounter with an old man who 'looked very old. Ninety at least' (425) comes as a relief to the little governess because he is 'really nice to look at' (426). This perception of him is coloured by her experiences thus far; the warning from the lady at the bureau, the altercation with the porter and the noisy men in bowler hats. Coupled with these experiences, the focalisation contributes to the reader's understanding of how the advice given at the bureau is actively working against our protagonist as we perceive the world both as it is and as it appears to the young woman. For

example, the old man is unlikely to be 90 years old, this is simply the young woman's perception of him.

The little governess begins to construct a fantasy of the old man, driven by their first exchange in which he presents himself as the polite gentleman which juxtaposes him in her mind to the rude porter who rips the 'Dame Seules' notice off the outside of the carriage. Mansfield again subjects the narrative to multiple perspectives to achieve the initiation of this fantasy:

For a moment or two big tears brimmed in her eyes and through them she saw the old man unwinding his scarf. 'Do I disturb you, Mademoiselle? Would you rather I took all these things out of the rack and found another carriage?' What! that old man have to move all those heavy things just because she . . . . (425)

The narrator's voice gives way to the old man and finally to free indirect discourse. The ellipses represent how the little governess's conceptualisation of her 'self' is nuanced, as it is quickly realised and then overcome by another, more forceful adaptation of her self. Here she moves from the tears of a child to construct herself as the magnanimous traveller allowing an old man place in 'her' carriage. She creates a fantasy of him which her lack of experience pieces together from what she perceives as evidence: 'He was a German. Something in the army, she supposed – a Colonel or a General – once, of course, not now, he was too old for that now' (425). The governess's encounters with other male characters (the porter, the men in bowler hats) has predisposed her to accept the older man as a safer option, believing that the old man's age characterises him as innocuous. She presents herself as the young woman able to offer her assistance, benevolently allowing him to stay in the carriage with her. She has then offered a kindness to a more vulnerable stranger she believes, and it is from this standpoint that she views him. She has reconstructed herself not as a 'dame seule', vulnerable and alone, but as a younger, stronger, kind travelling companion to a vulnerable elderly man. This construction and deconstruction of her sense of self, is married with the fantasy elements from her consciousness to reveal to the reader how she is likely, in her naivety, to have

misread the situation and presages the self-denial and self-deception she will endure later in her mishandling of the old man's attentions.

The exchange between the old man and the little governess, however, is likely to be jaundiced by Mansfield's use of the fairy tale elements overlaying the governess motif. The 'little' of her title translates into our understanding of the 'Little Red Riding Hood' story where the blame for her downfall is placed squarely at Red's feet (Zipes, 43). We are already expecting the 'wolf' and the bad ending for the little governess. We are predisposed therefore, to imagine her as placing herself in danger as Red Riding Hood does by disobeying her mother's instructions. Mansfield subverts this by stretching the traditional narrative to show how its nineteenth century middle-class ideals of femininity and innocence can be subjected to the scrutiny of new and emerging ideals of womanhood in the twentieth century. She adopts the fantasy to illustrate how a woman becomes vulnerable and the subject of male predators, not through her disobedience but through her inability to understand, and therefore conform to, societal protocols. She is also placed in her position because her situation in life forces her to seek opportunities, such as a position of governess, as a result of prevailing patriarchal ideologies which forced young, impoverished women into such roles.

The reader then, recognises how the old man courts and flatters the little governess responding to her explanation that 'this is the first time that I have ever been abroad at all' with, 'I am surprised. You gave me the impression, if I may say so, that you were accustomed to travelling' (426). His flattery guides her into an illusory position of safety, exploiting her vulnerability as a woman travelling alone. Whilst the reader's understanding of the naivety of the little governess is achieved by giving access only to her inner thoughts, there are points in the narrative where this becomes questionable. Consider this passage for example:

How kindly the old man in the corner watched her bare little hand turning over the big white pages, watched her lips moving as she pronounced the long words to herself, rested upon her hair that fairly blazed under the light. Alas! How tragic for a little governess to possess hair that made one think of tangerines and

marigolds, of apricots and tortoiseshell cats and champagne! Perhaps that was what the old man was thinking as he gazed and gazed, and that not even her ugly clothes could disguise her soft beauty. (426)

This passage provokes the question of whose focal point is being adopted, despite the narrator's sentence modifier 'perhaps' indicating that the comments are his/hers. The use of the adverb 'perhaps' distances the narrator from the character's thoughts, indicating a limited omniscience. The interpretation of this passage relies on an understanding of with whom the focalisation lies. If this is a shift in perspectival filter to the old man, it is subtle and more sophisticated than the depiction of inner monologue that Mansfield has exhibited before. Of this passage, Kaplan remarks '[i]n whose mind are these thoughts formulated? Would the little governess have described herself with such sensuous imagery?' (1991, 121). It could equally be interpreted as a comment by the narrator which simply augments the idea of the governess's naïvety.

Additionally, in the scene describing the governess eating strawberries, Kaplan states that '[i]n a sense she transports herself into a creature looking through the old man's eyes' but 'the charged sexuality of this encounter may be unconsciously perceived by the young woman who misplaces its meaning' (1991, 121-2). The words of the young woman as she eats the strawberries would seem to support this point. The free indirect discourse discloses the young woman's thoughts: 'What a perfect grandfather he would make! Just like one out of a book!' (429). However, the sensuous imagery, 'They were so big and juicy [...] the juice ran all down her fingers' (428), reminds us of Zipes's comment that Little Red Riding Hood's 'virtue is threatened because she forgets to control her sensual desires' (42). We are nevertheless suspicious, preferring to imagine that the switch in perspective allows for an ambivalent exploration of the sexual allure of this young woman. Whether Mansfield suggests that she should be aware of such an allure and modify her behaviour, as the traditional 'Little Red Riding Hood' fairytale would advocate, or whether she is using the

perspective of the old man to illustrate the extent to which the little governess is unaware of this allure and therefore inadvertently in danger, is left for the reader to decide. As discussed previously, Gray claims that Mansfield often ‘invites us to occupy narrative spaces that feel uncertain or undefined’ (2011, 79). She further asserts that readers should refer to

those moments when the trouble started, and to the tension those moments produce – that is, to the experience of tension itself, not just the tension in the characters or the story but the tension that Mansfield’s approach has produced in them as readers. That sense of uncertainty, produced in and by those moments, matters. (2011, 80)

Taking Gray’s comments into account, I would argue that it is the sense of uncertainty, generated here by the mixture of long-established genres with particular semantic and symbolic meaning, that Mansfield exploits in order to question the patriarchal system and its effect on the sense of self of a young female. The ‘tension’, as Gray articulates it, arises both at the level of narrative and at the level of consciousness through free indirect style. The reader is familiar with the governess trope and its connotations, as well as the traditional fairy tale morality which is here subverted. The tension then, arises from the perceived expectations of the reader and the unexpected events of the narrative. I would also argue that it is out of this tension that the discourse on self emanates. As the reader’s expectations are invalidated there arises an opportunity to explore how additionally, the expectations associated with the role of female can be questioned. The young woman’s inability to grasp a firm sense of self is reflected in the textual gaps left in the narrative.

The denouement of the story occurs as predicted by the reader familiar with the fairy tale. The little governess is subjected to a sexual assault by the ‘wolf’, delivered with the irony that ‘It was a dream!’ (432) and the realisation that the dream has in fact been her fantasy of him. Instead of the ‘grandfather’ (430) she has imagined, before her stands a sexual predator and her final ‘punishment’ of losing her place is meted out by the hotel waiter she has been rude to. Novelists of the nineteenth century used the governess narrative to

examine where the ‘prevailing cultural norms began to crack’ (Kathryn Hughes, 204), norms such as those that relate to women’s place in society under patriarchal regimes. Novelists, Hughes argues, would either ‘shore up those norms as best they can’ or ‘prize the gap apart a little further in order to look at the chaos that lay below’ (204). Mansfield takes the step of prizing apart the gap a little further by coupling the governess narrative with the fairy tale in order to manipulate the frame of expectation associated with those genres. The governess’s plight is bound inexorably with the role carved out for her by society (and in this case ‘the mother’) as the vulnerable female navigating a world of sexual danger without the means to protect herself. The toll this takes on her, and the resultant inability to gain a purchase on a unified sense of self, is evoked through Mansfield’s use of free indirect discourse allowing the reader access to the consciousness of the governess who can only grasp at momentary glimpses of nuanced states of self.

Mansfield would experiment further with the depiction of inner thought in her story ‘Prelude’ first published in 1918, allowing the reader access to more than one character’s consciousness (and at times with the effect of simultaneity) to examine the effects on establishment of self in a familial environment. Before I move on to examine that story in detail I want to first consider the story ‘A Dill Pickle’ published in the *New Age* in October 1917 which bridges the gap between Mansfield’s early and later writing in the period 1914 to 1918.

### **‘A Dill Pickle’ (1917)**

‘A Dill Pickle’ is the story of a chance meeting between Vera and a man she had a relationship with six years ago. The syuzhet (chronological events of the narrative) of the story takes place over only about a twenty-minute period, although the fabula (actual organisation of all of the events including those outside the narrative frame) spans a much

longer period (Bal, 76). This combination of a short interlude examining a much longer period through memory images, affords Mansfield the opportunity to revisit Vera's previous and hidden selves, giving rise to questions about the deliberate construction of self and its reliance on both perception and relationships with others.

Like 'The Woman at the Store' (discussed in Chapter 4) Vera's selves are revealed over timescales shown through analepsis and prolepsis. The first of these is initiated through the opening sentence: 'And then, after six years, she saw him again' (CW2, 97). The opening *in media res*, is oblique and simultaneously revealing, itself reminiscent of the contradictory and multifaceted nature of the self portrayed in so many of Mansfield's stories. The nine words of the focalised opening reveal far more than is explicitly stated. This relationship has clearly been important, indicated by Vera's ability to pinpoint exactly when she last saw 'him', the man who remains unnamed throughout the story. We assume then, that this is not an old friend, a relative or someone she is happy to encounter but as is confirmed later, is someone who forces Vera to recall aspects of herself and her relationship with the man that she has allowed to remain dormant. The words 'and then' plunge the reader into Vera's consciousness, suggesting a continuum along which we are travelling with Vera, moving back and forth between significant points in her life. This will be borne out as the narrative continues, as the fabula and syuzhet connect through analepsis and we are transported back to the 'six years ago' mentioned in the opening.

From Vera's point of view we are told that '[t]here was a tall plate of fruit in front of him, and very carefully, in a way she recognised immediately as his "special" way, he was peeling an orange' (98). The free indirect discourse serves to indicate that these two people were once intimate, betrayed by her knowledge of his 'special way'. The peeling of the orange is symbolic of an undressing image and the tone of mockery at his 'special way' belies Vera's unease at their meeting again. Their relationship, however, is unearthed as more

important to her than to him: 'Incredible! He didn't know her!' (98). The expressivity markers unmask her incredulity and immediately suggest an imbalance in the relationship. We accept that, for Vera, this meeting is inevitable and painful but she perceives that it holds less significance for him. I would argue that they are at odds immediately without even having spoken to one another and the lack of recognition that she perceives from him is enough to begin the process that must have taken place six years ago, of separation because of their incompatibility or her perception of it.

Throughout the narrative this inescapable separation is reinforced through contrasts, accented through a dissonance in the memory each experiences of their relationship. Of a visit to Kew Gardens he remembers how it was 'fine and warm' with 'bright colours', whereas Vera remembers it as an 'absurd scene over the tea table' where he became 'infuriated out of all proportion to the occasion' about the wasps (99). The dichotomy of the images recalled emphasises the personal nature of perception, that the experience for each person is individual, subjective and tempered by their own memory. This indicates an isolation from one another that will be explored further in 'Prelude' and is here foregrounded in the incompatibility of these two people. The 'warm sunshine' (99) recalls the afternoon they spent together and the opposition of warm/cold permeates the narrative becoming symbolic of the past and present.

The use of analepsis also provides Mansfield with an opportunity to explore aspects of the self as Vera recalls her previous life with this man and adjusts her memory accordingly: 'But now, as he spoke, that memory faded. His was the truer. Yes, it had been a wonderful afternoon' (99). The deliberate misremembrance allows her to adopt the self she assumed with him and to accept his annoying behaviour, to stop speaking when he interrupted, to wear the mask he expected her to wear. In her memory she becomes that self

again, the prescribed one that he expected of her, in order to remember the afternoon as he would like to remember it.

The opportunity for Vera to revisit the memory of a previous occasion, her part in it and thus herself at an earlier stage of her life, indicates how it is important in arriving at the current self that Vera adopts. We are invited to observe how she temporarily removes the mask she wears as ‘she took her little warm hand out of her muff and gave it to him’ (98) initially continuing in her role: ‘she hesitated, but of course she meant to’ (98). Throughout this short sequence we will witness Vera lower the mask to invite out into the open the sense of her previous self, the one from their relationship of six years ago, only to put it away again and leave as abruptly as she enters. Her mask is both metaphorically and literally removed as she ‘raised her veil and unbuttoned her high fur collar’ (98). The physical unmasking and loosening is met with a metaphorical detachment from her current self, allowing her to experience, if only for a few moments, a previous self. It is revealed through the memories of their relationship, however, that the perceived inequity of the relationship between them was what drove her away from him six years ago.

They begin a verbal patterning which is interrupted by him, the sing-song rhythm temporarily halted as he calls to the waitress. For Vera, this triggers a memory of how he once treated her:

“Ah, no. You hate the cold. . . .”

“Loathe it.” She shuddered. “And the worst of it is that the older one grows . . .”

He interrupted her. “Excuse me,” and tapped on the table for the waitress.

“Please bring some coffee and cream.” To her: “You are sure you won’t eat anything? Some fruit perhaps. The fruit here is very good.”

“No, thanks. Nothing.”

“Then that’s settled.” And smiling just a hint too broadly he took up the orange again. “You were saying – the older one grows –”

“The colder,” She laughed. But she was thinking of how well she remembered that trick of his – the trick of interrupting her – and of how it used to exasperate her six years ago. She used to feel then as though he, quite suddenly, in the middle of what she was saying, put his hand over her lips, turned from her, attended to something different, and then took his hand away, and with just the same slightly

too broad smile, gave her his attention again. . . . Now we are ready. That is settled.

She remembers this as something that ‘used to exasperate her’ (98). Her memory fills the silence of the conversation, the lacuna left by his interruption becomes an opportunity to revisit the self at the time of her relationship with him. Nevertheless, what she remembers is enigmatic and highly subjective. The ‘same slightly too broad smile’ is a judgment, her perception of him. Whilst this provides the sense that she has escaped from him, unlike Linda Burnell in ‘Prelude’ who only dreams of escaping the domestic drudgery to which she is subjected (see discussion below), Vera has escaped. But we ask, what has she escaped to? Although Vera may have dodged the life of a wife and mother (although the story does not indicate if she is married to someone else) she has not fulfilled her desires nonetheless, as this passage bears out: ‘she felt the strange beast that had slumbered so long within her bosom stir, stretch itself, yawn, prick up its ears, and suddenly bound to its feet, and fix its longing, hungry stare upon those far away places’ (100). The suppressed self here, the one that longs to fulfil the same desires for travel that the man has achieved, has been buried beneath the mask Vera has worn since leaving their relationship. Mansfield shows here that not only do women wish to escape their prescribed roles, there is nothing to escape to as the restrictions outside of marriage are equally as stifling as those within. We are given to understand that poverty extends beyond material possessions for women, reinforced by Vera’s admission that the piano she loved has gone. Its loss represents symbolically far more than its monetary value, standing in for all that she has not achieved in the intervening six years. The piano becomes metonymic of this loss.

The focalised narrative allows us to observe how Vera internalises her criticisms of the man, whilst he articulates his indifference towards her. He seems insensitive to her, whilst she is restrained. He expresses for example, ‘Really, for a moment I didn’t know you’

(98) and unsympathetically tells her how he has ‘really carried out all of those journeys we planned together’ (100). Vera’s critique, however, is articulated only through her inner monologue, indicating how he smiles ‘just a little too broadly’ wearing his ‘eager, lighted look’ (98) and her dismay and disappointment at not having undertaken the travelling that he has achieved becomes the subject of a fantasy, an activity internal to her consciousness. The juxtaposition of his outward expression and her inner thoughts reflects the dichotomy between the mask Vera wears outwardly and the truer self she constrains beneath. He, it would seem, has no such complexity. The suggestion is that he is in no need of a mask having nothing to hide behind, whereas Vera must maintain the role that she has constructed for herself, her loss at not having carried out her desires remains internalised. Her inner comments thus become a point of self-deception; her criticism masking her true feelings. This is not to say, however, that his words are not equally concealing. The narrative is focalised from Vera’s viewpoint and therefore we are subject to her interpretation of his words. His nonchalance and indifference could be a defence mechanism to hide his true feelings. He could be as guilty of mask wearing as Vera but whilst she internalises her self-deception, he articulates his.

