



# T I N A K O R I

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## Editor's Letter

Issues of self-expression, gender, and (post)colonialism occupy a central space in contemporary scholarly studies of Katherine Mansfield's fiction. Recent papers by Susan Gubar and Susan Reid have examined the connection between gender and self-expression in Mansfield's works. The 2013 edition of *Katherine Mansfield Studies* was dedicated to *Katherine Mansfield and the (Post)colonial* and Anna Snaith's 2014 book, *Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London* contains a chapter on Mansfield's response to Maori culture. Scholars' ongoing interest in these aspects of Mansfield's work demonstrates Mansfield's interest in problematizing our notions of identity. As this issue of *Tinakori* will show, many of Mansfield's stories are interested in exploring how our identities are formed and the ways in which they empower and/or constrict us. Mansfield is constantly probing, asking her readers to question easy divisions between masculine and feminine, colonial and post-colonial, the self and the other.

The papers that follow offer responses to some of Mansfield's (at times rather pointed) questions. Louise Edensor explores Mansfield's relationship with the experimental periodical, *Rhythm*, linking Mansfield's aesthetics to the instability of categories such as gender and nationality. Examining 'The Woman at the Store', Edensor argues that Mansfield couples raw colonial elements with an 'uncanny' narrative voice in order to force her readers to examine their own assumptions regarding gender roles. Edensor's study demonstrates that, by crafting a story that disrupts the colonial/Western dichotomy and emphasises gendered and narrative instability, Mansfield is able to 'embrace the flux', as *Rhythm* sought to do.

Similarly interested in issues of nation and colonialism, Lotta Schneidemesser analyses how living away from New Zealand shaped Mansfield's perception of and writing about home. Schneidemesser demonstrates that Mansfield's writing about New Zealand involved balancing a nostalgic yearning for her homeland with a fraught desire to introduce that (colonised) homeland to a wider, cosmopolitan, and colonial audience. Examining Mansfield's 'Prelude', Schneidemesser argues that writing about New Zealand allowed Mansfield to recreate a sense of home but also required her to grapple with her own feelings of exile following the death of her brother Leslie.

Focusing on issues of identity and self-expression through the lens of Henri Bergson's philosophy, Eiko Nakano examines how the characters of 'Psychology', 'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day', and 'Bliss' struggle to find the right words to convey their thoughts and experiences to others. Making use of Henri Bergson's concepts of duration and multiplicity, Nakano links Mansfield's characters' struggles with self-expression to Mansfield's own explorations of unity and plurality. Nakano argues that, while Mansfield's characters are overly reliant on uniform, conventional phrases, Mansfield herself uses the short story form to provide readers with a diversity of viewpoints and expressions.

Echoing Nakano's exploration of conventionality in Mansfield's fiction, Kristin Rajan provides a comparative analysis of social performativity in Mansfield's 'Miss Brill' and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Contrasting Orlando's ability to embrace and discard a wide array of roles with Miss Brill's strict adherence to social norms, Rajan argues that Orlando is ultimately able to access a deeper selfhood that eludes the title character of Mansfield's story.

I am delighted to publish these papers from four contributors from diverse parts of the globe. I also invite other scholars interested in Mansfield to consult the CFP at the end of this volume and consider submitting their research to the next issue of *Tinakori*.

Illya Nokhrin  
*Tinakori* Editor



## Contributor Biographies

**Louise Edensor** is Senior Lecturer in Media and Education, and Campus Programme Coordinator of the International Foundation Programme, at Middlesex University, Dubai. She contributed a book chapter to *Katherine Mansfield's French Lives*, and has published in *Katherine Mansfield Studies*. Louise is a doctoral candidate at the University of Northampton and she will submit her thesis on 'Katherine Mansfield and Conceptualisations of the Self' later this year.

**Lotta Schneidmesser** is a doctoral candidate at the University of York. She spent part of her undergraduate degree at Victoria University of Wellington, researching Māori literature and culture. She did a Master's degree in World Literatures in English at Jesus College, at the University of Oxford, continuing her research on Māori Literature. Her PhD-research focuses on the moment of homecoming and broader issues that concern home, homecoming and return migration in Pacific Literature. Her PhD is funded by the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation.

**Eiko Nakano** is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Cultural Studies at Kyoto Sangyo University, Japan, where she teaches English literature. Her publications include 'Katherine Mansfield and French Philosophy: A Bergsonian Reading of *Maata*' in *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, 1 (2009) and 'Katherine Mansfield, *Rhythm* and Henri Bergson' in *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism* (2011).

**Kristin Bryant Rajan** is a Lecturer in English at Kennesaw State University near Atlanta GA. Her dissertation investigates identity as a construction in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*, and her articles explore identity in modernist literature. She is working on a book illuminating the correlations between modernist literature and Eastern definitions of the self. She is also a poet, fiction, and creative nonfiction writer.

**‘Before art can be human again, it must first learn to be brutal’:**

**Katherine Mansfield, the self and *Rhythm***

Louise Edensor

**Introduction**

In December 1911, Katherine Mansfield sent her story ‘The Woman at the Store’ to a new magazine called *Rhythm*. The newly launched *Rhythm*, was an 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’.<sup>1</sup> Mansfield, seeking a new outlet for her writing after a disagreement over a recent publication in the *New Age*,<sup>2</sup> found *Rhythm* more amenable to her developing sense of artistry. In this paper, I consider how Mansfield’s story ‘The Woman at the Store’ both aligned with, and helped to shape, the Modernist aesthetic propounded by *Rhythm*. I will show how Mansfield explores her own disquiet in relation to her positioning within the colonial/European dichotomy and draws on her New Zealand heritage as the impetus for creativity. This reveals an assured use of free indirect discourse and experimentation with perspectival filters, in order to question and conceptualise issues of the self in ways that were akin to *Rhythm*’s 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 ‘Men 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’.<sup>3</sup> 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’,<sup>4</sup> it seems that Mansfield was seeking a magazine that provided the ‘stimulus there to shape the trend [she] wished to pursue’.<sup>5</sup> 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 Andre Derain. 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’ by turning to *Rhythm*, which embraced more ‘brutal’ and experimental forms of art.<sup>6</sup> This experimentalism is evidenced in the magazine’s physical form, with its ‘fluid movement between drawings and text embody[ing] its rejection of conventional gender, social and academic identities’.<sup>7</sup> Manfred Jahn has recently discussed how the close relationship between painting and literature 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.<sup>8</sup>

Capturing the subjectivity of perception and appealing to ‘the audience’s emotion and instinct’ was the aim of the Rhythmists, a Fauvist approach that ‘does not only aim at securing an impression of things as they are, but [...] aims at reflecting their psychological effect on the mind of the observer’.<sup>9</sup>

*Rhythm*’s manifesto however, was far from clear, causing Arnold Bennett to remark that the aspiration to ‘be the rhythmical echo of life,’<sup>10</sup> ‘flaps in the vague’ and has a ‘meaning [that] is not precise’.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, John Middleton 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’.<sup>12</sup> Binckes argues, however, that ‘the element *Rhythm* reproduced most accurately from one avant-garde generation to another was a sense of the mutability of such defining categories’.<sup>13</sup> This would seem to echo Goodyear’s assertion that *Rhythm*’s embracing of the ‘principle of flux itself’<sup>14</sup> was key to their underlying strategy. To grasp at the ungraspable ‘implies a textual culture with an almost infinite capacity to renew itself’<sup>15</sup> and therefore, the provision of any definitive categorisation, or clear outline of aims and ideals, would be both paradoxical and self-defeating. Mansfield’s adoption of the psychological realism genre produces a narrative which captures the ‘inability of the narrator fully to grasp and bear witness to an uncanny, unnarratable situation’ which results in a ‘concealment and displacement of meaning’.<sup>16</sup> The resulting disorientation created in the reader by the unstable narrative viewpoint is appropriate in the literary environment at *Rhythm* where the aim was to express the inexpressible. A narrative that depicts anything other than a world in a state of flux, a world based on the individuality of perception, would misrepresent reality and would be inappropriate for a magazine like *Rhythm*.

In accepting Mansfield’s story, ‘The Woman at the Store’, Murry expressed how it reminded him of ‘a phrase picked up by J. M. Synge: “Before art can be human again, it must first learn to be brutal”’.<sup>17</sup> Scholars have illustrated how Mansfield’s story can be ‘identified with the savage spirit of the land’ in that ‘it included that feral, savage side of [Mansfield’s] being, symptomised by her restlessness’,<sup>18</sup> 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’ remarks how she is ‘old with the age of centuries, strong with the strength of savagery’ (85). I will show how Mansfield’s first contribution to *Rhythm* has precedence in establishing the kind of avant-garde artistry the magazine wished to promote. I will illustrate how her first story, ‘The Woman at the Store’, is demonstrative of the brutality of Synge’s statement and how she questions the construction of gender boundaries.

### **‘The Woman at the Store’**

In ‘The Woman at the Store’,<sup>19</sup> Mansfield thwarts the reader’s expectations at every turn, relying on 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 reader’s sense of the stability of perception. The

narrative also speaks to *Rhythm's* conscious recognition of the blurring of gender boundaries<sup>20</sup> by providing a female narrator, something that is not revealed to the reader until the end of the narrative. The revelation of the narrator as female contributes towards the uncanny atmosphere of the story.<sup>21</sup> As Jenny 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' allowing Mansfield her attempts to find an 'authority of voice and form'.<sup>22</sup>

'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 [...] 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.<sup>23</sup>

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 afforded Mansfield an opportunity to examine her own positioning within the colonial/European literary dichotomy. Indeed, this extended beyond her literary aspirations to the question of 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'.<sup>24</sup> Whilst Mansfield had not experienced at first hand the brutal culture described in stories like 'The Woman at the Store' (although she may have witnessed it) 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. 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'.<sup>25</sup> Mansfield's representation of 'discomposure and disruption', in stories like 'The Woman at the Store' allows her to explore the effect of the brutal New Zealand environment upon women's self-perception.

Mansfield's sense of her own tenuous position as a colonial, living and writing as a European, raises questions about her conception of her own identity. In the New Zealand stories this is channelled into a questioning of aspects of the self and of the concept of shifting and unstable gender boundaries. Majumdar sees 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'.<sup>26</sup> 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 were not permitted at the *New Age*, finding a voice to exemplify the ‘violence of colonial rule, and particularly its impacts on women’<sup>27</sup> in more extreme ways, since this aligned with *Rhythm*’s more brutal art forms.

Mansfield’s methodology in the ‘The Woman at the Store’ is to subvert the reader’s expectations as a commentary on the nature of human perception, and to question gender boundaries. She does this by setting up expectations and then thwarting them to reveal how perception is unstable. From the outset, the evocation of the uncanny serves to set up uncertainty in the reader. Freud describes the uncanny as being similar to being 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 [...] the excessive stress that is laid on psychical reality, as opposed to material reality – a feature that is close to the omnipotence of thoughts.<sup>28</sup>

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 streams of consciousness (the flux) are individual,<sup>29</sup> creating a sense of individual psychical reality rather than a stable sense of ‘material reality’. The uncanny in this story conceptualises this psychical reality by showing how individual perceptions can be unreliable. The opening sequence of ‘The Woman at the Store’ depicts 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 Halloween-esque *mis-en-scène* where ‘everyone in the story seems touched by the savage and the grotesque’,<sup>30</sup> where even the beautiful things are tainted, such as the ‘purple orchids and manuka bushes covered with spider webs’ (268), the first-person narrative voice relates the travellers’ discussion of the woman they expect to see at the store. The reader’s reliance on the veracity of the narrative voice is exploited to show how the ‘psychical reality’ of Freud’s definition can be shown to be unreliable, and how the perceived reality of the travellers becomes a fantasy. As Freud articulates above, a ‘symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolises’, in this case, the woman at the store, becomes a sexual object, merely a male fantasy about woman. Hin’s description of the woman 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), is shown to be a chimera when the travellers arrive at the store and the reality of the woman’s situation becomes apparent. We 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>31</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 Pamela Dunbar confirms the woman ‘is presented less as a character than a construct – or presumed construct – of a series of macho fantasies’.<sup>32</sup>

Their first encounter with the woman not only destroys that fantasy of her, but also illustrates how masculinised she has become as a result of the brutal environment, and the treatment she has received from her husband. Added to her physical appearance, clad in men's boots, she also carries a rifle, she kicks the dog and she shouts rather than speaks (269-70). The masculine gesturing fits well within an environment of a 'whare roofed in with corrugated iron [...] and a creek and a clump of willow trees' (269), but once inside the house 'the walls are plastered with old pages of English periodicals' and the 'mantelpiece above the stove was draped in pink paper' within which is sat 'an ironing board and a wash tub' (270). The woman's mock femininity and domesticity is shown to be part of the ambivalent relationship between her 'self' as colonial settler and that of her western heritage, through the decoration from periodicals: the woman is literally enveloped within the expectations of western ideals of femininity and domesticity. The woman, whose domestic activity seems incongruous in such a dirty and barren place, begins 'pleating the frills of her pinafore' (270). These feminine actions contrast sharply with the masculine appearance of the woman and set up a dichotomy of feminine/masculine underscored by the shattering of the fantasy of the woman the travellers have envisaged. The woman is a caricature of femininity and domesticity, played out in the ritualistic domestic behaviour in an environment where she has had to become masculinised to survive. In Freudian terms she is the automaton, a 'wax doll' (272), where there is 'doubt as to whether an apparently animated object really is alive, and conversely, [with] a lifeless object might not perhaps be and is'.<sup>33</sup> She is, like the automaton, seen only in physical terms as an object: barmaid, wax doll, mother, housewife, sexual fantasy.