The imperfections of the relationship of six years ago become clear when the man articulates how he had wanted to ‘make myself into a sort of carpet for you to walk on so that you need not be hurt by the sharp stones and the mud that you hated so. It was nothing more positive than that – nothing more selfish’ (102). His gesture of subordination revives something in Vera and her thoughts reveal that ‘the strange beast in her bosom began to purr’ (102). There is the slightest hint that Vera contemplates whether her sacrifice to live independently with its deprivations has been worth it, a contemplation of ‘lost self-possibilities’ (Dennis Brown, 16). But once again there is room for doubt and perhaps the

man's subordinate response to Vera is simply to provoke an emotion in her, to mask his hurt feelings by attempting to revive Vera's feelings for him.

Vera now having 'buttoned up her collar and drawn down her veil' (102) must return to her suppressed self and the real self, the one that holds the slumbering beast, must be put away again. The man tells her how he 'felt that you were more lonely than anybody else in the world [...] and yet, perhaps, that you were the only person in the world who was really truly alive' (102). This reads as a contemplation upon aspects of the self and the isolation from each other that the construction of the self brings. It suggests that Vera, in rejecting the life of dependency with this man, extols the 'paradoxicality of self' (Brown, 15), that in our constant striving to realise the true self we are simultaneously isolated in that quest. 'A Dill Pickle', although one of Mansfield's shorter narratives, provides a searing portrait of how a woman is required to choose between playing a role which brings with it an incompleteness of self, or independence which nevertheless requires the adoption of equally constricting roles.

Whilst the two stories discussed above illustrate how Mansfield had begun to utilise the narrative techniques she would later become famous for, in 'Prelude' she sustains a reflection on aspects of the self over a much longer narrative, enabling multiple narrative positions to be introduced. She extends the techniques discussed in 'The Little Governess' and 'A Dill Pickle' to achieve a deeper contemplation of how the self is reliant upon both perception and interaction with others.

### **'Prelude' (1918)**

'Prelude' marks a watershed in Mansfield's writing, not simply because it is her longest story but because it encapsulates Mansfield's development in her writing to that point and illustrates how she goes beyond that development, in particular with respect to her depiction

of the self. In the introduction to this chapter, I discuss for example how Mansfield wrote to Dorothy Brett about her new technique, illustrating how she wanted to inhabit the characters she describes, to see them from within. As McDonnell also remarks, Mansfield's writing over this period enables her to emerge 'with renewed literary and commercial ambitions' (86) and the publication of 'Prelude' as a longer, stand-alone story formed part of such ambition. 'Prelude' is the story of the Burnell family, who are moving out of the town into the countryside and settling into their new home. The links to Mansfield's own family background in New Zealand are clear. The family consists of Stanley and Linda Burnell, Linda's mother Mrs Fairfield, Linda's sister Beryl and Linda and Stanley's three children, Kezia, Lottie and Isabel. The story follows them through twelve episodes over three days giving an insight into their family life.

In 'Prelude', Mansfield achieves a narrative structure that shifts focus between characters to show how their inner consciousness reveals the way they conceptualise their identity. The narrative is structured episodically, with quick changes of scene and simultaneity of action, illustrating how the 'language used to depict the inner life [...] is a bridging mechanism *between* the chaotic world of subjective consciousness and the ordered world of structure, syntax and textual representation' (Drewery, 104). The manipulation of the narrative texture to simulate the inner workings of her characters' minds enables Mansfield to reveal several strands of her own conceptualisation of the self. I will summarise how the characters of Linda and Beryl are utilised to expose the self oxymoronically as both multifaceted and indefinable, and how fantasy plays a role in the representation of both Linda's and Beryl's self-understanding. I will show how the constant contrasts and parallels, not only in the structure of the narrative itself pitting scene against scene (Hanson and Gurr, 51), but also those drawn within the story serve to highlight how whilst we all seek the inner, truer self individually, this simultaneously isolates us from each other. What Mansfield

achieves is a narrative illustrating the personal struggles with the self for the women of the household but also how, despite the individual nature of this struggle, the dynamics of the family group come to have a bearing upon the conceptualisation of self for both Beryl and Linda.

The depiction of character and the representation of self in 'Prelude' rely entirely on the subjectivity of perception and this is indicated through the use of fantasy, and at times the uncanny. Mansfield questions 'whether in fact it is possible to grasp reality independent of the fleeting and impermanent effects emerging from what appears to be real. And the question not only concerns the outer, visual stratum of the world, but also its very essence and the essence of the person perceiving it' (Kokot, 68). Mansfield sketches for the reader the dichotomy of the real and imagined suggesting that, particularly in Linda's case, the self is an amalgam of both. What we perceive as reality, the persona that we create of ourselves and then project, is not just our own creation but simultaneously a creation based upon the significant influence of societal mores and pressures within the family. This is evident in 'The Little Governess' (1915) as the young woman's sense of self vacillates between the vulnerable woman/child travelling alone and the adult self, depending on the circumstances she finds herself in and her interactions with the woman at the bureau and the old man.

In 'Prelude', Mansfield establishes by degrees throughout the story that Linda is uncomfortable in her role as wife and mother and that she is pregnant again, eventually culminating in her realisation that she both loves and hates her husband (see below). Drewery has indicated how

[i]n 'Prelude', a palpable resistance to the subject positions is presented, but in the case of the character of Linda, it quickly becomes apparent that this is futile. 'Prelude' depicts Linda resisting the maternal subject position. She resents her maternal role, her husband for his sexual demands of enforcing that role on her, the resulting pregnancy, and her other children. Linda's consciousness, her thoughts and even her dreams are preoccupied with this resentment. (98)

The narrative opens with an example of this resistance to typical maternal roles. When the children will not fit in the buggy, Linda jokes ‘we shall simply have to leave them [...] we shall simply have to cast them off’ (*CW2*, 56) and the ‘strange little laugh’ that ‘flew from her lips’ indicates from the outset Linda’s incongruity as wife and mother. Her flippancy masks her exhaustion and inability to cope in her role. Linda’s most valued possessions, the ‘absolute necessities’ do not include her children, although they do include Stanley’s slippers (62). To ‘cast them off’ presages the later representation of Linda as aching to relieve herself of child-bearing and the configuration of her ‘real self’, particularly that glimpsed through her fantasies, actively takes her away from this maternal role.

As the family wakes on the first full day in their new house, in an idyllic setting with ‘a faint green sky and drops of water on every leaf and blade’ (65), we are provided with a scene in which Linda reflects on her life and through her fantasy we are privy to her sense of entrapment. The escape through her fantasy reveals how she categorises her sense of self, identifying the outer false self she wears and her inner self that longs for escape. The passage is entirely focalised from Linda’s viewpoint, representing her internal monologue as she slips between the reality of the room with its ‘glare’ and the ‘hated blinds pulled up at the top’ (68) to a fantasy world where, as she traces her finger over the poppy on the wallpaper, ‘she could feel the sticky, silky petals, the stem, hairy like gooseberry skin, the rough leaf and the tight glazed bud’ (68). Momentarily, she inhabits the fantasy world, transporting herself to another dimension to the fantasy world where everything nevertheless feels as if it is real.

Kokot summarises how:

What is merely a figment of the character’s imagination becomes fact on the page [...] the character’s point of view blends with that of the narrator, and as a result the narrative distance from the protagonist’s fantasies is blurred; they are presented as facts, even if they become so only in the observer’s mind. (68)

Mansfield insinuates here that Linda’s real life (the outer life) is as much fantasy as the feeling she experiences in the poppy because she is acting, imagining herself in her role as

Stanley's wife, the children's mother, a partial rather than complete self. Her imagination fills the void created by her dull life and loveless marriage, for example in this extract: 'How often she had seen the tassel fringe of her quilt change into a funny procession of dancers with priests attending [...] How often the medicine bottles had turned into a row of little men with brown top-hats on' (68). The repetition of 'how often' serves to underline the pattern of her life, escaping into her fantasies to avoid the repetitive and dull life that she leads. Whilst she knows these are fantasies, the line drawn between fantasy and reality is blurred, the two together forming Linda's perception and identifying for the reader through that internal process, the extent to which Linda feels trapped by her life. As Kokot points out 'the character's point of view blends with that of the narrator'. The fantasy takes her away from the pressures of motherhood that she so loathes.

Mansfield's achievement in this scene is to show how our perception cannot be relied upon if we are able to truncate the space between fantasy and reality. In terms of the self, this proposes that our sense of everything including our 'selves' is fragile and almost ethereal, as at one moment we are firmly in tune with reality and the next have entered the realm of fantasy. Linda muses over her own fantasy, highlighting in oppositional terms how 'this coming alive of things'

seemed to swell out with some mysterious important content, and when they were full she felt that they smiled [...] THEY knew how frightened she was; THEY saw how she turned her head away as she passed the mirror. What Linda always felt was that THEY always wanted something of her, and she knew that if she gave herself up and was quiet, more than quiet, silent, motionless, something would really happen. (68)

This short fantasy provides a number of indices from which we can measure Linda's conceptualisation of her 'self'. The 'mysterious important content' is the content of her unconscious, what she desires, what she can't or won't articulate. The reader then, questions what it is she is frightened of, whether it is of speaking out, of dropping the mask or the feelings that she hides from the others, but also implied here, from herself, that she loathes

her life as wife and mother. The capitalisation of 'THEY' denotes both the manifestation of inanimate objects that become animate in her fantasies and in the phrase 'THEY always wanted something from her' indicates a metaphoric representation of not only her real family with their constant demands but also of the societal mores that have trapped her within this claustrophobic sphere of drudgery as wife and mother. 'THEY' know what it is that Linda cannot articulate aloud and when she cannot look upon herself in the mirror, we realise that she would see on her own face the outer self that she is projecting to the world which to her inner self is a lie. 'THEY' know this because the internal mechanism of her unconscious, from whence these fantasies spring, identifies what she believes to be her true self. Linda's ability to be 'silent, motionless' is metaphoric not literal, indicative of the hiding of her true self. She has silenced the inner self and it is only the acting, outside self that speaks and moves almost like an automaton.

Andrée Marie Harmat summarises how in many of Mansfield's narratives the catoptric trope, the use of mirrors as a motif, is used to portray the dichotomous nature of the self:

Whether repelled or attracted by mirrors, Katherine Mansfield's characters are always presented as the sum of two independent selves. Their synchronous existence is clarified through the split evocation permitted by the looking glass – a twofold image enabling the writer to convey the impression of simultaneous permanence and the harmonic effects resulting from it. The mirror thus clearly appears as a revealer of the counterpoint of the conscious and subconscious psychological life in each individual. (120)

To look in the mirror then, is to experience a moment of collective understanding of the self: the parallel viewpoint of the outer and inner self. This Linda rejects because it acknowledges her own duplicity in living what she considers to be a lie. As a literary device the catoptric trope as a method of revelation for a character is particularly fitting for the episodic structure of 'Prelude' which has been likened to a cinematic production. It demonstrates an

affinity between the psychological inquiry cinema pursued by means of the close up and Mansfield's use of the mirror as a framework that isolates the individual,

provoking epiphanies which prove painful. Faced with themselves, individuals lose the 'defences' they put up as social beings, experiencing a condition of authenticity and vulnerability. (Ascari, 2014, 53-4)

The mirror allows Mansfield to depict the self as an oppositional model for Linda, in the same way that the little governess addresses her other self in the mirror which is 'more frightened than she' (*CWI*, 424). Linda's inability to address that opposition reflects the sense of guilt to which society has driven her. In outwardly rejecting the role of wife and mother she is averse to the subject position she is assigned to. This is her painful epiphany, reinforced later in the narrative when she realises that she occupies not only two selves but multiple selves that she refers to as 'little packets' that she wishes to hand over to her husband (88). Mansfield herself articulated similar frustrations in her diary in 1921, exclaiming, '[o]f course it followed as the night the day that if one was true to oneself . . . True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many – well, really, that's what it looks like coming to – hundreds of selves' (*CW4*, 349).

In her fantasy, Linda moves into a liminal state:

she did not feel her bed, she floated, held up in the air. Only she seemed to be listening with her wide open watchful eyes, waiting for someone to come who just did not come, watching for something to happen that just did not happen. (69)

The synaesthesia extends the metaphor of her silence, since she hears with her eyes. The mixing of senses adds to the fantasy elements of her thoughts and illustrates how far from reality she has moved. The fantasy is odd and uncanny; as she floats she is literally outside her self, the real self, looking down upon the outer shell of herself in her role. This is a liminal position; awake but not awake, real but fantasy, the inner and outer self glimpsed simultaneously. However, Linda's rejection of her subject position reveals that she is unable to articulate exactly what it is that she desires, the 'someone to come who just did not come' and the 'something to happen that just did not happen'. She allows herself to step out of her real life into the world of fantasy but imagining what life could be beyond the role assigned

to her seems to be a step too far. Her fantasy is therefore a ‘passive resistance’ as ‘[s]he fantasises escape but cannot envision what shape it would take’ (Kaplan, 1991, 114). This may testify to her lack of imagination resulting from her limited existence or may speak to the idea that she does not know exactly who her true self is and so is unable to signify what its ideal occupation and existence would be.

In the portrayal of Linda’s sister, Beryl, Mansfield also employs fantasy as a means of exploring her sense of self. Beryl’s fantasies, however, involve an ‘experiment with various self-consciously acted roles’ in which she adopts ‘various feminine identities [...] these roles are constituted by or in visual artistic and literary stereotypes: romantic heroine, femme fatale, and chaste spinster’ (Drewery, 99). In her room Beryl ‘acts out’ these roles and speaks as if performing a play: ‘Oh, how tired I am – very tired [...] pretend(ing) to be more tired than she was [...] pushing back with a languid gesture her warm, heavy hair’ (64). The lexis, reminiscent of a romance novel, indicates how the layering of artificially constructed personas is far more deliberate than the suffering Linda, whose entrapment forces her to adopt a role she loathes. Whilst Linda fantasises her escape, wearing a deliberately constructed mask to hide her true feelings, Beryl ‘tries on’ a variety of masks or selves as fantasy to escape her real life.

Beryl typifies an idealised expression of romantic relationships despite her observance of Stanley and Linda: ‘out there in the garden a young man, dark and slender, with mocking eyes, tiptoed among the bushes, and gathered the flowers into a big bouquet, and slipped under her window and held it up to her’ (64). This romantic vision is sharply contrasted with reality when Beryl acknowledges ‘how frightfully unreasonable Stanley is sometimes’ (64). Much like Rosabel in ‘The Tiredness of Rosabel’ ([1908] see discussion in Chapter 2) Beryl’s fantasy involves a vision of herself laden with riches: ‘A young man, immensely rich, has just arrived from England. He meets her quite by chance’ (65). She

imagines her escape but there is the sense that the romance does not last long, her idealised imaginings of love mitigated against her thoughts of Stanley. Her wish for 'money of her own' (65) is at odds with the romantic desire for a man with money. It seems that even with money of her own she would still seek out a relationship with a man, and the reader questions whether this speaks to the scope of her imagination in terms of what a woman can achieve. Unlike Linda, however, whose passive rebellion against her position is futile, Beryl is 'caught in the period between hope of changing and despair at the permanency of her condition' (Fullbrook, 111). The doorway to another life for Beryl is briefly left open but what she sees through the doorway is the life Linda is leading. Ironically then, what her fantasy offers her is the life of wife and mother and a husband who is 'frightfully unreasonable' (64).

By structuring the narrative episodically, Mansfield achieves the sense that scenes are taking place synchronically and this allows for contrasts and similarities to be implied between Linda and Beryl. Mansfield places Beryl both literally and figuratively outside the family group. As Linda gazes out of the window at the moon, feeling 'strangely discovered' in the freedom of the liminal space, a contemporaneous scene takes place in which Beryl, dressed in white with 'white fingers' and a 'pale shadow', appears ghostly, ephemeral and set against the 'flood of cold light' that illuminates Linda. Beryl appears peripheral in the family with no exact role and longs for romance saying, 'If I were outside the window and looked in and saw myself I really would be rather struck' (77). Whilst Linda does not want to be seen in the spotlight of the moon, Beryl actively courts it (76-7). She is contrasted with the maid (Alice) whose face is 'crimson', the images of red and white denoting one as having an occupation and clearly defined role (red faced from her exertions), and one whose pale existence is barely noticed. Unlike Linda, Beryl is unafraid to look in the mirror at her 'pale shadow' remarking 'how beautiful she looked' giving the sense that she is being wasted here because 'there was nobody to see, nobody' (77). The mirror reassures her of her own sense of

the 'beautiful' self, as there is no-one else to see her. In a moment of symbiosis this echoes Linda's sentiments of the 'someone to come who just did not come', and in both women's lives there is a lacuna although neither seems to be capable of articulating clearly how that void should be filled. Beryl's sense of her self then, is articulated in terms of roles she can adopt when she has none within the family group.

The roles that Beryl adopts, that their previous nanny, Nan Pym, refers to as her 'animation' (90), speaks to 'Mansfield's sense of the self as multiple and performative, deeply contingent upon context and interaction with others' (Moran, 13). In this family as a single woman, Beryl has no predetermined role to play and so adopts a number of subject positions. In a passage of free indirect discourse, Beryl describes herself with 'Lovely, lovely hair. And such a mass of it. It had the colour of fresh fallen leaves, brown and red with a glint of yellow', finally remarking aloud, 'Yes, my dear, there is no doubt about it, you really are a lovely little thing' (90). Despite this, Beryl's self-admiration is overshadowed by her internal sense of her own role playing and she continues with a reflection on the dichotomy of her true and false self:

But even as she looked the smile faded from her lips and eyes. Oh God, there she was, back again, playing the same old game. False – false as ever. False as when she'd written to Nan Pym. False even when she was alone with herself, now. What had that creature in the glass to do with her, and why was she staring? [...] I'm always acting a part. I'm never my real self for a moment. And plainly, plainly, she saw her false self running up and down the stairs, laughing a special trilling laugh if they had visitors, standing under the lamp if a man came to dinner, so that he should see the light on her hair [...] she even kept it up for Stanley's benefit. (91)

Like Linda who feels at odds with the self presented to the world, Beryl considers the self to be a dichotomy: real or false. She continues, identifying how the 'real' self is glimpsed only in moments:

She saw the real Beryl – a shadow . . . a shadow. Faint and insubstantial she shone. What was there of her except the radiance? And for what tiny moments she was really she. Beryl could almost remember every one of them. At those times she had felt: 'Life is rich and mysterious and good, and I am rich and mysterious

and good, too.' Shall I ever be that Beryl for ever? Shall I? How can I? And was there ever a time when I did not have a false self? (91)

In the development of Beryl's character, Mansfield paints the notion of a 'real self' beneath the false self, echoing the sentiments expressed in her diary about the formulation of Beryl's character:

What is it that I'm getting at? It is really Beryl's 'Sosie'. The fact that for a long time now, she really hasn't been even able to control her second self: it's her second self who now controls her. There was [a] kind of radiant being who wasn't either spiteful or malicious of whom she'd had a glimpse whose very voice was different to hers who was grave who never would have dreamed of doing the things that she did. Had she banished this being or had it really got simply tired and left her. I want to get at all this through her just as I got Linda through Linda. To suddenly merge her into herself. (*CW4*, p.184)

The admission here is that the self is made up of at the very least, a duality (as indicated by 'Sosie', meaning an exact likeness of oneself) and is applicable in Mansfield's depiction of both Linda and Beryl. In the discussion of Linda above I noted how she fears her 'second' or 'real' self, hiding her face from the mirror to avoid seeing herself too clearly, the implication being that Linda hides from what she considers to be the false self she wears outwardly. In the passage above, Mansfield questions whether Beryl has 'banished this being', the more pleasant 'radiant being', confirming that she acknowledges the process as a conscious one. There are in fact three selves noted in Mansfield's passage; the 'second self', the original 'radiant being' and the 'her' who is now being controlled. I would assert that what Mansfield means to imply is that the 'her' is the inner self, the one at Beryl's core who represents the truer, more real self that she wants to merge with her less real self. What she has is the inner self overlaid with the selves Beryl adopts in her fantasy of herself, the 'visual artistic and literary stereotypes' that Drewery outlines above (99).

At several points Beryl refers to her 'real self' and the 'false selves' she adopts. Of her letter to Nan Pym she says

In a way, of course, it was all perfectly true, but in another way it was all the greatest rubbish and she didn't believe a word if it. No, that wasn't true. She felt

all those things, but she really didn't feel them like that. It was her other self who had written that letter. It not only bored, it rather disgusted her real self. (89)

Beryl's comments here are reminiscent of Mansfield's statement in her diary of 1921, discussed above: 'Of course it followed as the night the day that if one was true to oneself . . . True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many – well, really, that's what it looks like coming to – hundreds of selves' (*CW4*, 349). It may be that Mansfield put something of herself into her characterisation of Beryl. Some critics have argued that the character of Beryl is modelled on Mansfield's aunt, Belle (Dunbar, 138). Cherry Hankin, however, suggests that Beryl is closely aligned with Mansfield's protagonist in 'Juliet' (1906) and is in fact drawn on Mansfield herself (1983, 131).

What is implied by Beryl's confession in the extract above is that she does indeed 'feel all those things' but only whilst she is playing a role. So, whilst they are a true reflection of her life as she lives it, they are at the same time, not a reflection of her true self. Her hesitancy also speaks to her inability to grasp exactly whether she believes in herself or not, as if she does not know precisely when she is her 'real self' and when she is in one of her roles. She continues saying, 'The voice of the letter seemed to come up to her from the page. It was faint already, like a voice heard over the telephone, high, gushing, with something bitter in the sound. Oh, she detested it today' (90). This is reminiscent of Linda's 'faint far-away voice [that] seemed to come from a deep well' (65). In both instances there is the inference of a voice that speaks from the unconscious, although in each case the voice that speaks is considered the 'false' one. In Beryl's case, it is the voice that is 'flippant and silly' and 'wasn't her true nature at all' (90), and for Linda it is the voice that says goodnight to her husband in her role as wife and mother. The characters' inability to clearly articulate which 'self' the voice relates to serves to suggest the notion that the self is indefinable in stable terms but is a shifting and complex entity reliant entirely on delicately nuanced states and circumstances.

Several scholars have discussed Mansfield's conceptualisation of the self and their points are particularly relevant to my discussion of 'Prelude'. Fullbrook for example, argues that although Mansfield entertains the possibility of a real self, 'a unified self, even if knowable only in infinitesimal moments, there is a final hanging back' (19). Kaplan concurs, stating that in Mansfield's writing 'the nostalgia for an essential, original self alternates with the defiant – and at times triumphant – admission of self-generation' (1991, 179). Additionally, Kaplan summarises how 'Mansfield was already suspicious of the idea of the *essential* self. Her emphasis on roles and role-playing reflects her sense of self as a multiplicity, ever-changing, dependent on the shifting focus of relationships' (1991, 37). In the case of both Linda and Beryl (and the young woman in 'The Little Governess') the focalised narrative is persuasive in establishing how each character struggles to identify any notion of a stable, concrete self. In Linda's passive resistance to her role, her quiet rebellion through fantasy, and Beryl's sense that she is wasted in the family with no purpose of her own, there is the undercurrent of lives (and identities) drifting as they are completely absorbed into the family unit. It is not only that the self is dependent upon circumstances, that the blending of selves is inevitable given the number of roles that the women adopt, but also that the reliance on others for a sense of self means that 'no particular subjective thread of narrative would make sense if pulled out of "Prelude"'. The cognitive alignment that we experience with each character in turn means little on its own, for there is no I here only we' (Hammond, 114-5).

This sense of 'alignment' is developed as part of the narrative schema through the structure of 'Prelude' episodically, and it gives the opportunity for many contrasts and parallels. Episodes are deliberately juxtaposed to accentuate the story's themes. For example, the scene in which Linda experiences a moment outside herself where she 'floated, held up in the air' (69), is immediately followed by a scene in which Mrs Fairfield, Linda's mother, is

described as 'so much part of it' (69) working busily in the kitchen. Mrs Fairfield represents the old school of motherhood, comfortable and unquestioning in her role which is diametrically opposed to Linda's resistance to such a role.

This contrast is reinforced by the scene at night when Linda and her mother visit the aloe. Linda remarks that 'I believe it is going to flower this year' (86), providing covert confirmation of her pregnancy. She then returns to the fantasy world, dreaming of being swept away on the boat as she gazes at the aloe:

The high grassy bank on which the aloe rested rose up like a wave, and the aloe seemed to ride upon it like a ship with oars lifted [...] 'Don't you feel that it is coming towards us?' She dreamed that she was caught up out of the cold water into the ship with the lifted oars and the budding mast. Now the oars fell striking quickly, quickly. They rowed far away over the top of the garden trees, the paddocks and the dark bush beyond. Ah, she heard herself cry: 'Faster! Faster!' to those who were rowing. (87)

This brief moment is rich with symbolism. The 'budding mast' symbolic of pregnancy and Linda's despair at being pregnant again is represented by her being in the water. Her desire to escape is captured in the image of herself being hauled out of the water and taking command of the rowers, at last having some agency in her life. The escape to the 'dark bush beyond' suggests mystery and returns us to the idea that neither Linda nor Beryl have any concept of what they would be escaping to.

Linda's inner monologue reveals: 'How much more real this dream was than that they should go back to the house where the sleeping children lay and where Stanley and Beryl played cribbage' (87). The fantasy is more real to her than her 'real' life because she feels she is living a lie. Smith has commented how Linda fantasises 'a traditionally male role, taking command of a ship and escaping into an exploration of an unknown world, the dark bush; the dream is an alternative to the journey she has reluctantly embarked on towards childbirth' (1999, 99). Smith highlights how Linda uses the masculine rhetoric of escape and bravery in escape, imagining the will and the power to do it which is symbolized by the thorns of the

aloe. Linda articulates how '[n]obody would dare to come near the ship or to follow after' (87). I would argue, however, that this is not necessarily a masculine rhetoric but simply one that advocates an element of control, as a captain of a ship has authority regardless of whether the captain is male or female. The symbolism here emphasises how Linda's life is one of disenfranchisement, and only by fantasising herself in a commanding role can she imagine that her escape will be possible. Linda is able to examine her true feelings outside beside her mother who always provides support, comfortable as her mother is in her role. Linda literally leans on her mother whilst they walk outside with her 'hand on her mother's arm' (87) and in the close of the scene whilst Linda struggles to understand 'how absurd life was – it was laughable', her mother wonders 'what the fruit trees were like and whether we should be able to make jam this autumn' (88).

Throughout the story, Stanley and Linda are repeatedly seen to be at odds with one another (something that Stanley, in his solipsism, is completely unaware of). Whilst Linda fantasises about escape, Stanley's fantasies are of their real life together: 'On Sunday morning they would go to church – children and all [...] and he saw the neat brass-edged card on the corner of the pew – Mr Stanley Burnell and family . . . . The rest of the day he'd loaf about with Linda' (74). Stanley, of course, fantasises about his home life because he has another life at work which Linda does not have. When he gets home and delivers 'all the harvest of the earth' Linda refers to them as 'these silly things' (75). Stanley would like 'a Chesterfield and two decent chairs' whilst Linda feels that she 'liked it best as it was' (86). Stanley is living his dream life, but Linda expresses how she is not living at all, and in a moment of revelation she confirms

[i]t had never been so plain to her as it was at this moment. There were all her feelings for him, sharp and defined, one as true as the other. And there was this other, this hatred, just as real as the rest. She could have done her feelings up in little packets and given them to Stanley. She longed to hand him that last one, for a surprise. (88)

Linda glimpses her true feelings only for a moment, the ‘unified self’ seen only in ‘infinitesimal moments’ as Fullbrook asserts (19). The use of modal verbs here emphasises Linda’s guilt and passive resistance to her situation; she only longs to give the last packet to Stanley and there is no sense here that she ever will.

The episodic structure of ‘Prelude’ foregrounds individuality, each character striving toward the achievement of self-realisation, whilst at the same time the connectedness of the episodes, the narrative arc, identifies the connection between the members of the household and metaphorically with human existence. It promotes the suggestion that we are all connected in our quest but isolated in its execution. W. H. New articulates how

[t]he discreteness of the episodes, with their frequent departure into memory, dream, and make-believe, suggests a fragmentation of time; an insistently sequential overall chronology nevertheless suggests the continuities that connections among the episodes transform into revelatory narrative. (148)

New’s point suggests that Mansfield is able to depict both continuity and discontinuity simultaneously. In presenting discrete but interconnected, and at times synchronous episodes she is able to show both the connection and disconnection within the family and within each individual in their efforts at self-conceptualisation. The narrative schema within ‘Prelude’ actively represents its themes, with episodes that appear both cohesive and disparate. It characterises Mansfield’s conceptualisation of the self as equally cohesive and disparate, an entity and yet at the same time an ephemeral, quizzical formulation, reliant upon the perception of the individual and the sense they can make of the interconnections of self and other.

## **Conclusion**

Mansfield’s diaries and letters portray how, during the period 1914 to 1918, she was determined to seek out new methods of representation of the human experience in her writing. Turning her back on her previous work that in 1916 she said left her ‘perfectly cold’

(*CW4*, 191) she experimented with different genres (plays, dialogues, longer narratives) and with literary devices (free indirect discourse, focalisation) until she achieved a narrator who ‘seems to be able to be everywhere and nowhere all at once’ (Alpers, 190).

In ‘The Little Governess’, the inner life of the young woman is the nucleus of the story. Whilst Mansfield retains the overseeing narrative voice, this is knitted together with moments where the reader sees only from the young woman’s point of view. The application of this perspectival filter facilitates an understanding of the woman’s creation and deconstruction of the self through her interaction with others. The deployment of fantasy elements provides recognition of, and distinction between, the voice of the narrator and the internal perception of the young woman. Mansfield frames the conceptualisation of self in this narrative by the warnings from the woman at the Governess Bureau, and all subsequent intercommunications by the young woman are interpreted according to that term of reference. Mansfield’s achievement in this narrative is to eliminate judgment of the young woman and her actions and place the blame firmly in the hands of the patriarchal regime within which the narrative is set.

In parodying or subverting the fairy tale, Mansfield exploits readers’ preconceptions both of the fairytale and of the governess narrative. Instead of standing in judgment of the little governess, blaming her for her lack of propriety as the traditional fairy tale does, Mansfield instead uses the reader’s frame of expectation to ask questions about how a patriarchal society bears down upon a young woman’s sense of self. The narrative texture of ‘The Little Governess’ evidences Mansfield’s increasing grasp of how to formulate human consciousness in fiction, to remove gaps that distance the reader from character by employing focalisation and free indirect discourse.

That is not to say, however, that Mansfield leaves no room for narrative uncertainty. In the depiction of the exchanges between the little governess and the old man, there is the

suggestion that the focalisation moves, at points, into the consciousness of the old man leaving room for alternative interpretations of events. The reader becomes aware of sensuous imagery that is unlikely to have been formulated in the mind of the young governess. The swift and deft move into the old man's consciousness reinforces the juxtaposition of the reader's and the little governess's perspectives. Whilst the reader is able to contemplate the old man's lewd internal imagery, the little governess herself is unaware of his imaginings. This reinforces our expectations whilst we await the attack by the 'wolf' of which the governess is innocently unaware. Mansfield then, plays with the perspective to enrich the reader's contemplation of the situation (providing dramatic irony) and to re-emphasise how the young woman is subjected to the old man's exploitation, resulting from her liminal positioning between the demands of being a lady and an employee. This speaks to Mansfield's emerging capability in divining inner life through focalisation. Part of her craft is to leave room for interpretation and this is indicative of the nature of the self which is itself, mutable and fluid. Gray indicates how

the experience of an uneasy tension between who we are supposed to be and the countless moments of being that escape or exceed those expectations is available to anyone, at any time. And Mansfield knew it. She knew it and she knew how to put it into words alive enough to form narrative spaces that simply decline to enclose the meanings they make available. (2011, 80)

Mansfield's lack of closure of meaning is extended through 'A Dill Pickle', a narrative that provides the reader with a bird's eye view of a woman forced into an awkward exchange with a previous lover. The focalisation in this narrative is used to set up a series of contrasts which provide the reader with an understanding of the break-up of a previous relationship. Simultaneously, Mansfield is able to explore how the previous self of the woman has been constructed and then restrained, imaged as the 'slumbering beast' that Vera tames and cages. Both analepsis and fantasy play a role in examining Vera's sense of self, a brief interlude where she walks through her memories of her relationship with the unnamed

man. The ideas articulated here by Gray, of who 'we are supposed to be' and those moments that allow us to question that sense of self, are exemplified in this story. Vera questions her understanding of their relationship, revisiting it through her memory and fantasy and this is played out before the reader as a series of contrasts between the way Vera remembers or misremembers the sequence of events and how the man perceives their relationship. The reason for the break up remains unclear to the reader, and Vera maintains a sense of uncertainty in her final experience of one of Gray's 'countless moments of being' that illuminate our sense of self.