This objectification 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, and the past of the woman as a wife when her husband was alive. These timescales are overlaid by the present of the narrator as she tells the story to us. *Fabula*, the story of the visit by the travellers to the farm, and *syuzet*, the construction of the narrative on three timescales using the memory of both the travellers and the woman, work in combination in 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. Because of the mediation of the narrator's consciousness the woman's three selves are reduced to 'types' rather than formed consciousnesses. Monika Fludernik has explained that 'narratives construct selfhood as individuality and functional role'.<sup>34</sup> Identity and functional role, then, seem bound together but this is shown to be in conflict. The caricature of femininity 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, the expectations of her by the travellers as the saucy barmaid are exposed as specious. Each of these roles is examined and illustrated as a falsity. None of these

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.

Lydia Wevers offers an explanation of how this 'othering' relates to Mansfield's narrative objective and its relation 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.<sup>35</sup>

Wevers here identifies how the self of the woman as a masculinised creature with a rifle is a reaction to her colonial environment, but that the travellers recognise this as 'the other' because it is so far removed from the fantasy they have constructed of her as the 'wax doll bar maid' and of their idea of 'woman'. In examining Wevers point in relation to *Rhythm*'s aims and ideals, the narrative suggests that gender boundaries have become indistinct; the woman no longer represents either female or male, European or colonial, and can only be interpreted by the travellers as the 'other'. As part of the narrative project, the woman as 'unheimlich' sits well within the framing of a story as gothic and uncanny, where the narrator 'sitting alone in the hideous room [I] grew afraid' (271). What underscores the perception of the woman is the colonial/western dichotomy that patterns the travellers understanding of female and male. Within the colonial setting the construct of female, or femininity, as it is understood in the western world, is shown to be meaningless. This is established by juxtaposing the images on the walls of the woman's abode with the reality of her own situation. The walls are 'plastered with old pages of English periodicals' with 'Queen Victoria's Jubilee' as the newest of them. Whilst the images themselves are not described, the implication is of a delicate, English Queen, the epitome of femininity, adorning the walls of a room with little delicacy, in which 'flies buzzed in circles round the ceiling', furnished with 'broken cane chairs' (270). The narrator remarks on the futility of the woman's domestic routine: 'imagine bothering about ironing', (271) further asserting how the 'proper' dress in the western world, ironed and neat, seems ridiculous in this setting. The woman's self-perception is, both figuratively and literally, bordered by western ideals of femininity, hence her attempts at domesticity which produce a performative role applicable to a standard conception of female. Fludernik suggests that 'identity is an accumulation of performative stances and memories of past experiences which creates a continuity of self-understanding between roles and between contexts'.<sup>36</sup> This resonates with the woman's situation, not only in the acting out of a domestic role but also in her perception of herself as sex object. Her husband, when home, treats her as a sex object, 'come and give me a kiss', who would use

her and ‘then ’e’d go off again’ (274). Her self-understanding, because of her context, allows her to see herself only in stereotypical and/or sexual terms.

The blurring of gender boundaries extends beyond the description of the woman at the store, to the outer frame of the narrative by subverting the reader’s understanding of the narrator. 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 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. However, Mansfield exploits not only the characters’ sexist and patriarchal values, but also those of the reader, by showing that our perception is misplaced. 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’.<sup>37</sup> The child’s dialogue at the end of the story confirms that the narrator is female: ““No, everything, I’ll draw all of you when you’re gone, and your horses and the tent, and that one” – she pointed to me – “with no clothes on in the creek. I looked at her where she wouldn’t see me from”” (273). The expectation that the narrator is male is built on the idea that a woman travelling alone with two men is improbable, but even this presumption is countermanded 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 as we realise that the female narrator is Jo’s sister. Within the frame of a narrative that has exploited and then subverted our expectations, however, we remain 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 is unlikely to have been known to Mansfield at the time of writing ‘The Woman at the Store’.<sup>38</sup> What is more credible then, is that our shock at the narrator being confirmed as female is used to provoke a reassessment of our own understanding of the role of ‘female’. Learning that the female traveller is related to Jo asks us again to examine our perceptions and assumptions.

## Conclusion

Mansfield’s achievement with the narrative voice in ‘The Woman at the Store’, and the evocation of the uncanny, is to inspire the reader to question the nature of perception, and to show up how confinement within specific roles and constructs of female, is precarious. By introducing a female narrator Mansfield asks the reader to question their own understanding of

gender roles, a theme closely linked to the artistic aims of *Rhythm*. Lydia Wevers explains how the narrator is effectively placed outside the categories of cultural identity, subject and gender which allow us to ‘read’ the story; thus she acts as a subversive commentary on the kind of colonial discourse her narrative signifies. If the narrator cannot be constructed, can the narrative?<sup>39</sup> I would argue that Wever’s point speaks to the heart of Mansfield’s objective in constructing a narrative that thwarts the reader’s expectations. In order to ‘embrace the flux’, as *Rhythm* aimed to do, it is first necessary to identify that the flux cannot be grasped with any certainty. Creating a story with unstable narrative boundaries, with unstable character gender boundaries, and with a contrasted colonial/western dichotomy, the narrator exemplifies the perspectival position of being unable to narrate the unnarratable. The pervasiveness of uncanny elements within the story: the gothic depiction of the environment, the objectification of the woman to the point of evoking an automaton, together with the unreliable narration, serve to destabilise the sense of narrative certainty and ask the reader to question their perception. In turn, this allows Mansfield to show up the instability of roles and expectations placed on women. The mask of femininity is manifested as equally unstable and subject to outside expectations and ideals. In summary, Mansfield’s story uses the brutality of the colonial settler lifestyle as an environment from which to illustrate how *Rhythm*’s aim to represent the ‘rhythmical echo of life’<sup>40</sup> can be brought to bear upon a woman’s sense of self. The fluidity of the gender boundaries experienced in such an environment fit with *Rhythm*’s rejection of confining boundaries in art. Finally, Mansfield captures, with the unreliable narration, the fragility of human perception, exemplifying the ‘principle of flux’ of Goodyear’s statement<sup>41</sup> affirming Murry’s decision that the story was suitable for *Rhythm*.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John Middleton Murry, ‘Aims and Ideals’, *Rhythm*, 1: 1 (Summer 1911), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> The citing of Mansfield’s story ‘Along the Gray’s Inn Road’ in the letters section of the *New Age* had given Mansfield some indication of her artistic differences with the editors. *New Age*, 9: 23 (5 October 1911), p. 551.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Goodyear, ‘The New Thelema’, *Rhythm*, 1: 1 (Summer 1911), pp. 1-3 (p. 2).

<sup>4</sup> A. R. Orage, ‘Unedited Opinions’, *New Age*, 9: (29 December 1910), pp. 203-204 (p. 204)

<sup>5</sup> Anne Estelle Rice, ‘Memories of Katherine Mansfield’, *Adam International Review* 300 (1965), pp. 76-85 (p. 77).

<sup>6</sup> Carey Snyder, ‘Introduction to *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review*’, *The Modernist Journals Project*. (2012). Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p.81.

<sup>8</sup> Manfred Jahn, ‘Focalisation’ in David Herman, *Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 94-108 (pp. 94-5).

<sup>9</sup> Smith, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> Murry, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold Bennett (Jacob Tonson), ‘Books and Persons’, *New Age*, 9: 14 (3 August 1911), pp. 327–8 (pp. 327).

<sup>12</sup> John Middleton Murry, *Between Two Worlds* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1935), p. 184.

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- <sup>13</sup> Faith Binckes, *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 50.
- <sup>14</sup> Goodyear, p. 2.
- <sup>15</sup> Binckes, p. 55.
- <sup>16</sup> Davide Manenti, 'From the Store to the Story: Katherine Mansfield and the Process of Rewriting', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 32, Part 2: Special Issue: *Katherine Mansfield Masked and Unmasked* (2014), pp.167-81 (p. 170).
- <sup>17</sup> Murry, 1935, p. 184.
- <sup>18</sup> Janet Wilson, "'Where is Katherine?": Longing and (Un)belonging in the Works of Katherine Mansfield', in Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson, eds, *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.175-188 (p. 177).
- <sup>19</sup> Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan, eds, *The Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012). Vol. 1, pp. 268–277. All subsequent page references from this volume are provided parenthetically in the text.
- <sup>20</sup> Angela Smith remarks that, 'Just 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' (p. 81).
- <sup>21</sup> Other scholars have considered the narrator to be male. Angela Smith says for example, 'The assumption is likely to be that the narrator is male because the group who arrive at the store seem to have the camaraderie of fellow workmen' (p. 89).
- <sup>22</sup> Jenny McDonnell, *Katherine Mansfield and the Modernist Marketplace: At the Mercy of the Public* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 52–54.
- <sup>23</sup> Saikat Majumdar. 'Katherine Mansfield and the Fragility of Pakeha Boredom', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 55: 1 (Spring 2009), pp.119-143 (p. 122).
- <sup>24</sup> Anna Snaith, *Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London, 1890–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 113.
- <sup>25</sup> Elleke Bohemer. 'Mansfield as Colonial Modernist: Difference Within' in Kimber and Wilson, pp.57-72 (p. 62).
- <sup>26</sup> Majumdar, p. 120.
- <sup>27</sup> Snaith, p. 131.
- <sup>28</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*. London: Penguin Books, 2003, pp. 150–1.
- <sup>29</sup> James argues 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' suggesting that this provides a very individual experience of the world. William James, *Psychology: The Briefer Course* (New York: Dover Publications, 2001 [1892]), pp. 18-19.
- <sup>30</sup> Smith, p. 89.
- <sup>31</sup> The notes to the story describe these as 'Leather half boots' (277). The implication here is that they are typically male dress.
- <sup>32</sup> Pamela Dunbar, *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 47.
- <sup>33</sup> Freud, p. 135.
- <sup>34</sup> Monika Fludernik, 'Identity/alterity' in David Herman, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 260-273 (p. 260).
- <sup>35</sup> Lydia Wever, 'How Kathleen Beauchamp was Kidnapped' in Rhoda B. Nathan, ed., *Critical Essays on Katherine Mansfield* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 37-47

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(p. 45).

<sup>36</sup> Fludernik, p. 261.

<sup>37</sup> Freud, p. 124.

<sup>38</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, available at <http://www.oed.com/>. Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Wevers, p. 45.

<sup>40</sup> Murry, p. 36.

<sup>41</sup> Goodyear, p. 2.