Between 1915 and 1917 Mansfield reworked 'The Aloe' as 'Prelude' to emerge as a writer with a consistent and adept understanding of how literary devices such as free indirect style and focalisation could be exploited to better effect. Of 'Prelude' Fullbrook concludes that it

emphasises the lack of fixture in life – the vagaries of perception, the way that consciousness is invaded in surprising ways by unconscious forces, the almost limitless possibilities for change, the poverty of static assumptions. These things are the centre of gravity for the story. (64)

Whilst 'The Little Governess' and 'A Dill Pickle' have echoes of these techniques, 'Prelude' is distinctive in its crystallisation of Mansfield's narrative achievements to date. Fullbrook's summary indicates how perception is the guiding principle of the narrative, giving rise not only to the acute depiction of inner consciousness, but foregrounding how the construction of self is dependent upon perception. The narrator of 'Prelude' is a ghostly figure, rather than the governing consciousness of the earlier stories. The movement in and out of characters' consciousnesses is seamless and affords Mansfield the opportunity to explore aspects of the self through showing how different characters construct their own reality.

Structuring the narrative episodically underscores the individuality of her characters' perception by visiting each one in turn, delving into their inner life and emerging with a sense of how that character perceives the world around them, the others they interact with and how

they perceive their 'selves'. The simultaneity of action elicited from the way the episodes are juxtaposed indicates how the family, whilst existing as a unit, concurrently visit their own isolation through their consciousness, each struggling to identify with their inner selves but doing so collectively. This is expressive of the nature of human existence as we all wrestle with who we are, isolating ourselves from one another. Kaplan has indicated that Mansfield's story is 'revolutionary as a narrative in its implicit statement that the construction of gender should be the motivating centre of the text'. It is also a 'rejection of male modes, and this strategy is apparent in its overall structure: its multiplicity, its fluidity, its lack of a central climax, and its many moments of encoded sexual pleasure' (Kaplan, 1991, 114). Using gender as a position from which to view the interactions of the family, Mansfield establishes how the construction of self as a multiple and fluid concept can be conceived, reflected in the structure of the narrative itself. The effect of patriarchal regimes, as is highlighted in many of her stories, is the backdrop to the questioning of how women construct and deconstruct the self through relationships with others and through their self-denial.

Within 'Prelude' Mansfield manages to elicit enquiry into the multifaceted nature of the self, its nuanced state and whether the formation of an inner, true self is possible or desirable. In her characters, Mansfield allows for the possibility of the real self but treats this concept with a degree of scepticism in constructing both Beryl and Linda as unable to articulate clearly which of their 'selves' is the true one. What she insinuates is that this inner or real self is a product of the unconscious, coming to her characters from a distance, down a telephone line for example, as similar metaphors in Mansfield's own diaries and letters testify. The real self then, remains a phantom-like construct discerned only in moments of insight.

As I discussed above, after the development of 'Prelude' Mansfield wrote to Murry in February 1918 that the 'trouble is I feel I have found an *approach* to a story now which I

must apply to everything. Is that nonsense? I read what I wrote before that last & I feel: no this is all *once removed*: it won't do. And it won't. I've got to reconstruct everything' (L2, 71-2). In the last chapter of the thesis, I will examine how Mansfield applied her own unique approach to the final stories of her life, to complete the chronological examination of the development of her construction of the self in her fiction.

## Chapter 6

### 'The time has come for a "new word": Mansfield's Writing 1919 to 1922

#### Introduction

In Chapter 5 I reviewed Mansfield's writing between 1914 and 1918, exploring how she sought new approaches to the representation of the self. Her enquiries led her to the subversion of well-known genres, like the fairytale and the governess narrative, and included the deft exploitation of narrative structures to foreground a character's subjective experience. The chapter focused on Mansfield's increasing confidence and capability in manipulating narrative structure and perspective using free indirect discourse and focalisation to give the reader access to a character's inner consciousness, particularly to observe how a woman formulates a sense of her self. In this chapter I will continue this analysis by appraising Mansfield's writing in later years by evaluating stories written between 1919 and 1922, the years of her greatest achievements.

This period of Mansfield's life is characterised by movement; migrating between England, France, Italy and Switzerland in search of the elusive remedy for her tuberculosis. This would eventually lead her in October 1922 to the Gurdjieff Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man in Fontainebleau, where she died in January 1923. In her literary world Mansfield began writing for the *Athenaeum*, which was under the editorial management of her husband John Middleton Murry, publishing 115 book reviews between April 1919 and December 1920. She also wrote 77 short stories (including fragments), publishing 26 of those in a wide variety of magazines.<sup>26</sup> She also achieved the publication of two short story collections, *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920) and *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922). During this time, Mansfield began translating Chekhov's letters and stories with her friend,

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<sup>26</sup> In the collected works there are 77 entries for this period. Mansfield published in magazines such as *Art and Letters*, the *Athenaeum*, *Sphere*, the *London Mercury*, the *Saturday Westminster Gazette*, *Story Teller* and *Sketch*.

Koteliansky. In her private life, she had to endure blackmail threats over a youthful affair, infidelity from her husband, continuing ill-health and a series of debilitating X-ray treatments by Dr. Manoukhin in Paris. Despite this complicated, nomadic existence Mansfield's ongoing experimentation and perseverance with her writing produced some of her most remarkable stories and this became the most productive period of Mansfield's life.

In this final chapter, I want to explore how Mansfield expressed her disappointment with the fiction she reviewed for the *Athenaeum*, and how her reviewing fuelled her determination to discover new and innovative ways of manipulating narrative textures to reveal the inner workings of her characters. I will begin by discussing some of Mansfield's personal writing in which she expresses what Fullbrook terms her 'underlying disgust with entrenched forms' (87). This level of disgust drove her to constant appraisal of narrative technique, which she expresses freely in her reviews for the *Athenaeum*. I will illustrate from her letters and notebooks how she continually questions her own craftsmanship, as well as that of other writers, and how her confidence in her writing grows over this phase of her life. Mansfield's method of working was purposely turned towards her preoccupation with the representation of the self in her fiction which became more urgent as her health deteriorated. A contribution to this process was the publication of *Cosmic Anatomy and the Structure of the ego*<sup>27</sup> and I will examine some of the connections between Wallace's enigmatic book and Mansfield's personal writing and her fiction.

In this chapter, I examine three of Mansfield's most famous short stories from this period: 'Miss Brill' (1920), 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1920) and 'At the Bay' (1921). These have been chosen as examples of Mansfield's ability to harness and manipulate narrative perspectives in her later stories. They are connected by Mansfield's use of

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<sup>27</sup> *Cosmic Anatomy, and the Structure of the Ego* (1921) was a privately published work by M.B. Oxon (a contributor to the *New Age* named Lewis Alexander Wallace). A. R. Orage, editor of the *New Age* sent a copy to Murry who passed it on to Mansfield.

focalisation and free indirect discourse in revealing aspects of a character's self-conceptualisation. In 'Miss Brill' Mansfield shows how a character acts out the role of her public self, aided by the symbolic associations of her fox fur. Miss Brill's sense of self is revealed as fragile and Mansfield's use of focalisation and free indirect discourse in this story creates an immersive experience for the reader. This in turn means that the reader feels the uncovering of Miss Brill's self-deception most keenly. For the daughters in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' access to memories of their life with the Colonel discloses how their self-conceptualisation continues to be dominated by the Colonel's presence, despite his death. Again, it is the use of focalisation and free indirect discourse that allows the reader access to the sisters' consciousnesses and gives rise to both tragedy and comedy. In the last story, 'At the Bay' I show how, like Miss Brill who is surrounded by others, characters are nevertheless isolated in their endeavours to maintain a stable sense of self. Miss Brill's loneliness causes her to adorn herself with the fox fur and even to speak to it as if it were a companion; she hides the inner lonely self and displays the public self she links symbolically with the fox fur. Conversely, Linda in 'At the Bay' is forced to hide her inner self and perform her role as wife and mother. Before moving on to a review of these stories, however, I examine some of Mansfield's thoughts on fiction that arose from her reviewing for the *Athenaeum* and I also consider some of Mansfield's later thoughts on the self stimulated by her reading of *Cosmic Anatomy*.

### **Mansfield's 'New Word' and her Review of Current Fiction**

In a letter to Ottoline Morrell in July 1919 Mansfield writes:

It only makes one feel how one adores English prose – how to be a writer – is *everything*. I *do* believe that the time has come for a 'new word' but I imagine the new word will not be spoken easily. People have never explored the lovely medium of prose. It is a hidden country still – I feel that so profoundly. (*L2*, 343)

It is difficult to extract from this general comment exactly what Mansfield means when she argues for a ‘new word’ but some explanation can be gleaned from Mansfield’s review of F. Brett Young’s novel, *The Young Physician*, for the *Athenaeum* in October 1919. In her review Mansfield explains that

we live in an age of experiment, when the next novel may be unlike any novel that has been published before; when writers are seeking after new forms in which to express something more subtle, more complex, ‘nearer’ the truth; when a few of them feel that perhaps after all prose is an almost undiscovered medium and that there are extraordinary, thrilling possibilities. (*CW3*, 520)

It is interesting to note that Mansfield uses the word ‘truth’ which is often related to realism. I would argue, however, that what Mansfield refers to here is a more nuanced sense of reality that can incorporate both the ‘subtle’ and the ‘complex’. Mirosława Kubasiewicz has recently argued that ‘Mansfield’s life can be interpreted as an authentic project in which she adopted roles but never ceased to search for her own self’ (55). Kubasiewicz discusses Mansfield’s writing in relation to the existential term of ‘authentic existence’ an indefinable state which can only be described in terms of its antithesis as ‘inauthentic’. This ‘inauthentic self’, Kubasiewicz argues, ‘seeks security in fixed roles [...] and by objectifying itself conceals its being and, by objectifying others, makes genuine relationships impossible’ (55). Whilst Kubasiewicz’s article relates Mansfield’s fiction to a very particular existential concept, it is nevertheless useful in considering how Mansfield viewed concepts of the self and how each person is isolated in the process of self-conceptualisation (see my discussion of this aspect of Mansfield’s consideration of the self in her characterisation of Linda in ‘Prelude’ in Chapter 5). I would argue that in the passage above, Mansfield advocates that writers should strive towards representing the nuances of human experience. Whilst she does not define the word ‘truth’ she does advocate that writers must ‘express something more subtle, more complex’, suggesting that the ‘thrilling possibilities’ that prose has to offer are an untapped resource

that when utilised will reveal the novel that is ‘unlike any novel that has been published before’.

In a letter to Arnold Gibbons in June 1922 Mansfield returns to this point highlighting the problems writers face:

I realise it’s all very well to say these things – but how are we going to convey these overtones, half tones, quarter tones, these hesitations, doubts, beginnings, if we go at them *directly*? It is most devilishly difficult, but I do believe that there is a way of doing it and that’s by trying to get as near to the *exact truth* as possible. It’s the truth we are after, no less. (L5, 214)

The preoccupation here is with the ‘how’ of the narrative, the methods by which ‘these things’, as she calls them, can be discerned and expressed. Mansfield talks of how an indirectness would appear to be more appropriate. Again, she utilises the word ‘truth’ as the ultimate goal of writing but here she expands on that to suggest the kinds of subtleties and complexes of her earlier comment. The ‘truth’ includes the ‘hesitations, doubts, beginnings’ that are so ‘devilishly difficult’ to depict if one ‘go[es] at them directly’. I would argue that Mansfield’s own technique of depicting ‘these things’ from within a character’s mind uses methods that represent this indirectness such as free indirect discourse and focalisation. These techniques also resonate with Impressionism, which Melissa Reimer argues ‘concentrated on rendering the effect of a scene or event’ (41). By allowing the reader access to the consciousness of her characters, Mansfield permits the reader to register the effect of a character’s surroundings and relationships on their sense of self.

However, Mansfield’s proposition to seek a ‘new word’ that represents the ‘truth’ is problematic. The term ‘new word’ is itself nebulous and resonates with Mansfield’s inability to articulate exactly what it is that she strives for. I discussed in Chapter 2 how Mansfield’s vocabulary when writing about the self often betrays a homogenising of terms like ‘self’, using several different words to allow herself freedom to grasp at a variety of definitions of a complex topic. In Chapter 1, I outlined how Mansfield’s consideration of issues of the self

changes over time and often reveals contradictory comments and phrases. Mansfield's suggestion that the 'exact truth' is the goal of writing contradicts a comment she made in 1921 in her notebook. She writes:

'It is the special art & object of thinking to attain existence by quite other methods than that of existence itself'. That is to say. Reality cannot become the ideal, the dream, and it is not the business of the artist to grind an axe, to try and impose his vision of Life upon the existing world. Art is not an attempt to reconcile existence with his vision: it is an attempt to create his own world in this world. That which suggests the subject to the artist is the unlikeness of it to what we accept as reality. We single out, we bring into the light, we put up higher. (*CW4*, 346)

This passage foregrounds the artistry of the writer, the fact that what he/she depicts is untruth, the 'unlikeness of it to what we accept as reality'. This series of quotations from Mansfield's letters and notebooks illustrate how Mansfield's concept of the 'truth' in fact relates to the truth of the fictional world of her characters. She explains to Sydney and Dorothy Schiff in May 1920 that '[d]elicate perception is not enough: one must find the exact way in which to convey the delicate perception. One must inhabit the other mind' (*L4*, 4) because a 'writer should be immersed in the characters' inner reality' (*L4*, 93). For Mansfield then, the 'truth' can only be devised through narrative techniques that allow the reader access to the consciousness of her characters. For her, I would suggest this is the 'new word' of her letter to Ottoline Morrell in July 1919 (*L2*, 343). In Mansfield's fiction by using a character as focaliser the reader is granted access to that character's inner thoughts. Rather than the directness of an extradiegetic narrator, the reader becomes privy to the character's senses and internal processes, thus achieving the awareness of the 'hesitations, doubts, beginnings' of Mansfield's comment above.

Mansfield's reviewing for the *Athenaeum* between April 1919 and December 1920 allowed for 'a reappraisal of fictional forms and conventions that would underpin her literary output from this point on' and can be seen as 'evidence of her ongoing project to perfect her short story aesthetic' (McDonnell, 119). It also gave her confidence in her own ability as a

writer, for example in October 1920 Mansfield writes to Murry: ‘You know how I choose my words; they can’t be changed. And if you don’t like it or think it’s wrong *just as it is* I’d rather you didn’t print it. I’ll try and do another’ (L4, 66). The unwillingness to compromise on even a single word of her output, demonstrates Mansfield’s growing assurance in her writing. In responding to a comment by Thomas Hardy about ‘The Daughters of the Late Colonel’ she remarks to Dorothy Brett in 1921, ‘Even dear old Hardy told me to write more about those sisters. As if there was any more to say!’ (L4, 316). Antony Alpers comments that this expresses her ‘total confidence in the *form* which she had made her own, but which in English was not yet sufficiently familiar’. He highlights how ‘[t]he problem, even yet, was the loneliness not merely of herself but of the form – indeed, of the idea that form could have equal status with the content in a “story”’ (Alpers, 330). Mansfield’s statement to Ottoline Morrell, that ‘the “new word” will not be spoken easily’ (L2, 343) is borne from her experience of reviewing for the *Athenaeum* and in her increasing dissatisfaction with the novels she reviewed.

One of the most important texts that Mansfield read at this time was *Cosmic Anatomy and the Structure of the Ego*. It was not a text that she had been asked to review, but one sent to her husband by the editor of the *New Age*, A. R. Orage. Before I examine the short stories in this chapter, I discuss Mansfield’s reading of *Cosmic Anatomy* and highlight some of the ideas that many have attracted her to this unusual text.

### **Mansfield’s Thoughts on Cosmic Anatomy**

When Murry received his copy of *Cosmic Anatomy and the Structure of the Ego* from Orage he discarded it and gave it to Mansfield. Gerri Kimber suggests that Orage sent a copy of *Cosmic Anatomy* to Murry deliberately, knowing that he would dislike it and Mansfield’s

‘contrary nature’ would encourage her to pick it up (2017, 51). Described by Paul Selver<sup>28</sup> as ‘so much abracadabra’ (27) Mansfield read *Cosmic Anatomy*, describing how it ‘fascinates me [...] to get even a glimpse of the relation of things’ and how it ‘enlarges my little mind as nothing else does’ (CW4, 399). M. B. Oxon was the pseudonym of Dr Lewis Alexander Richard Wallace<sup>29</sup>, who helped Orage to finance the *New Age* in 1907. Kimber likewise suggests it is entirely probable that Mansfield already knew Wallace since he was contributing articles to the *New Age* on theosophy during a time when she was also contributing to the magazine (2017, 50). Both Orage and his co-editor Hastings were followers of theosophical and other mystical and esoteric ideas (see my discussion in Chapter 3 of Mansfield’s relationship with Orage and Hastings); moreover James Webb highlights how ‘the sort of psychoanalysis which the *New Age* favored [sic] was never far from the occult’ (217).

The exact nature of Mansfield’s interest in *Cosmic Anatomy* is difficult to gauge because although she comments above that it provides ‘a glimpse of the relation of things’, there is, according to Vincent O’Sullivan ‘little other direct mention of the book that so mattered to her’ (19). However, he does write that *Cosmic Anatomy* encouraged ‘the self-examining that had always, to some extent, been a part of her notebooks’ (19). He also comments that ‘[w]hether it was a direct influence, or merely the coinciding of similar concerns, it is certainly the case that a close reading of Mansfield’s last letters and notebooks brings home how similar her vocabulary often is, how much it shares with Wallace, Gurdjieff and Ouspensky’ (20). Mansfield herself wrote to Murry saying, ‘I don’t feel influenced by Youspensky (sic) or Dunning. I merely feel I’ve heard ideas like my ideas but bigger ones,

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Selver was a writer and translator who contributed to the *New Age*. He wrote a book about his experience at the *New Age* and his friendship with the editor, A. R. Orage entitled *Orage and the New Age Circle*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959.

<sup>29</sup> James Moore notes that the name was a ‘tribute to M. A. Oxon, the notable Victorian spirit medium, the Reverend W. Stainton Moses’. *Gurdjieff and Mansfield*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1980, p. 130.

far more definite ones' (L5, 285). Mansfield also seemed to find comfort in the nomenclature of *Cosmic Anatomy* saying, 'It helps me with my writing for instance to know that hot + bun may mean Taurus, Pradhana, substance' (CW4, 399) and she writes to Violet Schiff in January 1922 outlining how she has 'passed through a state of *awful* depression about work lately. It had to be. But I see my way now, I think. What saved me finally was reading a book called *Cosmic Anatomy*, and reflecting on it' (L5, 8). Mansfield does not describe how *Cosmic Anatomy* has 'saved' her and O'Sullivan speculates that 'Wallace's reassurances of the unity underlying causal phenomena must have been appealing' (19).

*Cosmic Anatomy* is certainly enigmatic and 'makes difficult reading' as O'Sullivan confirms (18). Oxon summarises the human experience thus:

We can reach the reality by the appearances if we are careful to throw them away again so that they shall not hamper us. They are the models which we elaborate and adorn to manifest the ideal within us, and so to expand our acquaintance with oneself [...] But all such creations are of Space or of Time, and by their contacts, which is Fate, enslave us to the not-self, and 'distract' us from that central point or focus from which we cannot err. (258)

The concept here of the 'not-self' is interesting and I would interpret this as the kind of mask wearing that Mansfield writes of in her letters and notebooks and fictionalises in her stories. Mansfield writes to Murry in July 1917 for example, 'don't lower your mask before you have another mask prepared beneath, as terrible as you like – but a mask' (L1, 318). In many stories Mansfield depicts characters whose inner self is deliberately hidden beneath an outer self or role (see for example, my discussion of Linda in 'Prelude' [1918] in Chapter 5). Oxon's syntax in the quotation above is unusual, nonetheless, adding to the difficulty in interpreting his ideas. The first sentence for example, that 'we can reach the reality by the appearance', seems awkwardly phrased, referring to 'the' reality and 'the' appearances. These 'appearances' we then 'throw away' so that they 'do not hamper us'. Reading this in relation to the psychological ideas of James, Oxon could be rewriting his theory of the 'social selves' one constructs to function in society (1892, 294), although he refers to how these

‘appearances [...] manifest the ideal within us’ but at the same time ‘enslave us to the not-self [...] that central point or focus from which we cannot err’, and this would seem contradictory. Our ‘appearances’ then, both bring us closer to ‘our acquaintance with oneself’ and ‘distract’ us from it, highlighting the enigmatic nature of the self or the difficulty of expressing its conception through abstractions. This passage is taken from the final section of *Cosmic Anatomy* and illustrates how Oxon’s text raises many questions that remain unanswered which is a reflection of the mystifying nature of its topic. It is understandable that scholars have commented that *Cosmic Anatomy* is ‘a book that remains no less cryptic despite almost a century of Mansfield criticism’ (Ascari, 2016, 38).

The unfathomable nature of the self is something that Mansfield herself wrote about at this time. She writes to Murry in December 1922: ‘You see, my love, the question is always “*who am I*” and until that is discovered I don’t see how one can really direct anything in one’s self. “*Is there a me*”. One must be certain of that before one has a real unshakeable leg to stand on’ (Author’s italics, *L5*, 340-1). The question of the unknowable ‘me’ (‘who am I’) is evident in a number of stories where women perceive that they are ‘acting’ a role but seek the truer, inner self. In ‘Prelude’ discussed in Chapter 5 for example, both Beryl and Linda meditate upon how they live out their everyday roles but seek escape from them to realise their inner desires. These desires remain unarticulated, however and reinforce Mansfield’s question here of ‘is there a me’. In ‘A Married Man’s Story’ Mansfield’s narrator says, ‘how extraordinarily *shell like* we are as we are – little creatures, peering out of the sentry box at the gate . . . wan little servants, who never can say for certain, even, if the master is out or in’. This ‘master’ is identified as ‘the owner, the second self inhabiting them’ (*CW2*, 383). This could be the ‘central point or focus from which we cannot err’ that Oxon describes in the passage above, the central organising inner, truer self. The narrator of ‘A Married Man’s Story’ also ponders whether ‘it’s something entirely individual to me’ (*CW2*,

383), establishing a refrain repeated in 'Prelude' that as we all attempt to grasp at any sense of certainty over the self, we are isolated in our endeavours. The idea that we are 'shell like' also reiterates Kubasiewicz's point that the inauthentic self 'seeks security in fixed roles [...] and by objectifying itself conceals its being' (55).

The extent to which *Cosmic Anatomy* enabled Mansfield to realise her goals for her writing cannot be estimated, and there is scope for more scholarly interpretation of Mansfield's fascination with *Cosmic Anatomy* beyond this thesis. Nevertheless, there is evidence in the passages and letters above that she was afforded some affinity with the ideas it contained. In the discussion below, I relate Mansfield's ideas about the self to her fiction, paying particular attention to ideas about the self as a duality of inner self and outer self. I begin with an analysis of 'Miss Brill' (1920) which is an example of how Mansfield depicts a woman's self-delusion in adopting a public self, symbolically represented through the wearing of a fox-fur. In this story, Mansfield illustrates how fragile outer selves can be but at the same time showing how, for many women, the outer self as a construct is a necessity that hides a vulnerable inner self.

### **'Miss Brill' (1920)**

'Miss Brill' was published in the *Athenaeum* in November 1920. It depicts a middle-aged woman getting dressed up and visiting a park that she frequents on the same day each week. As in 'Prelude' (see discussion in Chapter 5), Mansfield muses on ideas of isolation, particularly in relation to the formulation and understanding of the self. In 'Prelude' this is illustrated in a family environment where Linda, Beryl and Stanley go about their everyday lives. For the women they are connected as a unit, but their self-conceptualisation is shown to be an isolating principle, each sequestered in their endeavour to establish a consistent sense of self. In 'Miss Brill' this is extended to the wider community where Miss Brill initially feels an

affinity with those around her, providing her with the impetus for her self-conceptualisation. This is thrown into disarray by a comment from a young couple. Miss Brill's confidence in her interconnectedness with those around her is shattered and in turn, so is her sense of self.

The story begins with Miss Brill taking her fox fur from its box and putting it on. Free indirect discourse reveals her inner monologue: 'Dear little thing!' (*CW2*, 251) as she imagines it as a pet. However, rather than a creature upon which she lavishes her affection, it is the sensation it evokes that becomes important, generating excitement and 'a tingling in her hands and arms' (251). The fox fur evokes the 'tingling' and the 'something gentle' through transference, reflecting Miss Brill's inner self. Miss Brill becomes the focaliser, the fox fur, the focalised 'and when she breathed, something light and sad – no, not sad, exactly – something gentle seemed to move in her bosom' (251). This image of something that moves or seethes beneath the surface embodying a secret self is common in Mansfield's later narratives. In 'A Dill Pickle' (1917) Vera experiences a stir of 'the strange beast that had slumbered so long within her bosom' (*CW2*, 100) (see discussion in Chapter 5); Linda in 'Prelude' hears a 'faint far-away voice [that] seemed to come from a deep well' (*CW2*, 65) and in 'At the Bay' (see discussion below) Beryl feels that 'something stirred in her, something reared its head' (*CW2*, 370). In each case, what emerges momentarily is a second self, something that is consciously suppressed ('slumbered' for example) but which is aroused by a stimulus. In Vera's case the provocation takes the form of memories of her relationship with the man; for Linda it is evoked by her fantasy, and for Beryl by the approach of Harry Kember.

Mansfield expresses these moments of brief encounters with another self in her diary in 1922:

But I know it is not all. How does one know that? Let me take the case of K.M. She has led, ever since she can remember, a very typically false life. Yet, through it all, there have been moments, instants, gleams, when she has felt the possibility of something quite other. (*CW4*, 436)

As she often does, Mansfield renders the self as a dichotomy: true (the moments) and false (the outer or the everyday), where the true self can only be grasped at certain intervals. In her note she does not articulate how these ‘gleams’ are arrived at or what stimulates them, and there is the sense that the action is unconscious and beyond control. In her writing this manifests itself within the lexicon of disturbance, things stir, or are awakened from sleeping but only momentarily, evoking only the transient rather than the concrete. This in turn repeats the common refrain in Mansfield’s writing about the fragility of the self, based upon these moments of awakening as it is here with Miss Brill.

For Miss Brill the fox fur evokes a sense of self, a manifestation of the life she conjures with her imagination, ‘all the luxury and adventure in life that she convinces herself she shares’ with the local community (Fullbrook, 104). Her actions are ritualistic and uncanny as she creates imagery of the fox fur as animate, evoking a metaphor of loneliness as she courts its company as if it were real. At the end of the story she will imagine that she hears the fox fur crying, a manifestation of her own inner sadness (254). In ‘Prelude’ Linda fantasises tassels on the blind that turn into ‘a funny procession of dancers with priests attending’ (*CW2*, 68) and repeated here, the motif of fantasy expresses how imagination is a pathway to another self, an illusory self but nevertheless an intrinsic part of character. Miss Brill then, adorns herself not only with the fox fur but also with the weight of the illusory self it carries with it.

The focalisation and use of free indirect discourse during Miss Brill’s visit to the park serves to suggest the insular and stifling nature of her existence that gives rise to this fantasy self. As we are given access to her consciousness, we are aware of how trivial details amuse her: ‘Wasn’t the conductor wearing a new coat, too? She was sure it was new’ (251). This illustrates how her thoughts are preoccupied with minute detail, having little else to occupy her. Mansfield evokes sadness rather than endearment as the reader becomes aware that these

trivial details are a small mercy, that Miss Brill has very little to occupy her if trivial events can capture her attention so easily. Miss Brill's inner monologue reveals that '[s]he had become really quite expert, she thought, at listening as though she didn't listen, at sitting in other people's lives just for a minute while they talked round her' (251). Mansfield's technique of inhabiting a character, 'to so lose myself in the soul of the other that I am not' (*L4*, 180) is here articulated through her characterisation of Miss Brill. But Miss Brill, the reader realises, lives her life vicariously because she has no life of her own.

In the park, her loneliness is foregrounded as the reader interprets the implication of Miss Brill's thoughts. The others 'talked round her' (251) but not to her. Despite the pomp and ceremony of adopting the outfit of the fox fur, and the concept of the public self that it carries, it is not to integrate or to socialise but simply to be seen. Miss Brill achieves the self she wishes to project, but in appearance only. It is an exemplification of Mansfield's hypothesis of the self as a duality: inner and outer. Miss Brill exhibits the self she wants others to see but does not speak lest a conversation should give her away, entering the social world as a silent partner. Dramatic irony combined with free indirect discourse validates the notion of the fragility of the self:

Other people sat on the benches and green chairs, but they were nearly always the same, Sunday after Sunday, and – Miss Brill had often noticed – there was something funny about nearly all of them. They were odd, silent, nearly all old, and from the way they stared they looked as though they'd just come from dark little rooms or even – even cupboards! (252).

The access to Miss Brill's consciousness accentuates the irony of the statement, that in fact she describes herself. Describing her as old and silent, wearing a fox fur that has come from a cupboard, evokes pity for her. In many of Mansfield's stories the moment that approaches where the protagonist will have a brief glimpse of their reality, is anticipated by the reader (like 'Bliss' [1918] for example, where a woman comes to a sudden realisation of her husband's infidelity, in 'The Little Governess' [1915], the young woman is assaulted by the

old man she trusts). Here, we understand that Miss Brill is old, lonely and relies on this ritualistic visit to the park to adorn herself as the 'self' she wishes to project to the world. The irony here is not lost on the reader and whilst comic, it is also tragic. The pathos of her situation exemplifies Mansfield's critique of a society where women are reduced to triviality and insignificance if they do not marry, and, in many of her stories, to servitude if they do marry.

The comment that 'there was something funny about nearly all of them' makes Miss Brill appear voyeuristic, adopting a position of superiority and protecting herself behind the persona represented by the fox fur. She fantasises herself into a position where she watches and judges others but is unaware that others are doing the same to her and the final realisation of this is devastating. The self she acquires in adorning herself in the fox fur is shown to be delicate, easily removed by an unkind word overheard when the boy says, '[w]hy does she come here at all – who wants her?' (254). There follows a description of the *mise-en-scène* of the park: 'Two young girls in red came by and two young soldiers in blue met them [...] two peasant women with funny straw hats passed by [...] a beautiful woman came by and dropped her bunch of violets' (252). The many comings and goings watched by Miss Brill place her outside this world, a voyeur who has no participation in the scene around her. This serves to frame for the reader the final devastating revelation that the reader anticipates but Miss Brill, immersed in her fantasy, cannot foresee. This increases the poignancy of the situation, as the free indirect discourse places us within her consciousness and we empathise with her plight.

Each of the characters in the scene is identified with a colour or an object; the two girls are in red, the boys in blue, the peasant women have funny hats, the beautiful woman has and then loses her violets. Like Miss Brill they are each associated with a defining object, a small symbol of their existence that. Perhaps the beautiful woman's violets represent a lover won and lost, and the funny straw hats are worn only today for this outing, as is Miss

Brill's fox fur. The depiction of the scene, associating objects or symbols with each passer-by, evidences not only the nature of Miss Brill's existence as distanced but also illustrates how Miss Brill's sense of self is firmly grounded within the ornamental symbolism of the fox fur.

The description of the scene builds to a crescendo, like the band playing in the background, as Miss Brill makes a discovery that the people around her 'weren't only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting' (253). Miss Brill feels herself a member of a company of players, each taking their part and she describes how she imagines them all about to burst into spontaneous song: 'The young ones, the laughing ones who were moving together, they would begin, and the men's voices, very resolute and brave, would join them' (253). The scene is film-like and the imagery of music creates a kind of rhythm, a pattern of life. Mansfield discusses how she carefully crafted the lines of 'Miss Brill' writing to Richard Murry in January 1921 saying: 'It's a very queer thing how *craft* comes into writing. I mean down to details. Par exemple. In Miss Brill I chose not only the length of every sentence, but even the sound of every sentence – I chose the rise and fall of every paragraph to fit her – and to fit her on that day at that very moment' (*L3*, 165). It is interesting to note how Mansfield's statement relates to the rhythm of the story and this is reflected in how she demonstrates Miss Brill's emotions through the music from the orchestra. It rises to a crescendo as Miss Brill feels the most in-tune with the other 'actors' in the park. As Janet Wilson observes, the story's 'rhythms and music become synchronised with Miss Brill's thought processes' (2018, 124). The disappointment for Miss Brill when it comes, is felt more keenly by the reader because of Mansfield's ability to get inside her character. The use of rhythmic prose and the reader's access to Miss Brill's inner thoughts, especially those expressed symbolically through the fox-fur, allows the reader to become immersed in the character.