## **‘I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World’: The Depiction of Home in Katherine Mansfield’s Later Stories**

Lotta Schneidemesser

In 2012, New Zealand was the *Guest of Honour* at the Frankfurt Book Fair, the largest Book Fair in the world. Each year, the Fair celebrates a country’s literary heritage through giving its authors and literature a special focus at the book fair, including a large number of events such as readings, panel discussions, and Q&As with authors. In addition, there are usually special translation and publishing grants, encouraging German publishing houses to publish the country’s literature as its *Guest of Honour*. In a special ceremony, the *Guest of Honour* receives the ‘GuestScroll’, a scroll of parchment, from its predecessor and the country is then tasked with adding an excerpt from its national literature, representing the country’s literary heritage.<sup>1</sup> New Zealand chose nine quotations – the first one of which was by Katherine Mansfield: ‘I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World.’<sup>2</sup>

Reading this, we do not know from which context this quote is taken. Is it something Mansfield said herself? Is it uttered by a character in a story? What kind of character? Similar questions can be asked about the other quotations. For a thorough understanding of the quotes and the literature that is represented in the ‘GuestScroll’, it is important to contextualise the quotes and to give a brief analysis of their meaning and of the text that surrounds them. Taken out of context, the quotes stand for themselves, but allow a lot of room for speculation on the part of the reader. By contextualising them and showing the larger excerpt of the work they are taken from, and by providing some biographical details and analysis in the context of the author’s overall oeuvre allows us, as readers, to more fully understand the deeper meaning of the quote. In this article, I will analyse the quote by Mansfield more closely, in order to scrutinise the idea of home and homeland that is conveyed here, and how the experience of being an author living in exile, far away from New Zealand, her homeland, shapes Mansfield’s perception of home and her way of writing about it.

Mansfield’s quote is from a journal entry from 22 January 1916, when Mansfield was in Bandol, France. Three months earlier, on 6 October 1915, her beloved younger brother Leslie died tragically as a soldier in WWI during a training accident.<sup>3</sup> His death devastated Mansfield and significantly influenced her writing, as it unleashed memories of New Zealand and their shared childhood. Before joining the army, her brother had visited her in London and continued his visits throughout the summer of 1915, whenever he was on leave, often playing a game called ‘do you remember’ in which they would reminisce together, conjuring up memories of Wellington, the people they used to know, and the places that were dear to them.<sup>4</sup>

In his book *Reminiscences and Recollections*, Mansfield’s father, Harold Beauchamp, writes about the effect of Leslie’s death on his wife and on Mansfield:

My wife was sadly shaken by the loss of her youngest child and her only boy. If possible, Kathleen felt it even more deeply.<sup>5</sup> Leslie and she had been inseparable whenever they had been living together. Lonely and absorbed in her intellectual work, she welcomed the arrival of Leslie in England. It was her one bond with the life in which she had been brought up and which now was meaning more and more to her.<sup>6</sup>



In these lines, he reveals the bond that Mansfield and Leslie had shared and shows his awareness of how her brother's presence build a connection to New Zealand for her, bringing a sense of the home they had shared to Mansfield's lonely, exile-like existence in Europe. This personal connection was severed when Mansfield received the news of his death, but it evoked a strong yearning for her former home and the childhood which they had shared, and the memories of a time when Leslie was still alive. This is underlined in a letter she writes to her father on 6 March 1916: '[T]he loss of our darling one [...] has changed my life *for ever*'.<sup>7</sup> Devastated by her brother's death she left London and her partner, John Middleton Murry, and moved to Bandol in the South of France that same year.

The journal entry from 22 January 1916 expresses a strong desire to write in dedication to her brother and his memory, but there is also a strong sense of repaying a debt to her homeland by writing about it. This is the longer excerpt from her notebook entry, in which her famous quote that was used in the 'GuestScroll' is embedded, and gives a better sense of the context in which these words were written:

Now – now I want to write recollections of my own country. Yes, I want to write about my own country till I simply exhaust my store. Not only because it is 'a sacred debt' that I pay to my country because my brother and I were born there, but also because in my thoughts I range with him over all the remembered places. I am never far away from them. I long to renew them in writing.

Ah, the people – the people we loved there – of them, too, I want to write. Another 'debt of love.' Oh, I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World. It must be 'one of those islands' [...]. I shall tell everything, even of how the laundry basket squealed at '75' –but all must be told with a sense of mystery, a radiance, an afterglow, because you, my little sun of it, are set. You have dropped over the dazzling brim of the world. Now I must play my part – – (CW 4, pp. 191-2)

By writing about New Zealand, Mansfield longs to recreate a sense of home – albeit on the page. The recreation of home does not only take place for her, personally, but for a larger audience that is reading her work, and to introduce her home, New Zealand, to them through stories. She underlines that it is not only places she wants to write about, but, specifically, people that both she and her brother knew and loved.<sup>8</sup> It is not just a longing – she sees it as a personal duty to record their childhood, to write about their home in order to preserve it, for both herself and her audience – but to also reach a larger audience and present to them an image of New Zealand that they have not yet encountered in this form before. In a notebook entry from November 1915, it becomes visible to what extent her brother's death has affected her – she is suffering from severe depression, and records that

I think I have known for a long time that life was over for me, but I never realized it or acknowledged it until my brother died. [...] The present and the future mean nothing for me. [...] Then why don't I commit suicide? Because I feel I have a duty to perform to the lovely time when we were both alive. I want to write about it, and he wanted me to. [...] Very well: it shall be done. (CW 4, pp. 171-2)

This very much reflects her description of Leslie as her ‘little sun’, the centre of her life, and that with him gone, at first, there seems to be not much reason for her life to continue.<sup>9</sup> However, the duty Mansfield feels towards him and her home country and writing about it might also have given her renewed strength and prevented her from contemplating suicide further.

The quote New Zealand chose for the ‘GuestScroll’ – ‘I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World’ – is probably one of the most often cited references to Mansfield’s desire to write about New Zealand. But it is an ambiguous statement; ‘Our undiscovered country’ here refers to New Zealand, to the country Mansfield remembers from her childhood. Taken out of context, the meaning of the quote shifts towards an expressed wish for recognition and visibility and at the same time also an anxiety that ‘the Old World’, a metaphor for the writers and the people she meets while living in London and in different parts of Europe, might not be aware of New Zealand, might see it as a small country, a colony at the end of the world, rather than what it was for Mansfield: her home, with rich stories of its own. It also expresses an anxiety that in turn she, as a writer from New Zealand would be taken less seriously than the writers from ‘the Old World’, i.e. from Europe. This is an anxiety present throughout Mansfield’s writing, and indeed with other writers from the ‘colonial periphery’, such as Olive Schreiner.<sup>10</sup>

Coming from what she perceived to be the periphery to the centre, from New Zealand, the former colony, to London, Mansfield was concerned with being accepted as a writer, being heard, being recognised among the cosmopolitan writers of her time.<sup>11</sup> She longed to be part of the group of Bloomsbury writers, but felt she was rather balancing at the fringe, tolerated but marginalised at the same time. This is reflected in the way she writes about herself in her notebook: ‘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 [...]. She is a stranger – an alien’ (CW 4, pp. 277-8). This underlines the sense of being an outsider that Mansfield grappled with throughout her life – first in New Zealand, and then in London.

However, read in the context of the full journal entry (see page three of this article), the quote ‘I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World’ expresses an almost nostalgic wish to renew the places she remembers from her childhood in New Zealand by writing about them, and to introduce them to a larger audience through her stories. Her relationship to both New Zealand, her home, and to London, the metropole she longed to be at home in, was always an ambiguous one, and she shared the fate of many artists in exile who live in a state of in-betweenness – feeling the need for distance from their homeland, and needing this distance in order to write about it, but on the other hand also not feeling completely accepted by their newly chosen home.

In Mansfield’s case, this situation is complicated by the geopolitical situation at the time, because she is moving from New Zealand, considered as the ‘colony’, as a marginal space, to London, the centre of the British empire. According to Mark Williams she ‘needed a means of distancing herself from the limitations of the colonial world’<sup>12</sup> Williams further scrutinises the kind of home that Mansfield recreates in her writing and underlines that: ‘Mansfield carried her New Zealand with her to Europe, both the bourgeois New Zealand of her own family [...] and the wild New Zealand,’<sup>13</sup> thus emphasising that a number of Mansfield’s earlier stories have a discernible colonial setting, such as ‘Millie’ or ‘The Woman at the Store’. These stories, which portray a colonial settler existence and depict women who are living in a rural and remote area and suffer from isolation, and loneliness, in fact compliment the stories that have distinct

autobiographical elements and are written later, such as ‘The Doll’s House’, ‘The Garden Party’, ‘At the Bay’ or ‘Prelude’.

After moving from New Zealand to London, she stayed there for periods of time, but travelled all over Europe, living in Germany, Italy, England, and, towards the end of her life, in Southern France, and Switzerland, leading a nomadic life. Longing to visit her home again but being prevented from doing so because of her severe illness, she lived in a state of exile, and the sense of loss spurred her to recreate her home in writing.

According to Salman Rushdie, like Mansfield an author who has left his homeland and writes from a position of exile, ‘the writer who is out-of-country and out-of-language may experience this loss in an intensified form. It is more concrete for him by the physical fact of discontinuity, of his present being in a different place from the past, of his being elsewhere.’<sup>14</sup> In their work both Mansfield and Rushdie draw upon their memories of home as an inspiration for their writing. Whilst the necessary distance allows them to view their experiences and the places they knew and loved in a different way and enables them to write about them with more clarity, the distance from home also creates a profound sense of loss and an urge to recreate their home in their writing.

In numerous letters to her father, Mansfield underlines how much it grieves her that she is separated from him, and in fact, in a letter she wrote in 1922 to Sarah Gertrude Millin, she describes how her thoughts and feelings would always ‘go back to New Zealand – rediscovering it, finding beauty in it, re-living it.’ She concludes her letter by saying ‘I think the only way to live as a writer is to draw upon one’s real *familiar* life – to find the treasure in that [...]. Our secret life, the life we return to over and over again, the “do you remember” life is always the past’.<sup>15</sup> Rushdie aptly describes this phenomenon by underlining that home is not just a geographical space or a specific spatial point of reference, such as a house, but also has a temporal dimension. In his famous essay collection *Imaginary Homelands*, he writes that ‘the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time’.<sup>16</sup> Rushdie describes home as a memory, and the notion that writers in exile ‘are haunted by a sense of loss’,<sup>17</sup> mostly by the loss of their home, but also of a past that has forever disappeared. This is clearly visible in the work that Mansfield edits and publishes after the death of her brother. The idea of home Mansfield writes about and recreates in her stories has strong spatial references, for example, to the houses where she spent her childhood, and which features in a number of her stories, such as ‘The Garden Party’ and ‘Prelude’. However, the main point of reference is a temporal one – a memory of home, of a childhood she shared with her brother, of things that they both experienced, and of a time that now lies in the past and is therefore lost forever. It is this acute sense of loss, spurred by the death and loss of her brother, that makes Mansfield all the more aware of what her home had meant to her.

The longing to renew her memories in writing, of recreating her home through her stories, finds expression in a number of Mansfield’s short stories. She transforms her recollection of her New Zealand childhood into some of her finest writing, including the short stories ‘The Garden Party’, ‘The Doll’s House’ and ‘At the Bay’; and especially ‘Prelude’. Set in Wellington, the three latter stories describe the places in which she lived as a child and centre around the Burnell family, who resemble Mansfield’s own.<sup>18</sup> According to Rushdie, by writing about their homes, it will never be quite possible for a writer to capture the true sense of home and to ‘reclaim precisely the thing that was lost’.<sup>19</sup> But by recreating home in literature ‘we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands [...] of the mind’.<sup>20</sup> Mansfield and Rushdie are, of course, writers from very different times, and different

geopolitical circumstances – however, they speak to each other, and the way both of them deal with the situation of being separated from their homeland by recreating it in writing suggests that despite of the difference in style, the time they write in and the geographic location of the home they leave behind there are aspects concerning the concept of home that connect these two writers. By bringing them together, we can read both of them in a new way, because both of them are writers writing about their home, living in exile, yet yearning for their homelands, and recreating their home through their writing on the page. As the focus of this article is on Katherine Mansfield and her depictions of home, the comparison offers a new critical context in which to read not only her stories, but to understand what home meant for her.