Mansfield evokes irony when Miss Brill's observes the 'ermine toque' meet, and then be dismissed by, the 'tall, stiff, dignified' gentleman (253). The 'ermine toque' symbolises the character of the prostitute, here aging and down on her luck, as the decaying state of her clothing would suggest. Miss Brill is oblivious to the connections between herself and the woman she observes: aging, lonely and wearing an old, and possibly old-fashioned, fur. In the final scene of the story, Miss Brill's collapse of identity is revealed when the boy sitting near her says to the girl, 'Why does she come here at all – who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?' (254). This instantly shatters the illusion and fantasy built up in Miss Brill's consciousness. The fox fur she so admires, the symbolic representation of the Sunday outing 'self' is described by the couple as 'fried whiting' (254).

In the final lines of the story, we are reminded of Miss Brill's thoughts that the people in the park looked as if 'they'd just come from dark little rooms' as she 'went into the little dark room – her room like a cupboard' (254). As she puts the fox fur away, she 'thought she heard something crying' (254) and we are reminded again of that deeper inner voice of the second self. Inside the box, the metonymic fox fur entraps that illusory self and the reader is left wondering if the fox fur will ever be worn again, or if Miss Brill will ever recover that lost sense of self. As Wilson has indicated, the ending of the story 'expresses inner distress, although whether the sounds of crying she hears are her own or the fox-fur's is deliberately ambiguous' (2018, 125).

In 'Miss Brill', it is the craft that reveals Mansfield's conceptualisation of the self. Acutely ironic and sad, the *mise-en-scène* of the park with its 'actors' mocks Miss Brill's fantasy of herself as a participant in the social scene. The adornment of the fox fur enables her to adopt the outer self she wishes to communicate to the world, but its fragility is quickly revealed. In 'Miss Brill' it is the free indirect discourse and ability to adeptly focalise the narrative that enables the acute sense of Miss Brill's self-actualisation to be revealed. In the

next story I discuss below, Mansfield shows how, unlike Miss Brill who constructs a sense of the public self through wearing the fox fur, the sisters of 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' have been subjected to such extensive parental tyranny that their own sense of self has become subsumed beneath the selves they have been forced to adopt. In both stories, however, Mansfield illustrates how the inner self is revealed during a particular moment. For Miss Brill the revelation of her inner self, the vulnerable hidden self that she hears crying, comes about as a result of a painful moment at the park. For the sisters in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', the inner self is glimpsed momentarily in the final scenes of the story. In both stories, Mansfield makes use of both focalisation and free indirect discourse to allow the reader access to the process of self-conceptualisation for the characters.

### **'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1921)**

The use of free indirect discourse and focalisation is crucial to an understanding of the two women in Mansfield's 1921 story 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'. Mansfield herself described the story as 'the outcome of the "Prelude" method – it just unfolds and opens. But I hope it's an advance on "Prelude". In fact I know it's that because the technique is stronger' (*L4*, 156). She does not articulate exactly what she means by the 'Prelude' method but I would argue that she refers to her more assured use of perspectival filters (Jahn, 94), furnishing the reader with an acute insight into the inner consciousness of her characters. I would further contend that for Mansfield, her statement here that in the 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' the 'technique is stronger' suggests a move towards the 'new word' of her letter to Ottoline Morrell (*L2*, 343). She certainly wrote to Sydney Schiff in April 1921 that this story 'means more to me than any other' (*L4*, 206).

Focalisation gives an ideological overview that is important in the interpretation of 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', a story Mansfield told William Gerhardt was

‘misunderstood’, readers believing her to be “sneering” at Jug and Constantia’ (L4, 249). The ‘ideological facet’ of focalisation is ‘a general system of viewing the world conceptually, in accordance with which the events and characters of the story are evaluated’ (Rimmon-Kenan, 82). Focalisation is the difference between who speaks and who sees (Genette, 186). In ‘The Daughters of the Late Colonel’, the daughters are frequent focalisers, and it is from their viewpoint that the events are unfolded. The narrative voice of the external narrator therefore occupies a different ideological position from that of the sisters as internal focalisers. This allows for the dramatic irony and the humour of the story. The misunderstanding that Mansfield writes of above, may have been occasioned by contemporary readers misinterpreting the gap in those two ideological positions. In misreading the narrative’s intention, readers may have been familiar with the more plot-driven stories of the era and confused by Mansfield’s more radical approach. Contemporary readers may have not interpreted this as a narrative that seeks to speak to the reader from within the character rather than without. This would appear to support Mansfield’s assertion that ‘the ‘new word’ will not be spoken easily’ or, I would suggest, understood easily (L2, 343).

The ideological overview provided by the focalised narrative is that of the daughters’ reactions to their father’s death. The story is told most often through analepsis, or memory, enabling an understanding of the difference between the narrating self and the experiencing self of the daughters which offers them some hope of change. In discussing her story, Mansfield wrote to William Gerhardi in 1921 how

when I first had ‘the idea’ I saw the two sisters as *amusing*, but the moment I looked deeper (let me be quite frank) I bowed down to the beauty that was hidden in their lives and to discover that was all my desire . . . All was meant, of course, to lead up to that last paragraph, when my two flowerless ones turned with that timid gesture, to the sun. ‘Perhaps *now*’. And after that, it seemed to me, they died as truly as Father was dead. (L4, 249)

As it ‘unfolds and opens’ (L4, 156), the narrative is reminiscent of a single consciousness attempting to make sense of the self after a disruptive event. In ‘Miss Brill’ this painful

moment comes as a harsh word from a stranger, whereas in this story it is the death of the overbearing and controlling Colonel.

In a review of *Portrait of a Little Lady* by S. Macnaughton for the *Athenaeum* in April 1919 Mansfield writes: ‘But though one feels that her deliberate aim was to set down faithfully what she saw – the result is infinitely more than that. It is a revelation of her inner self which would perhaps never have been revealed in times less terrible and strange’ (*CW4*, 453). This reads as a recipe for ‘The Daughters of the Late Colonel’ where, after the death of their father, the sisters see themselves differently and glimpse different selves. They grapple with the ‘unsettling reappearance of their own potential’ (Gray, 2011, 87). The text Mansfield was reviewing was a diary of Miss Macnaughton’s war experiences. Mansfield says of Macnaughton that although there are ‘signs of the writer’s “literary” longing to register the moment, the glimpse [...] it is evident that she had no wish to let her reserved, fastidious personality show through’ (453). In many of the stories discussed in this thesis women find themselves in situations where their sense of self is placed under pressure as the result of a stressful influence. Gray refers to these moments, as ‘experience of an uneasy tension between who we are supposed to be and the countless moments of being that escape or exceed those expectations’ (2011, 80). In Mansfield’s review, she evidences how the scenes and glimpses described by Macnaughton reveal another self in her writing. In ‘The Daughters of the Late Colonel’ the death of the Colonel provides the opportunity for a similar revelation but in the case of the daughters this is a potentiality rather than a reality. In other stories discussed in this thesis, Mansfield illustrates how moments of tension or disruption result in revelations of alternative selves. In ‘The Education of Audrey’ (1908) considered in Chapter 2 for example, Audrey’s sense of self is shaken by an encounter with Max, a friend of some years ago; in ‘Millie’ (1913) discussed in Chapter 5, finding a young man at her home causes a disruption to Millie’s sense of self and evokes previously undiscovered maternal instincts.

What is common amongst Mansfield's stories of disturbance to a woman's sense of self is how she uses focalisation and free indirect discourse to allow access to a character's consciousness so that their development, and often subsequent re-development, of a sense of self is realised. As I discussed above in relation to 'Miss Brill', it is Mansfield's ability to create an immersive experience that is noteworthy.

In Mansfield's letter to Gerhardi above she says it is 'amusing' to watch the sisters reacting to their new-found freedom, but it is the focalisation that allows access to what is 'hidden in their lives' through the evocation of memory. Within the twelve 'episodes' of 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', four are given over to memories of life with father, and one to the fantasy of his watch being delivered to their cousin Benny in Ceylon. Each of the episodes builds towards something that is not in fact realised, but in moving between the present and the past it simulates the mind of a single individual. In another review written for the *Athenaeum* in April 1919 Mansfield writes how

[L]ife is sometimes very swift and breathless, but not always. If we are to be truly alive there are large pauses in which we creep away into our caves of contemplation. And then it is, in the silence, that Memory mounts his throne and judges all that is in our minds – appointing each his separate place, high or low, rejecting this, selecting that – putting this one to shine in the light and throwing that one into darkness. (*CW4*, 446-447).

In 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' memory is crucial in understanding how the sisters have lived with their father and how this has affected their sense of self. It is interesting to note in the quotation above how memory is a powerful and controlling force, capitalised and personified as a king. As the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that memory exerts a very controlling influence over the sisters, almost as if it replaces the overbearing Colonel who maintains his influence. These glimpses of alternative selves for the sisters are occasioned by their father's death and 'would perhaps never have been revealed in times less terrible and strange' as Mansfield says in the review above.

The structure of the episodes of past, present and future in the story are not distinct or completely separate, often bleeding into one another, moving from the present to a memory of the past, and back to the present again. The sections are joined together:

X ends: 'Isn't it curious, Jug,' said she, 'that just on this one subject I've never been able to quite make up my mind?'

XI begins: She never had. The whole difficulty was to prove anything.

XI ends: 'Well, we can't postpone it again,' said Josephine. 'If we postpone it this time –'

XII begins: But at that moment in the street below a barrel-organ struck up.  
(*CW2*, 279-280)

The divisions of the narrative become almost imperceptible and provide a mimesis of a single consciousness, or an inner thought process weaving in and out of the present and the past.

The intermingling of the past with the present gradually exposes how the daughters conceptualise their own sense of self, by examining their past life with their overbearing father. The divisions conjure the development of an argument, and with each step in the process a little more is revealed. From the beginning when the Colonel is dead, there is the sense of an opening, of a flower opening toward the sun (as Mansfield explains above), a release from strictures that have long confined the daughters. This is reminiscent of a diary entry of 1921 when Mansfield expresses how

there are signs that we are intent as never before on trying to puzzle out, to live by, our own particular self [...] explained by our persistent yet mysterious belief in a self which is continuous and permanent, which, untouched by all we acquire and all we shed, pushes a green spear through the leaves and through the mould, thrusts a sealed bud through years of darkness until, one day, the light discovers it and shakes the flower free and – we are alive – we are flowering for our moment upon the Earth. (*CW4*, 350)

Written in the same year as 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', this extract could be read as a summary of Mansfield's ideas for the story, namely that in the weeks following the death of their father there is the promise of a 'flowering' and an opportunity to realise the truer, inner self of the daughters that has been suppressed for so long. The semantic field of natural

growth and persistence in nature, of buds thrusting through darkness towards the light, is telling in relation to the two daughters and the opening scenes of the narrative would appear to support this hypothesis, suggesting the hope of change. It is important to note that Mansfield will return to images of nature at the end of the story when the sisters get a glimpse of alternative selves, symbolically represented by the moon and the sea (see discussion below).

As the story progresses, each section builds upon the preceding, acting as an additional step in the reader's process of realisation: the realisation, that is, that the daughters' lives will continue as they have been and that the flower will remain closed. Mansfield carefully controls the use of focalisation so that at points in the story the external narrative voice is the focaliser and the daughters are the focalised; at other points the daughters become internal focalisers and the reader is given access to their subjective experience. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan argues that focalisation provides the opportunity and 'lends plausibility to the withholding of information' (80). In this story, the control over 'who speaks and who sees' (Genette, 186) means that the memories of the daughters' life with their father can be revealed gradually. The initial optimism at the beginning of the narrative, the unfolding and opening, and the hope of escape can gradually be extinguished. It is for this reason that the story is not presented chronologically but instead weaves in and out of the past.

The narrative builds, by degrees, a picture of the daughters' future through an examination of their past. Analepsis and prolepsis are therefore exploited and to an extent subverted as it is only through the examination of the past that we come to understand what the daughters' future will be. For example, when the sisters discuss sending the Colonel's watch to Benny in Ceylon, they create a fantasy of the watch arriving and Benny standing on the veranda: 'his right hand shook up and down, as father's did when he was impatient'

(274). Both analepsis, the memory of father's hand shaking, and prolepsis, a vision of the future where Benny wears the watch, contribute to our understanding of the daughters' future through their past. In this sense, the experiencing self in the past is used to define the narrating self and its future. In the fantasy, Benny can only be defined in terms of the Colonel: the expression of his impatience must be the same because to the sisters, all men are the same. They have no terms of reference outside of their meagre existence in the patriarchal home. Josephine expresses how 'there had been nobody for them to marry [...] How did one meet men?' (281). We therefore question their future endeavours and can imagine that the strictures they have been exposed to will continue to define their actions in the future.

Mansfield's mastery in adapting perspectival filters in this narrative extends to the designation of the two daughters as a single consciousness, and this is evident at a number of points in the story. This technique serves to broaden the reader's comprehension of the daughters' conceptualisation of self through the treatment they have suffered with their father. Section III, of which the focal point is the Colonel's death, is a passage of focalised text and it is the narrator who speaks, but who sees is unclear as neither daughter is named individually. It is, therefore, polyphonic in the sense that it represents the subjective experience of both daughters but in fact evokes one set of inner thoughts. The narrative voice suggests that the two consciousnesses would express the same sentiments, mimicking what they would say. When their father opens only one eye before he dies, a moment of free indirect discourse reveals, 'Oh, what a difference it would have made, what a difference to their memory of him, how much easier to tell people about it, if he had opened both!' (269). Although this is free indirect discourse, whose consciousness it stems from is not revealed. The use of the possessive pronoun 'their' suggests that they share one memory, and is implied, one consciousness. They have acted as one in their servitude to their father with equal treatment by him under his tyrannical, patriarchal regime and this would suggest that

their being treated equally by him has resulted in their being unable to function as separate selves. This is also a social comment by Mansfield that the damaging effects of such servitude are universal and exhibit themselves in women in identical ways. As Kate Fullbrook argues, Mansfield's 'stories [...] demand to be read as unremittingly critical accounts of social injustice grounded in the pretence of a 'natural' psychological and biological order that is disproved by the experience of consciousness' (127-8). The fact that the two sisters act as one, their conceptualisation of themselves becoming indistinguishable from one another illustrates the destructive effect their father's tyranny has had on them.

The use of polyphonic focalisation continues into Section IV when Mr Farolles, the vicar, visits and offers to perform Communion in their home: 'But the idea of a little Communion terrified them. What! In the drawing-room by themselves – with no – no altar or anything!' (270). The first sentence here is the narrator's comment. The second is focalised but as in the scene described above, it is seen through 'them' as a collective entity, a dual consciousness. The implication is that for brief moments, the self that each sister assumes is so in tune with the other sister that they appear to think as one person. Besides the intimacy and closeness signified by this, it simultaneously insinuates that they are incomplete in their self-realisation. The narrative then breaks into two streams of thought to present each daughter's inner monologue: 'The piano would be much too high, thought Constantia, and Mr Farolles could not possibly lean over it with a chalice. And Kate would be sure to come bursting in and interrupt them, thought Josephine' (270). However, although there are two streams of separate thoughts here, there is the sense with the conjunction 'and' that the second thought follows on directly from the first, as if it had been spoken aloud, or that the daughters shared a common consciousness and therefore are thinking each point consecutively rather than separately. The overarching implication is that the daughters represent synchronous selves: the selves are identical because of the equal bullying treatment

from their father. They act, speak and move as identical selves. They exhibit independence of mind by speaking to one another, but we are given to believe they think the same thoughts and finish each other's sentences because they are each thinking the same thing, and the same thing is always what father would have wanted.