Returning to the journal entry from 22 January 1916, Mansfield writes further that ‘I want to write a kind of long elegy to you perhaps not in poetry. No, perhaps in prose. Almost certainly in a kind of *special prose*’<sup>21</sup>. Jenny McDonnell underlines what this new kind of prose looks like: ‘with “Prelude”, Mansfield developed the touchstones of the technique that influenced her mature work: [...] the use of significant moments or epiphanies as structuring principals; and a rejection of plot and conventional form.’<sup>22</sup> ‘Prelude’ was published by the Hogarth Press in July 1918; by this time, Mansfield had already been diagnosed with tuberculosis. The other most popular stories that reflect her childhood more than any of her other writing were all published in 1922 – the year before her death. ‘Prelude’, like ‘At the Bay’, ‘The Garden Party’ and ‘The Doll’s House’ can be read as an elegy to Mansfield’s dead brother and the childhood they shared together – but also as ‘a eulogy to New Zealand, her mother country’.<sup>23</sup>

In her stories, Mansfield reworks her experience of being a writer in exile in a modernist literary form. She revives the genre of the short story through presenting her readers with rich, elaborate stories that, instead of focusing on a specific plot, focus on characters, the setting, and the relationships of characters to each other and to the place the story is set in. ‘Prelude’ and ‘At the Bay’ both centre around the Burnell family, and the bourgeois life they live in the turn-of-the-century Wellington. As mentioned before, these stories have autobiographical references, and one of the characters, a young girl named Kezia, is understood to be Mansfield’s alter ego. ‘Prelude’ opens with the family leaving their former home at Tinakori Road in Wellington, to move to a larger house in what is today the suburb of Karori but lay outside of the city then. ‘Prelude’ is structured in twelve parts, which are narrated by different characters of the Burnell family, and the beginning, told from Kezia’s point of view, brims with the excitement of moving into a new place. ‘At the Bay’, which consists of twelve parts as well, has stronger references to typical New Zealand plants and words than ‘Prelude’. For example, Mansfield writes about *manuka trees*, she uses the words *whare* and *toi-toi* without explaining them to the reader. The story ‘The Doll’s House’ again has the Burnell children at its centre, whereas ‘The Garden Party’ has a different family setting. Both of the two latter stories are however written from the point of view of a young girl, and the ‘The Garden Party’ depicts the eager preparations for the long-awaited party, portraying a bourgeois setting similar to the one Mansfield will have grown up in.

Ivy McDaniels describes the way Mansfield writes about Wellington as ‘romanticised’,<sup>24</sup> and S. E. McCormick even goes so far as to claim that Mansfield’s depictions of Wellington are overcast with ‘the rose-coloured haze of nostalgic recollection’.<sup>25</sup> Rather than dismissing her stories in this way, however, it is important to acknowledge that by the time that ‘Prelude’ is published Mansfield is already terminally ill with tuberculosis, has been living in exile from her home and that for her writing about her home and recreating it on the page will have a specific function – for herself this is the function of remembering and recreating places and people that

were dear to her, and depicting them in the way she did was a conscious decision of how she wanted to present her home to her readers. This is an aspect that Janet Wilson underlines in her chapter titled “'Where is Katherine?'”: Longing and (Un)belonging in the Works of Katherine Mansfield' where she argues that: ‘This loss and the desire for reconnection appear to have driven [Mansfield] to return to New Zealand through memory and imagination as her health declined’.<sup>26</sup>

As with most of her stories, though seemingly playful on the surface, they have a much deeper meaning that manifests itself between the lines and in gestures and reactions of specific characters. ‘The Garden Party’ and ‘The Doll’s House’ can both be read as a criticism of class-society, the depiction of both Linda and Aunt Beryl in ‘Prelude’ and ‘At the Bay’ is highly complex, and both stories can also be read not just as depictions of childhood scenes, as McDaniels and McCormick seem to imply, but from the perspective of feminist criticism, scrutinising the role of women and the limited space they are granted in Edwardian society and by doing so criticising its patriarchal structures.

Mansfield began revising ‘Prelude’ a few months after her brother died. Formerly titled ‘The Aloe’, it had clearly discernible spatial references to New Zealand, but also references to war that she later decided to edit out. She began its composition in March 1915; a month before, in February 1915, Mansfield travelled to the war zone, alone, to visit her lover Francis Carco, and, as Alice Kelly notes, ‘Mansfield’s journey to the war zone gave her a privileged perspective on the effects of the war at first hand that was not usually afforded to civilians, particularly women [...]’.<sup>27</sup> What she saw on her journey had a great effect on her, and a fictionalised account of this journey can be found in her story ‘An Indiscreet Journey’.<sup>28</sup> Another story in which the war is explicitly referred to is ‘Spring Pictures’, and she also mentions it in her notebooks and letters. However, after Leslie’s death the focus in her writing shifts. As Alex Moffet so aptly puts it, in her later fiction the war ‘asserts its presence through absence.’<sup>29</sup> There is a strong sense of foreboding in ‘The Aloe’, of something bad that is going to happen, but scenes in which words such as ‘kill’ are mentioned are edited, and references to gravestones are edited out;<sup>30</sup> one part that is completely cut out is the following:

Suddenly the gate opened: A working man, a perfect stranger to her pushed up the path and standing in front of her, he pulled off his cap, his rough face full of pity. ‘I’ve bad news for you, Mam’ . . . ‘Dead?’ cried Dora, clasping her hands. ‘Both dead?’<sup>31</sup>

As Moffet suggests, editing the manuscript in 1917 meant that Mansfield would have been aware of the fact that her readership would have experienced scenes like the one above and suffered the loss of a loved father, husband, son or brother – as she did – ‘in a way that the younger version of herself who wrote those words would not have been.’<sup>32</sup> However, on an allegorical level the theme of war, of conflict is still there – it is just not made as explicit as in the first draft of ‘The Aloe’.

The first thing that Mansfield wrote after her brother’s death was a poem, explicitly dedicated to him, and simply entitled ‘To L. H. B. (1894 -1915)’.<sup>33</sup> The first nine lines recall a dream, and Mansfield uses the word home to refer to a moment in time where she is together again with her beloved brother:

To L.H.B.

(1894–1915)

Last night for the first time since you were dead  
 I walked with you, my brother, in a dream.  
 We were at home again beside the stream  
 Fringed with tall berry bushes, white and red.  
 ‘Don’t touch them: they are poisonous,’ I said  
 But your hand hovered, and I saw a beam  
 Of strange bright laughter flying round your head  
 And as you stooped I saw the berries gleam  
 ‘Don’t you remember? We called them Dead Man’s Bread!’  
 I woke and heard the wind moan and the roar  
 Of the dark water tumbling on the shore.  
 Where – where is the path of my dream for my eager feet  
 By the remembered stream my brother stands  
 Waiting for me with berries in his hands  
 ‘These are my body. Sister, take and eat.’<sup>34</sup>

The first nine lines of Mansfield’s poem recall a dream in which the speaker, perhaps a protective older sister, warns her brother against the dangers of beautiful, poisonous berries. Yet as the dream unfolds, the commonplace scene is intertwined with the surreal, as her brother’s head seems haloed in ‘a beam/ Of strange bright laughter.’ Saint-like, he stands before her. It is ambiguous whether the ‘home’ in line three refers to a time in their childhood, or to a time in which they are together again as adults. The question ‘Don’t you remember?’ evokes resonances of what Mansfield mentions in her letter to Millin, about how the ‘do you remember time’ is always in the past – and it might also refer to the ‘do you remember’ game she and her brother engaged in when he visited her in London, in the summer before his death. However, there is also a dark element in here, a sense of the opportunity of ending one’s life by eating the offered berries and re-joining her brother in an afterlife – a notion that would link to Mansfield’s contemplation of death and suicide in her notebook entry from November 1915.

In a letter to her father that she wrote on 9 July 1922, only half a year before her death on 9 January 1922, Mansfield expresses regret about the fact that she is unable to travel back to New Zealand with him.<sup>35</sup> On New Year’s Eve of the same year, she repeats this regret, writing: ‘May the New Year be full of happiness for you. I wish I could imagine we might meet in it, but perhaps in the one after I shall be fortunate enough to turn towards home [...]. It is a dream I would love to realise’.<sup>36</sup> It is a dream that should never come true for her. Only nine days later she dies from a pulmonary haemorrhage, aged 34.

Looking at the literary oeuvre she has left behind and her life as a writer in the context of the Frankfurt Book Fair and with her quote being the opening quote of the ‘GuestScroll’, Mansfield is given a very prominent position, and situated firmly in her homeland’s culture: in traditional Māori culture, it is a woman who calls the guests onto the *marae*. In the context of how the scroll is presented, it is Mansfield who welcomes us, as guests, to the Frankfurt Book Fair and invites us into the space which represents New Zealand and its literature and culture, symbolised through the New Zealand pavilion at the Book Fair.<sup>37</sup> This is so remarkable here, because Mansfield is grouped with a number of prominent writers from New Zealand, such as Hone Tuwhare, Patricia Grace, Witi Ihimaera and Bill Manhire. Writers from the Southern

hemisphere, who, as a group of different generations welcome the visitors – in Frankfurt, in Germany, in the Northern hemisphere – and invite them to engage with New Zealand, its literature and culture. However, Mansfield is not just presented as part of the group of New Zealand writers here – but as their leading figure. Her wish that ‘I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World’ is given prominence here and – almost 90 years after she wrote it down – reflect upon one of New Zealand’s most prolific writers and her achievements. The ‘Old World’ certainly became aware of her homeland through her writing; she is now considered as one of the most influential modernist writers of her time. Her stories are a celebration of a childhood and of a lost home, and a commemoration of her brother, with whom she shared all these things, and who, like her came from New Zealand to Europe, never to see their home again.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of the ‘GuestScroll’ and New Zealand’s representation at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2012 please see my article ‘Institutions of National Self-Representation: New Zealand Literature – Then/Now, Home/Abroad’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, (Forthcoming February 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Gerri Kimber and Claire Davison, eds, *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield: Vol. 4 – The Diaries of Katherine Mansfield, including Miscellaneous Works*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> J. Lawrence Mitchell, ‘Katie and Chummie: Death in the Family’, in *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays*, eds Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 27–41 (pp. 33–34).

<sup>4</sup> Mitchell, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp was her original name; she later changed it to Katherine Mansfield.

<sup>6</sup> Harold Beauchamp, *Reminiscences and Recollections* (New Plymouth: Thomas Avery & Sons, 1937), p. 94. As quoted in Mitchell, pp. 34-35.

<sup>7</sup> Vincent O’Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984–2008), Vol. 1, p. 252. Hereafter *Letters*, followed by volume and page number, and references placed parenthetically in the text.

<sup>8</sup> She does not specify explicitly whom the pronoun ‘we’ refers to, but because later in the same passage she addresses her brother directly, it can be assumed that the ‘we’ refers to Katherine and her brother Leslie.

<sup>9</sup> A number of critics such as Cherry A. Hankin have remarked on the fact that possibly Mansfield’s grief is exaggerated and that due to the fact that Leslie was much younger than her and did not see her for a number of years when she was at school in London the bond between the siblings was not as strong as portrayed by Mansfield. See: Cherry A. Hankin, in *Katherine Mansfield and her Confessional Stories* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1983) p. 106. This is, of course, possible – however, for this article I have decided to work with the journal entries and records that Mansfield left behind, and which suggest otherwise.

<sup>10</sup> Cherry Clayton, ‘Olive Schreiner and Katherine Mansfield: Artistic Transformations of the Outcast Figure by Two Colonial Women Writers in Exile’, *English Studies in Africa*, 32: 2 (1989), pp. 109–19 (p. 112).

<sup>11</sup> W. Todd Martin, “‘Why haven’t I got a real ‘home’?”: Katherine Mansfield’s Divided Self”,

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*Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 31, 2013, pp. 66–83 (p. 66).

<sup>12</sup> Mark Williams, ‘Mansfield in Maoriland: Biculturalism, Agency and Misreading’, in *Modernism and Empire*, eds Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 249–74 (p. 256).

<sup>13</sup> Williams, p. 257.

<sup>14</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta Books, 1991), p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Letters*, 5, p. 80

<sup>16</sup> Rushdie, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Rushdie, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> In fact, there is a very direct family reference embedded here as Mansfield’s mother’s full name was Annie Burnell Beauchamp.

<sup>19</sup> Rushdie, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Rushdie, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> *CW* 4, p. 192

<sup>22</sup> Jenny McDonnell, ‘“The Famous New Zealand Mag.-Story Writer”: Katherine Mansfield, Periodical Publishing and the Short Story’, in *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism*, eds Janet Wilson, Gerri Kimber, and Susan Reid (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), pp. 42–52 (p. 45).

<sup>23</sup> Stephanie Rudig, ‘Home and Abroad in the South Pacific: Spaces and Places in Robert Louis Stevenson and Katherine Mansfield’s Short Fiction’, in *Katherine Mansfield and the (Post)colonial*, by Janet Wilson, Gerri Kimber, and Delia da Sousa Correa (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 102–15 (p. 110).

<sup>24</sup> Ivy McDaniels, ‘Young Writer, “Young Country”’: Katherine Mansfield’s Ambivalence toward Colonial New Zealand’, in *Pockets of Change: Adaptation and Cultural Transition*, eds Jane Stadler et al (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), pp. 71–80 (p. 72).

<sup>25</sup> S. E. McCormick, *New Zealand Literature: A Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 90.

<sup>26</sup> Janet Wildon, ‘“Where is Katherine?”: Longing and (Un)belonging in the Works of Katherine Mansfield’, in *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays*, eds Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 175–188 (p. 176).

<sup>27</sup> Alice Kelly, ‘Katherine Mansfield, War Writer’, in *Katherine Mansfield and World War One*, eds Gerri Kimber et al (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 1–11 (p. 2).

<sup>28</sup> She is the first writer to record the effect of chlorine gas on soldiers in her story.

<sup>29</sup> Alex Moffet, ‘Katherine Mansfield’s Home Front: Submerging the Material Metaphors of “The Aloe”’, in Kimber et al, pp. 69–83 (p. 71).

<sup>30</sup> For a more detailed analysis see: Richard Cappuccino, ‘War Thoughts and Home: Katherine Mansfield’s Model of a Hardened Heart in a Broken World’, in Kimber et al, pp. 84–97.

<sup>31</sup> Gerri Kimber and Vincent O’Sullivan, eds, *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield: Vols 1 and 2 – The Collected Fiction*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), vol. 1, p.

<sup>32</sup> Moffet, p. 76.

<sup>33</sup> Her brother’s full name was Leslie Heron Beauchamp.

<sup>34</sup> Gerri Kimber and Claire Davison, eds, *The Collected Poems of Katherine Mansfield* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 109-10.

<sup>35</sup> *Letters*, 5, p. 219

<sup>36</sup> *Letters* 5, p. 344



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<sup>37</sup> Each Guest of Honour country has its own pavilion at the Frankfurt Book Fair; a space of about 4200 sqm which they design to reflect their country's literary history.

## Repeated 'Mouths' in Katherine Mansfield's Writing

Eiko Nakano

Included in the eighth volume of *Katherine Mansfield Studies* are two interesting articles on the Scottish painter J. D. Fergusson's painting, *Poise*, which was introduced as a missing portrait of Katherine Mansfield in *The Telegraph*. Angela Smith disagrees with the view that the sitter in the painting is Mansfield, whereas Rachel Boyd Hall argues it is possible that it is a portrait of her.<sup>1</sup> I was told during a visit to the Fergusson Gallery in Perth, Scotland, more than a decade ago that the sitter in *Poise* is probably Mansfield, but no evidence has ever been found. Although it is interesting to imagine that Fergusson, a good friend of Mansfield, intentionally or otherwise included some of her characteristics such as the hairstyle in the painting, it does not seem appropriate to determine without a doubt that the woman in *Poise* is Mansfield.

From a philosophical point of view, this debate on whether this painting is a representation of one person or another is intriguing since, as Mansfield's comments on the painting show, her interest in Henri Bergson affords her the opportunity to consider the significance of the multiplicity, as well as the unity, of self.<sup>2</sup> Mansfield writes:

You know *Poise* is extraordinarily fine, but having gone so tremendously far as Fergusson *has* gone I don't think the *mouth* is quite in the picture—It is—it is more 'in the picture' than most of his other mouths are—but I think it might be more *sensitive* . . . more 'finely felt.' Of course I can hear his 'to Hell with rosebuds' but I won't be put off by it: its too easy & begs the question anyway. To exaggerate awfully (as I always do) he really seems sometimes to fit women with mouths as a dentist might fit them with teeth—& the same thing happens in both cases: the beautiful *individual* movement (mobility) of the face is gone—Looking at *Poise* again this mouth seems more nearly right than any other—Perhaps that's what sets up the irritation in me. I must say as a picture it properly fascinates me.<sup>3</sup>

As is clear here, to Mansfield, it is important to describe the way life shows its different aspects so the artist can reproduce its 'beautiful *individual* movement', rather than focus solely on any single element and repeat it. As this essay will clarify, Mansfield's preoccupation with mobility corresponds with Bergson's argument on multiplicity of duration.

Mansfield's dissatisfaction with Fergusson's mouths reminds me of a question that often seems to be asked in her stories about the characters who tend to repeat the same words in different situations or those who repeat words already uttered by others: can the same 'mouth' be repeated automatically? Or to borrow the words from the story 'Psychology': 'Was this really anything more than a wonderfully good imitation of other occasions?'<sup>4</sup> For example, Laura in 'The Garden Party' feels 'ashamed' when she tries to imitate her mother to greet workmen (336-7). Like her, some characters try to speak like someone else, while others attempt to repeat the words that they themselves have said and that have worked before. Though unsuccessful, many of these characters actually wish to express themselves without routine repetitions, just as Mansfield tries to approach 'beautiful *individual* movement'. This essay aims to analyse Mansfield's Bergsonian descriptions of multiplicity of different individuals with a particular emphasis on their struggles to avoid the same 'mouths' or uses of words. In doing so, I will attempt to show that Mansfield expresses the beauty of mobility by attracting attention to

different or changing inner feelings of the same character that cannot fully be explained with repeated clichés.

### **Irreversible Nature of Duration**

Bergson writes about our ‘inner voices’ in relation to the unity and multiplicity of selves:

Is my own person, at a given moment, one or manifold? If I declare it one, inner voices arise and protest—those of the sensations, feelings, ideas, among which my individuality is distributed. But, if I make it distinctly manifold, my consciousness rebels quite as strongly; it affirms that my sensations, my feelings, my thoughts are abstractions which I effect on myself, and that each of my states implies all the others. I am then (we must adopt the language of the understanding, since only the understanding has a language) a unity that is multiple and a multiplicity that is one; but unity and multiplicity are only views of my personality taken by an understanding that directs its categories at me; I enter neither into one nor into the other nor into both at once, although both, united, may give a fair imitation of the mutual interpenetration and continuity that I find at the base of my own self. Such is my inner life, and such also is life in general.<sup>5</sup>

To put it simply, here Bergson tells us two essential things. One is that a person, if we insist, can be called either one or many, because there are different feelings and emotions when the person experiences time, or ‘duration’. The other is that a person, if we insist in another way, can be neither one nor many; we are neither a number nor any other type of category. Useful as they are, numbers, words, images or any sort of symbols fix life in place and fail to reflect its fluidity, just like the way in which Fergusson depicted the mouths with which Mansfield was concerned.

Bergson differentiates the perspective from which we recognise ourselves as one or many and the perspective from which we do not clearly see ourselves in that way. The latter is explained in relation to the irreversibility of duration or experienced time: ‘our duration is irreversible. We could not live over again a single moment, for we should have to begin by effacing the memory of all that had followed. Even could we erase this memory from our intellect, we could not from our will’ and from ‘this survival of the past it follows that consciousness cannot go through the same state twice’.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to the irreversibility of duration, Bergson provides a detailed account of memory with an example of learning a lesson by heart. Before memorizing it perfectly, one has to repeat the lesson. When the person has learned it, there are two forms of memory; one is the memory about each reading, and the other is the learned lesson:

the lesson once learnt bears upon it no mark which betrays its origin and classes it in the past; it is part of my present, exactly like my habit of walking or of writing; it is lived and acted, rather than represented: I might believe it innate, if I did not choose to recall at the same time, as so many representations, the successive readings by means of which I learnt it.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, the memory of each reading is the memory of each of one’s selves; every time one reads the lesson trying to learn it, there is a new meaning or story behind the learning. That

is, you are a different person every moment. In contrast, it can also be said that, once you learn it, you remain the same as far as this lesson is concerned. You are a person who has learned it, which differentiates you from others who have not learned it yet. By repeating the same learned lesson, or the same ‘mouth’, quite often you can just live your life almost automatically rather than think or try to find the right words to represent your new experiences. This is the way one experiences and lives irreversible duration in which one’s self can be called a unity.

As well as living your life and duration, you also attempt to express and represent a particular time or experience when it has a significant meaning to you. Although duration is irreversible, which means you cannot experience exactly the same things once again, you can reflect on past moments and name them. In so doing, your past is separated from your present self, creating a multiplicity. Many of Mansfield’s characters also try not to repeat the same ‘mouth’ but to find unique expressions for their new experiences or for their inner secret feelings.

### Secret Words and Actual Words

Mansfield’s stories often show the difference between the words the characters wish to say and the words they actually say. ‘Psychology’ is a good example.<sup>8</sup> A male novelist visits a female playwright in her studio. Even when they are silent, their ‘secret selves’ start whispering:

Just for a moment both of them stood silent in that leaping light. Still, as it were, they tasted on their smiling lips the sweet shock of their greeting. Their secret selves whispered:

‘Why should we speak? Isn’t this enough?’

‘More than enough. I never realized until this moment. . . .’

‘How good it is just to be with you. . . .’

‘Like this. . . .’

‘It’s more than enough.’

But suddenly he turned and looked at her and she moved quickly away. (186)

The romantic moment is ‘suddenly’ ended as both of them try to escape from it. In this way the story mostly focuses on what they say in their minds rather than what they actually say. When the woman playwright disagrees with her friend who shows his professional interest in the relation between psychology and literature, the narrator does not let the reader hear their actual talk in detail but instead quickly summarises it with ‘On the talk went’ (190). This probably reflects the fact that it does not really matter to the protagonists whether they share the same idea or not; it seems they share the same time and feelings even when their actual words and ideas disagree with each other on the surface: ‘it seemed they really had succeeded. [...] Her smile said: “We have won.” And he smiled back, confident: “Absolutely”’ (190).

As the story lets the readers focus on these inner voices, they hear the novelist’s secret wish to break the silence in a different way from usual: ‘Not by speech. At any rate not by their ordinary maddening chatter. There was another way for them to speak to each other, and in the new way he wanted to murmur: “Do you feel this too? Do you understand it at all?”’ (190). Without ‘their ordinary maddening chatter’, he would like to communicate with her in a special way that he has never done before. To express what he is experiencing at the present moment, he uses the pronoun ‘this’, showing its unnameable quality. He wants to search for a different way

of representation for this particular moment. This choice of the word ‘this’ would be more appropriate than a more concrete word that he might have used to explain other moments he has already experienced. Even though this vagueness seems to show the limitation of language, if his wish to ‘speak’ to her without speech was realised, this unspoken interaction could more successfully illustrate the mobility of their secret selves in relation to what Bergson calls duration.

In spite of his current secret will to murmur, ‘Do you feel this too?’ in a special, nonverbal way, he says something totally contradictory immediately after the last quotation: ‘Instead, to his horror, he heard himself say: “I must be off; I’m meeting Brand at six.” What devil made him say that instead of the other?’ (190). Again, the reader, along with the novelist himself, sees the gap between his mental words and actual words. The same thing can be said about his friend too. Although she actually says, ‘You must rush, then. He’s so punctual. Why didn’t you say so before?’ and helps him leave quickly, her secret self says, ‘You’ve hurt me; you’ve hurt me! We’ve failed!’ (190).

### Repeated Words

Near the end of ‘Psychology’, the female writer has another guest:

On the doorstep there stood an elderly virgin, a pathetic creature who simply idolized her (heavens knows why) and had this habit of turning up and ringing the bell and then saying, when she opened the door: ‘My dear, send me away!’ She never did. As a rule she asked her in and let her admire everything and accepted the bunch of slightly soiled looking flowers—more than graciously. But to-day. . . (191)

This occasional visitor says the same thing every time she comes, and the playwright reacts in the same way too regardless of her true feelings. Her response this time however is different. Although at first she says she is busy, her mind changes as she sees the garden, the plants and the sky and feels the silence just as she did when she saw the male writer friend off some minutes ago: ‘But this time she did not hesitate. She moved forward. Very softly and gently, as though fearful of making a ripple in that boundless pool of quiet she put her arms round her friend’ (192). In other words, she does not repeat the same words or expressions this time.

Instead of reacting the same way as usual, to the admirer who asks “‘Then you really don’t mind me too much?’”, she says, “‘Good night, my friend,” [...] “Come again soon”” (192). After the visitor leaves, the playwright starts to write to the male friend. This time she is clearly positive about the issue of the psychological novel that he mentioned during their earlier chat. Perhaps it seems as if she is trying to go back to the past and start the same moment afresh, to cancel what she has already said. She might expect that she would finally change and be able to behave more naturally in front of him on the next occasion just as she did with the female guest, a change that could improve their relationship.