In the final section of the story the subjective experience of each daughter is depicted in turn as each becomes the focaliser. Both Constantia and Josephine reflect on their past life where their lives had been 'looking after father, and at the same time keeping out of father's way' (281) which all 'seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel' (282). Mansfield returns to the semantic field of natural elements in depicting the world outside and how it penetrates into the house: 'at that moment in the street below a barrel-organ struck up' (280). The sound of the barrel organ triggers a memory of the Colonel and the sisters think they must immediately make it stop. This memory causes moments of introspection for both daughters as '[t]he sunlight pressed through the windows, thieved its way in, flashed its light over the furniture and the photographs' (281). Rich in symbolism, this scene provides a glimpse of what could be, the "literary" longing to register the moment, the glimpse' of Mansfield's comment on Macnaughton's book. Mansfield herself writes in her notebook in 1920:

And yet one has these 'glimpses' before which all that one ever has written (what has one written) all (yes, all) that one ever has read, pales . . . The waves, as I drove home this afternoon – and the high foam, how it was suspended in the air before it fell . . . What is it that happens in that moment of suspension? It is timeless. In that moment (what do I mean) the whole life of the soul is contained. One is flung up – out of life – one is 'held' – and then, down, bright, broken, glittering onto the rocks, tossed back – part of the ebb and flow. (*CW4*, 310)

The daughters seem held in that 'moment of suspension' with the sudden realisation that they do not have to rush out and silence the organ grinder. Hanson and Gurr observe how '[t]he trap, the predetermined fate of the Daughters, is suggested through Mansfield's stock symbol of life, the sun' (92). However, as Kimber argues, rather than a symbol of life in this

scene the sun is a masculine symbol representing the Colonel, who ‘thieved [his] way in’ touching everything in the room as if he is still very much present (2008, 62).

The scene is full of questions, ‘What was Constantia thinking?’; ‘Would everything have been different if mother hadn’t died?’; ‘might they have married?’ (280-1). When Josephine hears the sparrows cheeping the narrative viewpoint shifts from external to internal as she ‘felt they were not sparrows, not on the window-ledge. It was inside her, that queer little crying noise. *Yeep – eyeep – yeep*. Ah, what was it crying, so weak and forlorn?’. Like Miss Brill who hears the fox-fur crying, the inner voice of Josephine weeps for her lost life, the Josephine who could have married if her mother had been alive. Finally, ‘[t]he thieving sun touched Josephine gently. She lifted her face. She was drawn over to the window by gentle beams. . . .’ (281). The ellipsis signals that Josephine gets no answers to her questions and the final portrait we have of her as she ‘stared at a big cloud where the sun had been’ (282), is of a moment of revelation as the ‘cloud’ covers the ‘sun’, symbolically representing a brief respite from the Colonel’s tyranny. However, although he is dead, she is unable to make the final imaginative leap towards freedom.

The entrapment is equally true for Constantia who

remembered the times she had come in here, crept out of bed in her nightgown when the moon was full, and lain on the floor with her arms outstretched, as though she was crucified. Why? The big pale moon had made her do it [...] she remembered too how, whenever they were at the seaside, she had gone off by herself and got as close to the sea as she could. (282)

As the narrative moves into Constantia’s memories of ‘the pale moon’ and the life caring for her father that had ‘happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn’t real’, we realise that like Linda in ‘Prelude’ she has been acting a role, projecting a self that had to ‘get things on approval’ (282). But, her thoughts reveal, ‘It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself. What did it mean? What was it that she was always wanting? What did it all lead to? Now?’ (282). Again this

passage is rich with symbolism. The moon and sea are feminine symbols relating to cycles and time, which here is symbolic of the circularity of their existence. Mansfield herself refers to her use of these symbols in her note on *Cosmic Anatomy*:

It is only a greater view of psychology. It helps me with my writing for instance to know that hot + bun may mean Taurus, Pradhana, substance. No, that's not really what absorbs me, it's that reactions to certain causes & effects always have been the same. It wasn't for nothing Constantia chose the moon & water – for instance! (CW4, 313)

Constantia tries to get 'as close to the sea as she could' (282) to court its feminine properties, to adopt them vicariously. In her life she has had no need of those properties, no marriage, no children and only servitude to her father. Mansfield's comment above that these 'causes & effects always have been the same' speaks to the ideas expressed in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', that the bullying of women and their suffering is universal across generations. She recognises the symbolic and universal qualities of images like the moon and the water. For Constantia these are 'natural elements that have been archetypically codified as female, and that even *force* her to acknowledge [...] her inner truth, i.e. her victimization at the hands of her father' (Ascari, 2016, 51). Whilst she might recognize her own victimization there is no sense at the end of the story, that she will free herself from its constraints.

In the final scene, the daughters become the focalisers but in this instance separately, and briefly they are depicted as separate selves in their respective symbolic associations. However, these symbolic representations lead only to questions and not to answers and the narrative ends with a return to the adoption of roles and selves, each asking the other to speak, each unable to articulate their desire to the other, or indeed to themselves: 'I've forgotten what it was [...] I've forgotten too' (282). Despite their brief glimpse of an alternative self, each is unable to grasp at the opportunity and they remain under the influence of the Colonel.

In the final story discussed below, 'At the Bay', Mansfield returns to the characters of 'Prelude'. In Mansfield's characterisation of Linda, she continues to question how the self can be represented as a duality of inner and outer and how often the inner self is discernible in a few revelatory moments. 'Miss Brill' hears her inner voice crying as she puts her fox fur away, and the daughters experience an instance where the possibilities of the inner self are revealed and depicted as they contemplate the moon and the sea. Images of nature are equally revealing for Linda in 'At the Bay' who catches sight of her inner self in moments of fantasy that are represented through metaphors of nature. I will discuss below how Mansfield's assured use of focalisation and free indirect discourse allows access to a character's consciousness and so permits her to construct the self as a duality.

### **'At the Bay' (1922)**

'At the Bay' returns to the Burnell family a year or so beyond the time frame of 'Prelude' and was published in the *London Mercury* in January 1922. The opening sequence presents a pastoral setting, a place in which a shepherd goes about his daily routine in the idyllic natural surroundings described by the narrator. The story begins very much in the outer world, the narrative voice echoing the pastoral sentiments of a romantic, sublime scene adapted to a modernist aesthetic. Bennett remarks how this opening is 'carefully wrought' and 'controlled' seeking to concern itself with 'revelation and concealment, with appearance – and appearances – and disappearance' (67). The narrator knows what is 'hidden under a white sea-mist' (342) but describes it in terms of what cannot be seen, and I would argue that this presentation serves to extend the reflections upon the self begun in 'Prelude'. The presentation of Linda and Beryl in 'Prelude' centred around their self-conceptualisation as a duality of an inner and outer self, the appearance of the outer self and the concealment of the

inner self. In the opening pastoral description the scene itself appears to have an inner and outer self, a transferred epithet.

The picturesque scene is interrupted by Stanley Burnell rushing past all the beauty in his urgency to be the first to reach the unbroken waters of the sea. The description moves from the idyllic to the naturally harsh, reflecting back to Stanley his own masculine personality: he 'rushed through the tussock grass' racing over 'big porous stones' onto 'hard sand that gleamed like oil' (*CW2*, 344). The pathetic fallacy reflects Stanley's character, and the narrative voice allows the reader to hear his thoughts: 'First man in as usual! He'd beaten them all' (344). Through the combination of action, imagery and Stanley's thoughts Mansfield is able to 'show' Stanley in a film-like sequence.

The *mise-en-scène* of natural beauty generated in the opening sequence is thus used as a site of interpretation of Stanley's character. The peaceful tranquillity of the shepherd's existence is shown in relief to Stanley's rushing urgency and competitiveness, depicting the self-image that he projects to the world. This is sharply contrasted later with Linda's acknowledgement of her love for her husband which is based on his weakness or vulnerability, his timidity and simplicity, and how he 'longed to be good' (354). These are typically non-masculine attributes, where his 'open quivering, distraught look [was] like the look of a trapped beast' (355). Mansfield would seem to portray Stanley more sympathetically than in 'Prelude' but she maintains her critical eye by showing how when he leaves in the morning he deliberately does not say goodbye to Linda meaning it 'as a punishment to her' (347) symbolising his solipsism. Later, when he apologises to Linda for not saying goodbye to her this is reinforced by the idea that he believes Linda's existence revolves around him. Whilst his vulnerability is shown when he later exclaims that he has 'suffered for it enough to-day' (367) he nevertheless feels guilty because he believes Linda relies on him, misses him and would be upset by his absence, when ironically the opposite is

the case (although it is fair to note that Linda is financially dependent on Stanley). His solipsistic behaviour may be masked in his moments of weakness, but the depiction of self shown in the opening scenes of 'At the Bay' reinforces our understanding of Stanley from 'Prelude'.

Equally, in 'At the Bay', Linda is no more settled in her life with Stanley and the children than she was in 'Prelude'. She expresses how the Stanley that she loves is seen only in 'glimpses, moments, breathing spaces', whilst the rest of the time her life is firefighting in a 'house that couldn't be cured of catching on fire' and 'what was left of her time was spent in the dread of having children' because 'she did not love her children' (355). She continues to muse upon aspects of the inner and outer self when alone, evoking fantasies of escape. In a focalised scene when Linda is lying under the manuka, free indirect discourse reveals:

But as soon as one paused to part the petals, to discover the underside of the leaf, along came Life and one was swept away. And lying in her cane chair, Linda felt so light; she felt like a leaf. Along came life like a wind and she was seized and shaken; she had to go. Oh dear, would it always be so? Was there no escape?  
(354)

The pathetic fallacy that evokes Stanley's characterisation in the opening of the story is here continued with similes and metaphors of nature. Life personified as the wind sweeps in to carry away Linda's sense of self (metaphorically, the 'underside of the leaf'). In 'pausing to part the petals' Linda is able to see the 'underside of the leaf', the real self that is hidden below the outer parts that are visible. The use of the 'leaf' is an apt metaphor because it is delicate and light, almost ephemeral and subject to easy influence by the wind. In contrast to Stanley who cuts through the picturesque images of nature, boldly striding towards the sea, Linda is here depicted as subject to nature, abashed by it and carried along unwillingly. Her sense of self unlike Stanley's, is delicate and easily lost because her true self is worn only on the inside and discovered when Linda has the opportunity to 'part the petals' every now and again.

Linda's part memory, part fantasy that follows on from this conjures the vision of escape repeated from 'Prelude' (in 'Prelude' it was a vast ship [CW2, 87]). Linda's memory of her father summons the following images:

and he promised, 'as soon as you and I are old enough, Linny, we'll cut off somewhere, we'll escape. Two boys together. I have a fancy I'd like to sail up a river to China'. Linda saw the river, very wide, covered with little rafts and boats. She saw the yellow hats of the boatmen and she heard their high, thin voices as they called. . . . (354)

I discussed in Chapter 5 how Angela Smith (1999, 99) writes of the images of Linda's fantasy in 'Prelude' (the 'vast ship' [87]) as masculine. However, I illustrated how these images are of control rather than being specifically male-gendered. Here, the comment that they should be 'two boys together' would seem to support Smith's point, although this colloquial phrase could simply suggest camaraderie, an escaping together. In my discussion of 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' above I examined the symbol of the sea as feminine, forcing Josephine to 'acknowledge her inner truth' (Ascari, 2016, 51). She approaches the water getting 'as close to the sea as she could' (282). In this place 'she really felt herself' and the visual stimulation of the sea allows Josephine to ask '[w]hat did it mean? What was it that she was always wanting?' (282). The sea, whilst feminine, is also represented as mysterious and in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' is aligned with the moon.

At the end of 'At the Bay' the sea is again used as a site of femininity and wonder.

After Beryl's encounter with Harry Kember there is a final scene XIII:

A cloud, small, serene, floated across the moon. In that moment of darkness the sea sounded deep, troubled. Then the cloud sailed away, and the sound of the sea was a vague murmur, as if it waked out of a dark dream. All was still.

Linked to Linda's vision of sailing on the river (or the 'vast ship' sailing in 'Prelude' [87]) the cloud that covers the moon symbolises the masculine. Beryl has rejected Harry Kember's advances, the 'dark dream' of the quotation. Beryl's imaginings of romance are swept away by their reality, and as in narratives such as 'Frau Brechenmacher attends a Wedding' ([1910])

see discussion in Chapter 3) male advances are tinged with violence, the 'dark dream'. But now 'all is still' on the feminine sea and Beryl, like Viola in 'The Swing of the Pendulum' ([1911] see discussion in Chapter 3) has overcome the man she has conjured in her fantasy, realising that the reality is far from how she imagined it.

It is not only women who dream of escape; in 'At the Bay' this extends to the men as this narrative becomes one in which the feminine is shown with strength (as in Mrs Harry Kember), and the masculine with weakness (as in the discussion of the traits Linda admires in Stanley discussed above), subverting the traditional interpretation of these subjectivities. In a conversation between Linda and Jonathan Trout (Linda's brother in law) Jonathan speaks of his job saying, 'On Monday the cage door opens and clangs to upon the victim for another eleven months and a week' (365). He believes himself as equally shackled as the women trapped within patriarchal strictures, like Linda, but his comment that the cage door opens means that he is offered some escape, even if it is only for one week a year. Linda's cage, however, never opens to let her out. This seems an apt metaphor to apply not just to Linda here, but also to the daughters of the Colonel, whose cage is shown to be perpetual. Jonathan continues, 'Tell me, what is the difference between my life and that of an ordinary prisoner?' (365) and the sense of his entrapment is accentuated with the description of him as 'gifted, exceptional' within whom 'a new fire blazed' (365). There is a symbiosis between Jonathan and Linda, and Linda feels keenly for him because she is equally trapped. There is a deliberate contrast between his apathy and the futility of her dreams of escape. Whilst she would escape if she could, it seems that he will not.

Jonathan continues with an alternative metaphor:

The only difference I can see is that I put myself in jail [...] I'm like an insect that's flown into a room of its own accord. I dash against the walls, dash against the windows, flop against the ceiling, do everything on God's earth, in fact, except fly out again. (365)

He asks himself why he does not escape, answering ‘it’s not allowed, it’s forbidden, it’s against the insect law, to stop banging and flopping and crawling up the pane even for an instant’ but he has ‘no stamina. No anchor. No guiding principle, let us call it’ (366).

Mansfield has recourse to elements of the natural world in structuring the relationships within this family. Whilst Linda is associated with flowers, petals, leaves, and Stanley with the sea, Jonathan is a fly, and has semantic associations with insects as small, insignificant, stupid. Unlike Stanley, whose striding masculinity provides him with self-assurance in opposition to Linda’s struggle to grasp at a certain conceptualisation of herself, Jonathan is placed in juxtaposition to Linda through his weakness and apathy. He has the means of escape but is unable to make use of it. This deliberate oppositional model serves to subvert traditional male and female roles, a harping back to the *Rhythm* stories in which Mansfield blurred the lines between the masculine and feminine to question those roles (see discussion of ‘Millie’ [1913] and ‘The Woman at the Store’ [1912] in Chapter 5).

The final scene of ‘At the Bay’ is given to Beryl and begins by addressing the reader directly:

Why does one feel so different at night? Why is it so exciting to be awake when everyone else is asleep? Late – it is very late! And yet every moment you feel more and more wakeful, as though you were slowly, almost with every breath, waking up into a new, wonderful, far more thrilling and exciting world than the daylight one. (368)

The second person narrative invites the reader to join Beryl in her musings. Initially, we are aware that this is a train of thought and inside the consciousness of one of the characters, but which character is not revealed for another two paragraphs. This apostrophe, addressing the reader directly, collapses the gap between reader and character and adds another dimension to our understanding of Beryl’s musings upon aspects of the self. She invites the reader to be complicit, so that we can be counted amongst those who understand her need to fantasise and to realise the dreams that began in ‘Prelude’. Hankin has argued that this reveals ‘narrative

motifs whose universality suggests something very like the Jungian collective unconscious' (1993, 28). This echoes the dual sentiments presented by the sisters in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'. Using the second person serves to invite the reader to consider how the sentiments relate to everyone, underlining how the formulation of the self is a lonely business in that we might all feel the 'thrilling and exciting world' of the night, but that the imaginings we create to explore aspects of our 'self' are dreamt up in isolation.

Sitting in the liminal space of the window, and under the cover of darkness, Beryl experiences the 'far more thrilling and exciting world' as the romantic visions of 'Prelude' are reawakened, and she imagines 'two people standing in the middle of her room. Her arms were round his neck; and he held her. And now he whispered, "My beauty, my little beauty!"' (368). The use of the second person in the passage above and positioning a character in the liminal space of a window is reminiscent of one of Mansfield's earliest stories discussed in Chapter 2: 'Vignette I', written in 1907. Whilst the narrator of 'Vignette I' sits at the window, London personified addresses the reader: 'Do you not hear the quick beat of my heart? Do you not feel the fierce rushing of blood through my veins?' (*CWI*, 79). In the case of Beryl and the narrator of 'Vignette I', the second person narrative arises from the narrator's consciousness as the 'I' of the narrative. Both narrators are given the opportunity, by using the second person, to step outside themselves for a moment and project a different self as if they are James's 'I' observing the 'Me' (1892, 42).