This ending does not necessarily promise anything about the future; the feelings of the playwright and the novelist might or might not change after the moment described in the story. This ambiguity seems to represent the unforeseeable nature of duration, or experienced time, that Bergson emphasises: ‘the free act takes place in time which is flowing and not in time which has already flown’.<sup>9</sup> For Bergson, an action in duration is taken freely, without having any lines drawn from which to choose. It is the heterogeneity of duration that enables us to be free, to keep

changing unpredictably. Similarly, the reader of this story cannot actually see or observe the future of these characters, even if they might like to imagine what it will be like.

Although there is no obvious conclusion in the story 'Psychology', there is a hint in the letter that the female protagonist writes that her attempt to retrieve the past moments and live them again, as it were, may not be successful: 'At the end she wrote: "Good night, my friend. Come again soon."' (192). She uses exactly the same words that she has just said to the female admirer instead of creating new expressions only for him. Those repeated words are just like the 'little dead bunch' (191) of flowers that the admirer brought, which might have been beautiful at their peak but are no longer. They are untimely and fail to express what Mansfield calls 'the beautiful *individual* moment (mobility)' quoted earlier. Although this ending suggests that anything could happen in the future as Bergson explains, it does not seem very likely that a desirable change will occur soon after the moment the story describes. Also, as Bergson insists, one cannot go back to and relive the same moments, even if that is what the female playwright wishes to do.

'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day' also describes a character who repeats the same words. Reginald is not able to say what he actually wishes to say to his wife. Although many thoughts and words come and go in his mind while she is sleeping, when she is awake it is not easy for him to vocalise them: 'he suddenly decided to have one more try to treat her as a friend, to tell her everything, to win her. Down he sat on the side of the bed, and seized one of her hands. But of all those splendid things he had to say, not one could he utter' (128). Reginald, a singing teacher extremely popular among his female students, is able to attract his students with his musical expressions. His verbal expressions also impress his devoted students and help him communicate with them successfully. Through the narrator, the reader hears one of his students saying: 'Why [aren't] all men like Mr Peacock?' (127). However, whenever he teaches and whomever he teaches, the same words are repeated routinely: "'Dear lady, I should be only too charmed'" (126, 127). At the end of the story, he again finds it difficult to talk to his wife about what he is eager to say, and finally, '[f]or some fiendish reason, the only words he could get out were: "Dear lady, I should be so charmed—so charmed!"' (128).

In reading 'Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day', just as in reading other stories by Mansfield, the reader often comes across the idea that some words are easy to find, or actually easy to utter, but others are not. Alongside this, the reader also encounters the idea that it is more difficult to find the right expression for what you really wish to describe than for other matters. In this sense, Bertha Young in 'Bliss' who names her excitement 'absolute bliss' (174) without hesitation is more similar to Reginald than she might seem. It is not difficult for her to call her feeling 'bliss' but that expression does not seem to satisfy her:

Oh, is there no way you can express it without being 'drunk and disorderly'? How idiotic civilization is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?

'No, that about the fiddle is not quite what I mean,' she thought [...]. (174)

As is obvious from the last sentence of the quotation, she is keen to find appropriate words. Later in the story when she gets a phone call from her husband Harry, she truly cannot find words at the end of their conversation:

What had she to say? She'd nothing to say. She only wanted to get in touch with him for a moment. She couldn't absurdly cry: 'Hasn't it been a divine day!'

'What is it?' rapped out the little voice.

'Nothing. *Entendu*,' said Bertha, and hung up the receiver, thinking how more than idiotic civilization was. (176-7)

Her preoccupation with the right expression might be connected to her affinity for creative art. Unlike Reginald or the two characters in 'Psychology', she is not a professional artist but likes creating beauty; for example, she buys fruits for a party and displays them tastefully:

'Shall I turn on the light, M'm?'

'No, thank you. I can see quite well.'

There were tangerines and apples stained with strawberry pink. Some yellow pears, smooth as silk; some white grapes covered with a silver bloom and a big cluster of purple ones. These last she had bought to tone in with the new dining-room carpet. Yes, that did sound rather far-fetched and absurd, but it was really why she had bought them. She had thought in the shop: 'I must have some purple ones to bring the carpet up to the table.' (175)

After making two pyramids of fruits, 'she stood away from the table to get the effect—and it really was most curious. For the dark table seemed to melt into the dusky light and the glass dish and the blue bowl to float in the air. This, of course in her present mood, was so incredibly beautiful' (175). This minute description of how she creates her work is more vivid and stronger than any single word such as 'bliss' because the depiction follows Bertha's process, or Bergsonian duration, of making pyramids as time passes, instead of summarising it in retrospect after the time has passed. Through this durational description of Bertha, the reader finds out that, just as Reginald has his singing, Bertha has her way of expressing herself, if not with verbal language as she wishes. Here Mansfield's descriptions of Bertha are akin to showing her in a film to attract attention to Bertha's mobile and multiple self instead of fixing it with just a few words. Perhaps because Reginald and Bertha, like Mansfield, are able to express themselves in some situations and in some ways, they strongly wish to properly express to their spouses as well, using the right expressions, rather than just reusing the same old 'mouth'.

Bertha's and Reginald's difficulty in finding the right words on the right occasions (despite their capability on other occasions and by other means) suggests the most significant link between 'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day' and 'Bliss'. That is, the readers cannot rely on the narrators. It is suggested that different perspectives and interpretations should make more sense than the narrators' explanations. As 'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day' is told from his point of view, it might sound as if his wife were unreasonable and not understanding, as Reginald claims, which could perhaps be true to some extent, but if the story were told from his wife's perspective, he might be described as too selfish to understand his busy wife who does all the housework and childcare. Rather similarly, as is clear throughout the story of 'Bliss', 'Bertha's utter unreliability as a narrator makes this particular plot impossible to decipher: we can only know "what really happens" through her, and she doesn't know'.<sup>10</sup> On one hand, 'Bliss' could be read as somewhat similar to 'How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped', which is told from the perspective of a young Pearl; as her surname Young implies, Bertha might be just like a child. If one reads the story in this way, it can be interpreted as follows: Bertha does not understand the single truth of the story, which is the fact that Harry and Pearl are having an affair, not that

Bertha and Pearl are going to be close. On the other hand, one can assume that Bertha, not literally young like Pearl Button, is not that ignorant. According to this interpretation, there is no single truth in the story; it is true that Harry and Pearl are in a close relationship, but it might also be true that there is some feeling between Bertha and Pearl, or it might be that Bertha has known about the affair between her husband and Pearl. In other words, the story, just like ‘Mr Reginald Peacock’s Day’, shows in a more complex way that things could be interpreted differently. These complicated ways in which stories are told underline the difficulty in capturing the fluid nature of duration with language; words cannot reproduce each character’s mobile consciousness exactly as it is.

### Short Story Form Showing Unity and Multiplicity

Mansfield’s fiction, which enables a story to be read as an independent piece or a part of a larger unit, is appropriate when representing Bergsonian time, which can be experienced intuitively and also spatialised intellectually. The flexibility of Mansfield’s short stories can be explained with regard to the relation between the form and the theme in the works of other writers influenced by Bergson. In ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, the self of one single person, Prufrock, is fissured, while in novels such as *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, the links between different characters and different scenes are suggested. For *The Waves*, Woolf needs two forms, that of the main text and of the interludes, to describe both separated and united self, although the difference between the role of each form becomes unclear as the six characters’ selves, which are emphatically distinguished from each other at the beginning of the novel, eventually become unified. Bernard says, ‘what I call “my life,” it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am—Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis; or how to distinguish my life from theirs’.<sup>11</sup> It can be said that Mansfield managed to describe both types of self by making the most of the flexible form with which the reader can either create a frame around each story or remove it. Although Mansfield wrote some ‘series’, it is notable that she explored the short story genre’s capability to represent multiplicity as well as unity. This becomes clear when comparing her stories to, for example, Joyce’s *Dubliners*, a collection that emphasises the unity of different stories written for the same single purpose.<sup>12</sup>

By contrast, Mansfield uses the short fiction form to write about different people in different countries or situations even in her early stories published in *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review*. Even though the reader can read her stories as a series just like *Dubliners*, in reading each story they can also experience (rather than ‘read about’) the particularity of a moment or a place or situation that they happen to encounter only because they read the particular story. As far as her explorations of unity and multiplicity are concerned, Mansfield’s tiny and accessible stories are more comparable to Joyce’s huge novels such as *Ulysses*, in which the different selves of different people are connected and a single person’s self is divided, than to *Dubliners*, which primarily focuses on the unity of different stories written for the same purpose to describe Dublin. Perhaps due to a common misunderstanding of Bergson’s philosophy, some focus on unity in Bergson’s and Bergsonian writers’ works and overlook their multiplicity.<sup>13</sup> However, just like Joyce and Woolf, Mansfield was concerned with the relation between the multiplicity and the unity of each of her characters, as is clear in this famous quotation from her personal notebook:



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 am 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.<sup>14</sup>

Although Bergson's notion of duration, with an emphasis on its indivisibility and unity, is attractive, it is equally important that he discusses the significance of divisions that make us recognise the nature of things or our experiences by cutting them into identifiable units. As Gilles Deleuze repeatedly explains in *Bergsonism*, Bergson is keen to make appropriate differences between different types of arguments or concepts. Even when Bergson explains qualitative elements such as duration and rhythm, he admits they could be recognised as plural. For example, in *Duration and Simultaneity* Bergson writes:

When we are seated on the bank of a river, the flowing of the water, the gliding of a boat or the flight of a bird, the ceaseless murmur in our life's deeps are for us three separate things or only one, as we choose. We can interiorize the whole, dealing with a single perception that carries along the three flows, mingled, in its course; or we can leave the first two outside and then divide our attention between the inner and the outer; or, better yet, we can do both at one and the same time, our attention uniting and yet differentiating the three flows, thanks to its singular privilege of being one and several.<sup>15</sup>

It is possible to say that there is only one single duration in this situation because everything is connected within the duration of the person sitting on the bank of the river. However, we can also say that there are more 'durations'. As Deleuze explains, here, Bergson is talking about a plurality of rhythms of duration, and each rhythm is itself a duration, so there are some different durations within one duration.<sup>16</sup> Again in the next quotation, Bergson is concerned with 'many' rhythms: 'In reality there is no one rhythm of duration; it is possible to imagine many different rhythms which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness, and thereby fix their respective places on the scale of being'.<sup>17</sup>

This can be more easily understood when read in connection with the following passage from Mansfield, which is similar to, but more accessible than, Bergson's argument:

It is true that Life 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 the darkness. . . . [W]e feel that until these things are judged and given each its appointed place in the whole scheme, they have no meaning in the world of art.<sup>18</sup>

Mansfield sees this act of appointing each separate place affirmatively. Though modernist writers' fascination with what Bergson calls 'intuition' is more commonly acknowledged in literary criticism, Mansfield finds significance in judgement, selection and separation as well as intuition and unity. Bergson also suggests that things become clearer when they are measured and given respective places. Although he does emphasise the importance of duration, or

heterogeneous unity of time, he does not underestimate separable time or the act of separation or discount intellectual analysis as opposed to 'intuition'. Mansfield's choice of form is linked to Bergson's explanation of different rhythms, for she implies different rhythms in relation to different kinds of consciousness by writing short stories rather than novels, that is, like her friend Fergusson, by drawing distinctive outlines around each independent story and by painting them with colours distinguishable from each other.

In conclusion, Mansfield's depictions of the ways people wish to avoid repeating the same verbal or written expressions show the ways they try to cut what is supposed to be undividable and irreversible duration, or unity, into recognizable pieces, or multiplicity, so that they can understand reality or express themselves. Unlike some of her characters, Mansfield successfully lets the reader 'see' our mobile multiplicity 'not by speech' or 'ordinary maddening chatter' (in short, not by language, as it were) just as the male novelist in 'Psychology' wishes to do but fails. Mansfield's complaint about Fergusson's typical mouths that do not seem to her to describe the beauty of mobility very well is consistent with the way she shows her characters in duration.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Angela Smith, 'Poise', *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, 8 (2016), pp. 151-56. Rachel Boyd Hall, 'Poise by J. D. Fergusson: A Rediscovered Portrait of Katherine Mansfield?', *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, 8 (2016), pp. 157-64.

<sup>2</sup> As for Bergson's influence on Mansfield, see Eiko Nakano, 'Katherine Mansfield and French Philosophy: A Bergsonian Reading of *Maata*', *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, 1 (2009), pp. 68-82, and Eiko Nakano, "Katherine Mansfield, *Rhythm* and Henri Bergson," in Janet Wilson, Gerri Kimber, and Susan Reid, eds, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 30-41.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984-2008), Vol. 2, p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> Katherine Mansfield, *Selected Stories*, ed. with an introduction by Angela Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 189. Hereafter, page numbers are placed parenthetically in the text.

<sup>5</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan, 1911), pp. 271-72.

<sup>6</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: Allen and Unwin, 1911), p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> For interpretations of Mansfield's stories including 'Psychology' in relation to Bergson's philosophy, see Clare Hanson, 'Katherine Mansfield and Vitalist Psychology', *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, 8 (2016), pp. 23-37.

<sup>9</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F. L. Pogson (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1910), p. 221.

<sup>10</sup> Patricia Moran, *Word of Mouth: Body Language in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf* (Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia, 1996), p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (London: Hogarth, 1933), p. 196.

<sup>12</sup> James Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. by Richard Ellmann, Vol.2 (London: Faber, 1966), p.

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<sup>13</sup> For instance, David Trotter writes, ‘I’m not convinced that the great continuity was really her [Mansfield’s] thing. The energies which traverse and shape the later writing, in particular, are very much more spasmodic—more discontinuous, more jittery—than the [Bergsonian] ideas of *durée* and *élan vital* then in circulation would readily have accommodated’. David Trotter, ‘Modernism Reloaded: The Fiction of Katherine Mansfield’, *Affirmations: Of the Modern*, 1, 1 (2013), p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Katherine Mansfield, *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, ed. by Margaret Scott (NZ: Lincoln University Press and Daphne Brasell Associates, 1997), Vol. 2, p. 204.

<sup>15</sup> Henri Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity: with Reference to Einstein’s Theory*, trans. by Leon Jacobson, with an introduction by Herbert Dingle (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberiam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 275.

<sup>18</sup> John Middleton Murry, ed., *Novels and Novelists by Katherine Mansfield* (London: Constable, 1930), p. 6.

### Beneath the Performance:

#### Identity in Katherine Mansfield's 'Miss Brill' and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*

Kristin Bryant Rajan

'It's a terrible thing to be alone -- yes it is -- it is -- but don't lower your mask until you have another mask prepared beneath -- as terrible as you like -- but a mask.'

— Katherine Mansfield

Letter to her future husband, John Middleton Murry (July 1917)

'It was like a play. It was exactly like a play....'Yes. I have been an actress for a long time.'"

Katherine Mansfield 'Miss Brill'

'And it's a sort of duty, don't you think—revealing people's true selves to themselves?'

Virginia Woolf to Vita Sackville-West

*Letters*, 18 October 1932, V

'For now she need not think of anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of – to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone.'

Virginia Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*

'Orlando naturally loved solitary places, vast views, and to feel himself for ever and ever and ever alone.'

Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*

The characters of Miss Brill from Katherine Mansfield's short story of the same title "Miss Brill" (1920) and Orlando from Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) are vehicles both writers use to explore the complicated nature of identity. Miss Brill is an aging teacher living alone in France. The highlight of her life is her weekly visit to the park to not only listen to the band but also the conversations of those around her. She is isolated and romantic, a lonely English teacher who likely escapes into literature, a combination that fosters her creation of multiple stories about those around her, even about herself. She begins her day with hope and expectation, brimming with optimism and buoyancy. But by the conclusion of the story and the end of the day, Miss Brill is disillusioned and defeated. Reality is incompatible with her creation. Orlando, on the other hand, is dynamic, colorful, always in flux. Orlando is a boy, man, woman, spanning the years from 1558 to 1928. Orlando is both in the world and of it, as opposed to Miss Brill solely observing life from the periphery. However, no matter how lavish the life, there are moments in *Orlando* where Woolf illustrates a richer self beneath the surface, expressing that there is a source beneath external identity and social roles, which Orlando occasionally taps. This deeper selfhood is manifested in the symbol of the Wild Goose, an untamed bird, beautiful, majestic, but never still for long, apt because tapping into moments of deep selfhood are always momentary in Woolf's works. The Wild Goose reflects the fluctuating, flowing self beneath the rigid forms of social identity. Miss Brill, on the other hand, is incapable of tapping anything beneath the surface. Her identity is solely superficial: how she looks, what she does, what she wears, how others see her. The symbol of the fur she dusts off in joyous preparation for her day

at the park, then later puts away with sadness and utter disillusionment is symbolic of Miss Brill's attachment to an external identity with no awareness of a self existing beneath the surface.

Woolf's fascination with the self permeates her works. James King, noted Woolf biographer, finds that she perpetually probes the 'world beyond appearances.'<sup>1</sup> Even as a child, Woolf recognised the difference between rich and intense moments of being fully alive and those other times, the more prevalent moments, which simply pass in a rather quotidian manner.<sup>2</sup> In her diary entries, she writes of having the frequent sensation of 'non-being' and of a 'heightened sensibility.'<sup>3</sup> Woolf wants to 'discover the real things beneath the show'.<sup>4</sup> I suggest that these experiences result from respites from social roles and performances, those more traditional modes of being, and a subsequent immersion in deep selfhood. These are moments Orlando penetrates, and also, precisely, moments Miss Brill is incapable of tapping.

A Woolf diary entry from 8 August 1928 explores the superficiality and artificiality of external identity:

Something illusory then enters into all that part of life. I am so important to myself: yet of no importance to other people: like the shadow passing over the downs. I deceive myself into thinking that I am important to other people: that makes part of my extreme vividness to myself: as a matter of fact, I don't matter; & so part of my vividness is unreal; gives me a sense of illusion.<sup>5</sup>

This entry is a fitting description of Miss Brill herself as she relishes her crucial role in the performance at the park. Woolf examines the individual's obsession with surfaces, how concerned humanity is to present a particular self and make a certain impression. These 'illusions' of self dictate behaviour, distancing one from a more remote-and in Woolf's view a more authentic-self. According to Woolf, the performance, costumes, roles, even one's name defines the exterior, but these dramas are illusory, removed from a more authentic self. In this entry Woolf, herself, is liberated by the freedom from these restrictions. Miss Brill, however, upon making the same revelation that she is not crucial in the social arena suffers a type of death because the social self is the only self she knows.

In society both Orlando and Miss Brill ascribe to social roles, but in *Orlando*, Woolf illustrates that the exterior others perceive does not reflect the interior of the individual. Essentially, Woolf defines society as a drama of consensus: all members, usually subconsciously, agree on their roles and participate accordingly. We see this quite pointedly in 'Miss Brill' as well: Miss Brill's entire sense of self is that which is defined by the other: 'No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all.'<sup>6</sup> Miss Brill feels the need to be connected to the larger performance, finds value in this way. As a matter of fact, she invests her self-worth in how she is perceived by the other and her crucial role in the drama of society; she furthermore, creates how the other sees her. But the 'illusion' to which Woolf so frequently refers in *Orlando* is precisely the behaviour Miss Brill identifies with. Deeper selfhood, therefore, can only be captured in pure solitude, free from the pressures of the other, precisely when we are *not* making an impression. Woolf implies that when there is another, there is always some sort of performance; and where there is performance, there cannot be not deep selfhood.

Because the performance is the summation of Miss Brill's existence, she is devastated when she overhears the young girl say, 'Why does she come here at all -who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home? (254). This is the great tragedy of her life, that her

role in the elaborate play she has created is inconsistent with how others see her. To them, she is an old, odd woman, a prop incompatible with *their* play. To hear that she is actually not a crucial part of the performance crushes her, leading to the tragic ending where she packs away the fur, which once represented so much potential on this brilliant day. The crying we hear is that of Miss Brill, unable to ever realise that she is more than how others see her.

*Orlando*, too, explores the ways in which society is based upon performances. Woolf illustrates the forces of society suppressing and steering the individual to various personae. Mikiko Minow-Pinkney acknowledges that ‘social/historical factors’ create the subjects in Woolf’s works; she further illustrates that the Victorian period despite Orlando’s hostility to it, necessarily reshapes her as its product.<sup>7</sup> However, I would emphasise the power of Orlando to escape these forces, if only momentarily. These moments of escape fortify and nourish Orlando, but Miss Brill is incapable of tapping into such depths, leading to her despair in the conclusion

The concept of the name is a helpful tool for understanding the significance of social signifiers in these works, since names are crucial in social performance. The fact that both works’ titles are also the names of the protagonists highlights their significance: *Orlando: A Biography* and ‘Miss Brill’. The name represents society’s need to quickly label and recognise an individual. However, Woolf’s treatment of names in the text calls into question this tool for defining identity, a tool traditional biography cannot afford to question. Although traditional biographies rely on names, roles, titles for their mere existence, Woolf’s version of the biography completely invalidates all labels. Woolf specifies that this is a “biography” precisely to question the accuracy of the genre in capturing the complexity of the individual.

*Orlando* delineates the contrasts between the simplicity of the name and the complexity of the individual beneath the label, thus distinguishing between external and internal identity. One’s title or name-essentially for Woolf they are the same-is a distraction from deeper selfhood. No matter how elaborate, the name never comes close to approximating the complicated deeper self, and as we will see, often serves solely as a springboard for perceivers’ connotations, having nothing to do with the actual individual named. A name-like gender, roles, articles of attire-is invariably inadequate at representing all facets of identity because like all labels, a name is limited, whereas deeper selfhood is multidimensional, changeable, comprising more than one signifier can ever express. Woolf anticipates a poststructuralist view with her treatment of names in that the sign, the name, is removed from the signified identity. The name is merely a springboard for perceivers’ connotations and, like language, will always be limited.

Woolf uses names in *Orlando* to dismantle social identity. As reflective of ethnic origin, family background, gender, economic status, marital condition, even historical period names are obviously limited and incapable of representing the deeper components of the individual, which move beyond all these surface features. Designating a symbolic role a character plays within the social arena, a title is static and limiting, failing to encapsulate the more fluid, fluctuating essence of the self.

The name ‘Orlando’ itself is case in point. The protagonist’s interactions with other characters in the novel illustrate the contrasts between a romantic and culturally resonant name and Orlando’s deeper self. As a young boy, Orlando possesses a romantic fascination with roles, his own and the others in his perceived drama. He has multiple interludes with his created *illusions* of girls. He is not so interested in the actual person, the self beneath the name, but in his personal creation of the girl, the other. This is effectively illustrated in his interest in how well a girl’s name will fit into his poetry: ‘Doris, Chloris, Delia, or Diana, for he made rhymes to them all in turn.’<sup>8</sup> Woolf here illustrates the human propensity to construct the other in a social arena

solely to promote our constructions of ourselves. The individual's construction of self can only exist if there is also a construction of how others perceive this self. Orlando gauges his romantic counterpart according to her potential to enhance his image as the quintessential poet. This explains why he can change the other's name depending on the particular poem he is writing. He is clearly more concerned with the label of his romantic other-the name-than with the person beneath the name.

Here Woolf is over-simplifying the complexity of creating the other through her use of names/labels in the text. The names of these girls are extensions of Orlando's artistic creations in the same way social identity, is an artistic construction. Orlando stylistically creates his own identity and reality in the same way he creates his poetry. The names he uses for the girls in his sonnets-Chlorinda, Favilla, Euphrosyne-become the names by which everyone calls them,<sup>9</sup> whether they are the girls' actual names or not. These girls' names become another one of his creations. This scene illustrates Orlando's power in naming others based on his artistic purposes; it also suggests his complete immersion in his personal drama. The women's names-in this case, but Woolf suggests in all cases-reflect the one who names in order to propel the namer's constructed drama. In probing this concept, Woolf is illustrating that our perceptions of others are purely to solidify our perceptions of self. Orlando as a self-absorbed artist has no real interest in any facet of the other except in how she can serve his art, both his poems and his construction of self. Because Orlando has created these girls' names and put them in his sonnets, these are the names others use of the girls as well. Ultimately, the biographer, too, is creating the subject of the biography, which readers then accept as the definition of the individual.

Much like Orlando, Miss Brill uses those around her as props in her own self-construction. Contrasting with the multiple names Orlando uses, both male and female, to attempt to reflect the multi-faceted self, Miss Brill is simply Miss Brill. Mansfield makes minimal reference to a self beneath the social persona. The name 'Miss Brill' distances the reader from a deeper, more complex identity beneath the role. Miss Brill is out of touch with herself, unable to tap anything beneath the surface; consequently, through her narration, readers are limited to these superficialities as well. The title of the story and name of the character-Miss Brill-is immediately limiting. We are not even given the dimensionality of a first name. The honorific firmly establishes Miss Brill's rigid role in society as single, removed from a more complex identity. It would seem that the protagonist even thinks of herself as 'Miss Brill.' Her name suggests a static, limited persona; though she clearly desires to be more complex. She fantasises that she plays a more crucial role in the social performance surrounding her.