In this final episode in the story Beryl revisits her vision of 'Prelude' of the 'someone who just did not come' (*CW2*, 69) for whom she waits. She courts images of romance spoken in the conditional:

If I go on living here, thought Beryl, anything may happen to me.  
'But how do you know he is coming at all?' mocked a small voice within her.  
But Beryl dismissed it. She couldn't be left. Other people, perhaps, but not she. It wasn't possible to think that Beryl Fairfield never married, that lovely fascinating girl.  
'Do you remember Beryl Fairfield?'

‘Remember her! How could I forget her! It was one summer at the Bay I saw her [...] but it’s years ago now’. (369)

Sandley argues that the changes in tense in this passage are ‘used to convey Beryl’s dizzying shift of times and realities’ in which she ‘creates(s) a whole other self whose fictitious past, present and future exist alongside her everyday self’s present’ (Sandley, 87). However, there are more than two selves in this exchange. Beryl projects herself onto the couple embracing in her room, signalled by the repetition of Mrs Harry Kember’s remark, ‘what a little beauty you are’ (352). In the exchange above, there is the self of Beryl thinking in the conditional (‘if I go on living here’); there is also the self of the ‘small voice within her’ and there is the self that represents Beryl Fairfield as a subject viewed in the past, in the comment ‘to think that Beryl Fairfield never married’. Whilst Beryl dismisses the ‘mocking voice’, the doubt raised that the romance might not come at all seems justified in the final lines of the exchange because whoever ‘speaks’ the words did in fact leave, only seeing Beryl ‘one summer at the Bay’ (369) and is reminded of her beauty from long ago. There is no suggestion of stability or endurance in romance. The mocking voice reminds us of Mansfield’s comment that Beryl ‘really hasn’t been even able to control her second self’ (*CW4*, 184). The connection with the inner self is repeated in other stories; in ‘Prelude’ Linda hears a ‘faint far-away voice [that] seemed to come from a deep well’ (*CW2*, 65), and Miss Brill ‘thought she heard something crying’ (*CW2*, 254). Here it serves to highlight the dichotomy of the real and imagined.

The conditional moves towards the concrete as Beryl ‘saw somebody, a man, leave the road’ (369). Carried away by her fantasy and the strength she seems to have drawn from Mrs Harry Kember’s recommendation that she should ‘enjoy yourself while you’re young’ (369), she enters the garden and the stirring that she felt earlier in Mrs Harry Kember’s company is awakened again here, ‘the quick, bold, evil feeling’ (353). As Harry Kember approaches ‘something stirred in her, something reared its head’ (370) as ‘that weak thing within her seemed to uncoil, to grow suddenly tremendously strong’ (370). Away from the

protection of the liminal space, however, it 'seemed to her everything was different. The moonlight stared and glittered; the shadows were like iron bars' (370). What was 'more thrilling and exciting' in the 'beautiful night' where 'even the stars were conspirators too' (368) is now exposed as terrifying. In the final lines of the story Beryl rejects Harry Kember's advances calling him a 'cold, little devil!' (371) and the dichotomy of fantasy and reality is firmly established. Beryl's sense of self as the subjected, lonely female looking for romance is revealed as fragile when faced with the possibility of its realisation. This is suggestive of Mansfield's frequent reference to the unknowable aspects of the self, 'who am I' and 'is there a me' (*L5*, 340-1). Beryl may be able to design a fantasy based on what she thinks is her truer, inner self but the reality is that she is unable to grasp with any certainty what that true self really is.

## **Conclusion**

Between 1919 and 1922 Mansfield's reviewing for the *Athenaeum* gave her the opportunity to reflect on the current state of fiction. In her reviews as well as her notebooks and letters, she tries to express how writers could make better use of fiction to arrive at what she terms the 'truth'. She does not, however, define exactly what she means by 'truth' and this is a problematic term that seems to contradict other comments in her notebooks. Although, Mansfield does express how 'we live in an age of experiment' relating this to the 'thrilling possibilities' that prose has to offer (*CW3*, 520). Her emphasis on the craft of writing is clear and although she expresses the challenges of representing the 'hesitations, doubts, beginnings', she nevertheless acknowledges that 'there is a way of doing it' (*L5*, 214).

For Mansfield, the craft of writing involves being 'immersed in the characters' inner reality' (*L4*, 93) and the stories discussed in this chapter provide good examples of how Mansfield achieves such immersion. In each of the stories discussed Mansfield uses both

focalisation and free indirect discourse to reveal the inner workings of her characters' minds. This allows her to show how they formulate conceptions of themselves that are reflected in some of her personal writing. For example, Mansfield continues to depict characters who wear masks or deliberately adopt roles. In Mansfield's earliest stories discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, mask wearing and role playing were clearly evident, for example, the two students in 'In a Café' or the character of Audrey in 'The Education of Audrey'. Fantasy often plays a key role in the establishment of alternative selves, such as Viola's reinvention of herself as a courtesan in 'The Swing of the Pendulum'. In 'Miss Brill' discussed in this chapter, Mansfield returns to the concept of mask wearing but in Miss Brill's case this is linked symbolically with her fox-fur. The fox fur represents the public self that Miss Brill wears but also comes to symbolise Miss Brill's inner self. Mansfield reveals how fragile Miss Brill's sense of her public self becomes when faced with an unkind word from a stranger. Miss Brill's self-deception is uncovered and because of Mansfield's use of focalisation and free indirect discourse achieves an immersive experience for the reader.

Many of Mansfield's earlier stories use focalisation as a way of revealing a character's sense of self, for example in 'Millie' the main character experiences a sudden and surprising feeling of maternal nurturing toward a stranger when she helps a young boy who arrives on her farm. This momentary glimpse of a self previously unknown to a character is an important aspect of 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'. Mansfield's depiction of the two daughters is moving whilst at the same time comic, but the overall message in the story is one of long-term damage resulting from a lifetime of ill treatment. Mansfield carefully controls the narrative viewpoint to show how at certain points the sisters' thoughts seem to be momentarily aligned. The sharing of the sisters' consciousness is achieved through focalisation or free indirect discourse where the reader is briefly uncertain whether either Constantia or Josephine is the focaliser. What this reveals is a life time of servitude resulting

in the sisters having little concept of themselves beyond the life they have endured with their father. Throughout the narrative, memories of their life are unveiled and gradually these illustrate how the treatment the sisters have received means that they are forever trapped in the selves they have long since worn. In the final moments of the story, each sister gains a brief glimpse of the possibility of another life, represented symbolically in images of the moon and the sea. However, like Millie who dismisses the self she catches sight of and returns to adopting her husband's viewpoint, the two sisters are unable to take advantage of their possibilities and remain under the Colonel's influence despite his death.

In the last story discussed, 'At the Bay' Mansfield returns to the idea that the self is unfathomable and this links with the ideas expressed in *Cosmic Anatomy* and her notebook entries from the time that she was reading it. Mansfield's ideas seem to be particularly well conveyed through the character of Beryl, whom some critics have acknowledged is a likeness of Mansfield herself. In 'Prelude' Beryl is depicted as having many selves although none of these satisfies her and she seeks solace in fantasy. She awakens 'something [that] stirred in her' (353) but as in other stories the 'something' of the inner self is unrecognisable and unknowable. In 'At the Bay' Beryl dreams of romance again, articulated through the 'thrilling and exciting world' of the night but is shocked to discover that the reality of romance is far from her fantasies.

In each of three stories analysed, Mansfield uses images of nature to illustrate how characters attain a glimpse of the inner self. Mansfield writes of momentary glimpses, associating them with the powerful sea and waves that provide a 'moment of suspension' (CW4, 310). In 'At the Bay' Linda imagines how she wants to discover 'the underside of the leaf' (354); the daughters are associated with the feminine properties of the moon and the sea (282) which provide them with a brief moment of hope that the inner selves they have hidden for so long can be released; and for Miss Brill it is the fox fur imagined as an animate

creature, upon whom Miss Brill can bestow some affection, that uncloaks the ‘something gentle [that] seemed to move in her bosom’ (251).

The stories discussed in this chapter provide examples of representations of the self that Mansfield depicted in several earlier stories and are also illustrative of anxieties about aspects of the self that Mansfield expressed in her letters and notebooks in the last few years of her writing career. This thesis has shown that what sets the later stories apart is Mansfield’s handling of narrative techniques, particularly the use of focalisation and free indirect discourse, in more carefully controlled ways. Her ability to allow access to a character’s consciousness in the later stories is more sophisticated and, therefore, better able to represent the kinds of enquiry that Mansfield expressed in her notebooks and letters. Mansfield’s oeuvre does not represent a journey from a starting point to a finishing point in her conceptualisations of the self but these are more aptly recorded as a process of distillation that led her to develop narrative techniques to explore questions rather than to answer them.

## Conclusion

This thesis offers a new reading of Mansfield's writing by arguing that her preoccupation with selfhood was the stimulus behind the development of her unique modernist aesthetic. What my analysis has revealed is that Mansfield's pursuit of enquiry into notions of the self was a life-long project, although not a conscious and deliberate one, that directly fed her desire to create narrative spaces and structures that could accommodate her need for representations of anxieties about the self, its divisions and its contradictions. She often refers to herself as divided, as if it is an illness she cannot escape. She says, for example, in a notebook entry, that she has found '[a]nother proof of my divided nature' (*CW4*, 411) and in another exclaims: 'Oh God! I am divided still' (*CW4*, 390). Mansfield articulates a desire to know the self but what her writing uncovers is a self that is unknowable or hidden. I have discovered how often Mansfield's needs are communicated in oblique terms and many of her notebook entries and comments in letters are enigmatic or contradictory. Using narratological theory as a guiding principle, I have unveiled how this complexity and elusiveness translates into Mansfield's experiments with narrative forms. Through the application of key narratological terms, I have explored how Mansfield gradually harnesses narrative technique to represent her characters' struggles with their understanding of their many selves, as she does in comments in her notebooks and letters.

My close textual analysis of Mansfield's stories has illustrated how, even from her earliest writing, she experimented with focalisation and free indirect discourse, initially tentatively and later with more adeptness and sophistication. Mansfield's ability to refine and hone her narrative skill is shown in this thesis to be related directly to the comments and ideas about the self that she puzzles over in her notebooks and letters. This study has also

revealed how Mansfield's ideas on self-reflexivity have some connection with prevalent theories, both psychological and esoteric, of the early twentieth century.

In terms of existing Mansfield scholarship, I suggest that this thesis has broken new ground by building upon and extending earlier scholarship by key Mansfield scholars such as Kate Fullbrook, Clare Hanson and Sydney Janet Kaplan. Whilst their approaches examine some aspects of Mansfield's enquiries into the self, and its connection to particular stories, their studies are often defined by theoretical frameworks such as modernism, feminism or biography. This study, framed by early twentieth-century theories of selfhood, has taken a chronological approach that has enabled a re-evaluation of Mansfield's conceptualisation of the self over her lifetime. I have analysed in depth seventeen stories selected carefully as the most noteworthy examples of Mansfield's narrative experiments, informed by her emerging ideas of the self. By choosing stories from across Mansfield's oeuvre I have revealed how an understanding of her changing comprehension of the self is best addressed sequentially, working from her earliest stories to those at the end of her writing career that are among her most famous and most anthologised. This approach has also unveiled how some of Mansfield's most critically neglected stories, particularly her early writing, repay close analysis in uncovering the point from which she began her exploration of selfhood.

Within this study I have also assimilated more recent Mansfield scholarship, particularly from the last ten years, which has opened up new directions in analysis of her stories. I have built upon the studies of scholars such as Claire Drewery whose work on liminality has enabled me to explore how Mansfield uses these in-between spaces to reveal the inner workings of her characters' minds. I have also incorporated studies that examine the mirror trope, the uncanny and fantasy, and common story frameworks such as the fairy tale and the governess narrative. Particularly of note in exploring subjectivity has been the edition of *Katherine Mansfield Studies* devoted to fantasy, as well as Maurizio Ascari's work on

Mansfield's adaptations of cinematic techniques into narrative structure. The originality of my thesis lies in how I have drawn on these studies and integrated some of their ideas to focus attention on the relationship between narrative technique and the narrativising of the self.

Another innovative aspect of this study has been the examination of Mansfield's engagement with more esoteric ideas beyond the popularised psychology of Sigmund Freud and William James. Mansfield was open to the concept of new modes of thinking and in this thesis I have drawn on the small number of studies that address Mansfield's interest in mysticism or esoteric ideas, briefly exploring her relationship with people around her who advocated such ideas. Whilst some recent scholars, such as Gerri Kimber, have considered Mansfield's interest in mysticism, this remains an area of Mansfield scholarship which would repay further investigation beyond the research I have undertaken here.

By taking a chronological approach to Mansfield's writing, I have been able to expose how Mansfield's ideas about the self change over time, becoming more complex. Initially, her ideas are based on Wildean tropes of the hidden inner ego. Many stories address identity as a dichotomy of the inner and outer self, and in particular she depicts this in moments of contemplation in front of mirrors or in liminal spaces. Later stories reveal more complex ideas of how the self can be a deliberate, although often necessary, construct which Mansfield explores through fantasy, performance, charade and the uncanny. As Mansfield's ability to control narrative perspective becomes more adept, characters are represented with more complicated constructions of their selves. Characters such as Beryl and Linda from 'Prelude' (1918) and 'At the Bay' (1922) address their many selves, including those they acknowledge as false, as they attempt to access their truer, inner selves. What I have revealed in this thesis is how each of these constructions of selves can be related to Mansfield's personal thoughts and her need to draw out from her writing a sense of what the self is. Her

writing in this sense can be described as reflexive; in probing her ideas on the self and merging them with the creative process she develops narrative techniques that can best represent those thoughts and self-reflections.

Part of this study has shown how Mansfield develops her narrative techniques by making the best use of situation: she places her characters in positions of tension and crisis to illustrate how selves change in different circumstances. The New Zealand stories address how the self is affected by environment and in many stories Mansfield shows how relationships with others place stress upon the self, causing characters to adjust and reflect upon themselves in their daily interactions. Masks, facades and personas are broken down or discarded, and inner selves are unearthed as characters are placed at a turning point where the possibilities of alternative selves are revealed. Each of these situations exposes Mansfield's unease at the transitory nature of the self. The connections that I have made throughout the thesis between the stories and Mansfield's personal writing are evidence of the importance she placed on giving expression to her concerns over the self and in articulating the struggle to understand its multiplicity through her fiction writing.

In terms of her accomplishment with narrative techniques, Mansfield begins with a tentative grasp of how narrative voice and perspective can be utilised to depict inner monologue. Early stories reveal a need to retain an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator. As Mansfield's ability becomes more skilful, she relinquishes this overarching narrative voice and begins to understand how the differences between the narrating self and the experiencing self can be exploited to reveal aspects of a character's inner self. Mansfield's deftness in moving between narrative viewpoints builds throughout her oeuvre until she is able to remove the external narrative voice in favour of multiple focalisers, in some stories even managing to depict multiple consciousnesses simultaneously. Throughout this thesis I have

exposed how these techniques can be linked to Mansfield's variant and complicated conceptions of the self.

Mansfield's stories are memorable, if not unforgettable, for their acute sense of a woman's position in society and the pressures that patriarchal regimes place upon a woman's sense of self. She can evoke both tragedy and comedy in the depiction of characters such as the sisters in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1921), illustrating how parental abuse has lasting and detrimental effects on women's selfhood. Mansfield captures the enduring effect of such abuse through the representation of the sisters' inner consciousness simultaneously. In other stories, Mansfield captures the self as a construct, whether forcibly imposed upon women trapped by suffocating marriages or deliberately contrived as a means of escape. The commonality among Mansfield's stories is the depiction of the self as characterised by impossible contradictions: it is at once a duality of the inner and outer self and equally a multiplicity, it is knowable in brief flashes of insight but at the same time hidden. In order to represent these contradictions in fiction Mansfield sought out techniques that could bring together psychological realism, which allows her to register the effects of environment and relationships on the selves of her characters, with a more fleeting and impressionistic expression that draws on fantasy, dream, the uncanny or the imagined and which speaks to the modern modes of understanding the world popularised by Sigmund Freud and William James.

A key discovery of the research is that Mansfield's search for an understanding of the facets of the self is at the centre of her literary achievements, particularly her contribution to modernism. She generated a unique creative output bringing together devices such as liminality or the uncanny with several literary techniques such as cinematic or synchronous episodes, and an extensive and assured use of free indirect discourse and focalisation.

Mansfield translates her need to uncover aspects of the self into an experimental aesthetic and in doing so she generates new realms of creativity, contributing to an emerging modernism.

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