Miss Brill is how her English students address her, and is also the name the old man she reads to as he sleeps would refer to her, if he referred to her at all. Brill is the name of a European flatfish, and certainly not the way the character would wish to see herself. This reference reminds us of the young girl's brutal remarks that the fur Miss Brill wears so proudly at the beginning of the story, looks 'exactly like a fried whiting' (254). Overhearing this insult leads to the protagonist's demise. Miss Brill has invested so much in how she is perceived by others that the realisation that she is perceived far differently is crushing.

The less common, but also deeply contrasting definition of brill as a slang adjective meaning excellent and marvelous, a derivation of the word 'brilliance,' is a word the character uses frequently while building her steep expectations of her afternoon in the park and her role in the drama surrounding her: 'it was so brilliantly fine'.<sup>10</sup> The contrast of brill, the flatfish, and brill meaning excellent epitomises both Miss Brill's immersion in an exaggerated and hyperbolic

world of her creation contrasted with the less sparkling reality of her life as more mundane and ugly.

Miss Brill is a limited character; consequently, her interpretations of the world are also limited. The observations of those around her are devoid of names because she doesn't truly even know who these characters are outside the context of an afternoon at the park. They are significant only as they will fit into her creation, much like Orlando as poet uses the other. Through the narration, readers only know who Miss Brill is by how she interprets others, which is merely to categorise them. Her isolation prevents her from understanding the complexity of humanity and even her own complexity. Her interpretations are self-serving and, consequently, harsh and judgmental, indicating a lack of empathy. The old man she reads to does not contribute to her romantic 'creation' of self in any way: therefore 'If he'd been dead, she mightn't have noticed for weeks; *she wouldn't have minded*' (my emphasis, 253). This observation from Miss Brill's perspective illustrates a selfish immersion in her own world: others are significant only as they fit into her creation. She lacks the multidimensionality to empathise and truly understand others.

She censors her story of self and others as much as she is able to try to maintain her self-image, but ultimately what lies beneath the superficialities is a truth Brill does not want to acknowledge. Her harsh criticism of the 'odd' old people-they seem 'as though they'd just come from dark little rooms or even-even cupboards' (252) -actually reflects a truth she is attempting to suppress: that she, too, is of this generation, and her home is indeed quite cupboard-like. In truth, her observations of the old people are a reflection of her own life. When references to her age and isolation creep through her observations, she must suppress these details with another story, struggling to edit any dark truth that surfaces in the same way she dabs 'black sealing wax' on the nose of the fur she wears that has clearly taken some blows from reality.

Miriam Mandel illustrates how Miss Brill 'reduces and dehumanises' those around her: People become props and are basically no more multidimensional than what they wear.<sup>11</sup> She further finds that it is Miss Brill's sole determination to limit all around her and force details into a world of her creation that causes her downfall: 'Miss Brill herself created the smallness of her life.'<sup>12</sup> The complete absence of any names in the story, except for the limited name of Miss Brill, further supports the notion that the protagonist's interpretations have more to do with her and less with what is interpreted.

Woolf shows that Orlando, too, creates the other depending on how he/she will foster the protagonist's self-perception and agenda. Woolf makes clear that we interpret others only to the point that they will fit nicely within our stories of self-our own interpretations of self-but this process always backfires eventually if we get to know the other more deeply. We see this when another reality inevitably intrudes on Orlando's interpretations. The more experiences Orlando has with another, the less capable he is of deleting those details that do not coincide with his creation. Eventually Orlando is incapable of editing out those factors that do not bolster his own self-image. When Orlando notices traits he finds unappealing, inconsistent with his romantic image of the other, the entire interpretation shifts from idolisation to disparagement. He now focuses solely on negative characteristics to corroborate his judgment. Once Orlando, 'a passionate lover of animals',<sup>13</sup> sees Favilla, a potential mate, brutally punish a dog for tearing one of her stockings, he then begins to notice *everything* unappealing about her: for example, her crooked teeth, which he never noticed while venerating her. Woolf illustrates that all interpretations of the other are transient, based on superficialities, and shift constantly; however,



she alludes to a deeper self beneath the artificial constructions, performances, and interpretations of others-the eternal, abiding essence of self.

The final, dramatic scene of *Orlando* presents a culmination of Woolf's theories on identity. This passage depicts vividly Orlando's interior self. Her solitude in this scene is a crucial component in understanding the nature of deeper selfhood. Due to the protagonist's isolation, this passage is practically devoid of dialogue, highlighting one of Woolf's necessities for a moment of deep selfhood: solitude, silence, and the resulting respite from society's demands. Within this uninterrupted meditative moment, Woolf traces the characteristics of deep selfhood and contrasts them with those of the performing, social self. Communicating with others requires one to play a role; Orlando's moment of deep selfhood is a silent, solitary scene.

Woolf illustrates that these moments of deep selfhood are similar to the nebulous and hazy states of sleep, where nothing is clearly defined and there are no contextual social cues to lead the individual to expected action and directed behaviour. We better understand this through Woolf's pervasive water imagery: capturing the fluidity and flow of deep states of selfhood: 'sleep so deep that all shapes are ground to dust of infinite softness, water of dimness inscrutable, and there, folded, shrouded, like a mummy, like a moth, prone let us lie on the sand at the bottom of sleep.'<sup>14</sup> Because Orlando's perspective here is fluid and free, everything, including her surroundings, appears to be in flux; thus, each object Orlando observes reminds her of-or represents- something else in a continual stream-of-consciousness flow of metaphors: 'her mind had become a fluid that flowed round things'<sup>15</sup>; '[n]othing is any longer one thing. [...] Someone lights a pink candle and I see a girl in Russian trousers.'<sup>16</sup> During moments of deep selfhood in *Orlando*, the mind moves, always in flux; thus, there is no static identity, not one lens through which to view the world, but more of a meditative immersion with the flow of the mind and a culmination of all experience. Language, the traditional biography, rigid narratives, social roles impose a grid on reality and identity, and thus, misrepresent the complexity of both. Woolf, acutely aware of these restrictions, rebels against rigid structures in these unrestrained passages of *Orlando* and alludes to a self beneath the roles, forms, and structures.

There are no such moments in Mansfield's 'Miss Brill'. The protagonist is immersed in narratives, of herself and others. From the moment she dusts off the fur she wears to the park, she is creating a story of expectation: 'like a chill from a glass of iced water before you sip' (250). Throughout her entire day at the park, she is creating stories of all she sees around her, placing characters into categories. As Mandel demonstrates, she reduces her surroundings to fit her interpretation, preventing those she observes from leading their individual, fleshed out lives.<sup>17</sup> The 'nose' [of the fur], which was 'of some black composition, wasn't at all firm. It must have had a knock, somehow' (251). This might indicate that Miss Brill has been down this road before. This is not the first time she has been 'beaten up' by a reality uncooperative with her creative construction. But she is resilient: 'Never mind-a little dab of black sealing-wax when the time came -when it was absolutely necessary' (251) will cover up the bruises from a harsh reality. Miss Brill, is crying at the conclusion of the work and so out of touch with her deeper self that through her narration she must project the crying onto the fur: it is the fur that cries. It is too painful to admit that it is she herself who cries. Though she is defeated in the conclusion, she will rise again to observe, create, and pretend that she is participating in the social performance surrounding her. As long as she is alive, she will perform, for the performance **is** her life.

Though Miss Brill is solitary throughout the entire story, a crucial component in tapping deep selfhood in *Orlando*, she never taps the core self beneath the performance as Orlando does. The primary symbol in the story, the fur, denotes Miss Brill's relationship to the concept of

identity. The fur is reflective of the costume Miss Brill wears in her performance and also suggests how the character lives her life, in a box in the cupboard. The fur is an extension of Miss Brill herself. This static, quite literally *dead* symbol is the opposite of the very much alive wild goose, which represents the deeper selfhood of Orlando. As a matter of fact, it is significant that Miss Brill is so immersed in the artificiality of the social performance, that her few observations of nature, reflective of what is real and untainted, are practically non-existent. When she does notice nature, she forces these natural details into her created artificial performance:

Who could believe the sky at the back wasn't painted? But it wasn't till a brown dog trotted on solemn and then slowly trotted off, like a little 'theatre' dog, a little dog that had been drugged, that Miss Brill discovered what it was that made it so exciting. They were all on the stage. They weren't only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting. (253)

The natural elements of the dog and sky are merely props in her play. Miss Brill herself is nothing more than a part of the play. She is trapped in a social role, unable to tap a self beneath the performance, so it is no surprise that she forces the human beings surrounding her into social roles as well. Consequently, when she overhears that a teenage girl (the prototype of one most trapped in social performances) does not see Miss Brill as she sees herself, her world is destroyed. Anyone who understands the mindsets of teenage girls will applaud Mansfield's choice of this character to relay the news that Miss Brill is old, ugly, and should have just stayed home. Stereotypically adolescents are absorbed in a separate drama and brutally eschew any type that does not fit in their narrative in much the same way Miss Brill does. Tragically, Miss Brill has invested her entire existence in the performance she has created and is, therefore, devastated to hear that another views her radically differently from how she views herself.

This moment of revelation in 'Miss Brill' has the potential to lead the character within, to find respite and solace through a meditative exploration of what lies beneath the surface of the individual. Alda Correia finds parallels between the styles of Woolf and Mansfield, in that they both highlight moments of epiphany and revelation.<sup>18</sup> We see this in Miss Brill's sudden shock in the penultimate scene of the story, which resonates with Orlando's moments of revelation as well. The key difference is that Woolf would have taken this Mansfield moment and led Miss Brill to an epiphany of something deeper, alive, sustained beneath the surface. Miss Brill, however, is incapable of tapping the self beneath the role. Her entire sense of self is encapsulated in the role she plays.

All Woolf's works gravitate in some respect to inspecting life and identity. In a diary entry of 28 July 1940, she writes, 'The life-writer must explore and understand the gap between the outer self (the fictitious Virginia Woolf whom I carry like a mask about the world) and the secret self.' In a letter to Vanessa Stephen, Woolf's sister, dated October 1908, Clive Bell writes that Woolf has the incredible power of 'lifting the veil and showing inanimate things in the mystery and beauty of their reality'.<sup>19</sup> Woolf accomplishes this feat in *Orlando*, exploring identity and showing that beneath all the social roles and performances, there is something deeper, more substantial and natural, which sustains and nourishes. Mansfield's Miss Brill is so entrenched in the roles she plays, she cannot comprehend a life beneath the performance. Consequently, both conclusions and the symbols used to relay the themes of identity are radically different in the two works. Miss Brill is so out of touch with her deeper self

that through her narration she projects her crying onto the worn, tattered, literally dead fur she puts into the box. The performance of her life has shifted to a tragedy: she is the old fur, living in a box put into the cupboard. Orlando's conclusion is strikingly different: Orlando is one with nature, 'bearing her breast to the moon',<sup>20</sup> her pearls glow in the dark, and she experiences an epiphanic moment of deep selfhood, free from age, gender, roles, names, performances, and time, very much alive, and, though fleeting, as beautiful and free as the wild goose soaring above.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> James King, *Virginia Woolf* (New York: Norton & Co, 1995), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings* ed. by Jeanne Schulkind (London: Chatto and Windus for Sussex University Press, 1976) p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> King, p.140.

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf 5 vols* ed. Anne Oliver Bell (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1977-1984), vol 3, p. 188.

<sup>6</sup> Katherine Mansfield, 'Miss Brill', in *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield Vols 1 and 2 - The Collected Fiction*, eds Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), vol. 2, p. 253.

<sup>7</sup> Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf & The Problem of the Subject*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers, University Press, 1987), p. 135.

<sup>8</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1928), p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. (183).

<sup>11</sup> Miriam B. Mandel, 'Reductive Imagery in Miss Brill', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 26 Fall 1989, 473-77, (p. 475).

<sup>12</sup> Mandel, p. 477.

<sup>13</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>17</sup> Miriam Mandel, p. 476.

<sup>18</sup> Alda Correia, 'The Shape of the "Moment" in Virginia Woolf's and Katherine Mansfield's Stories' *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, 86 (2015), 23-5 (p. 25).

<sup>19</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, 6 vols eds Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth, 1975-1980), vol. 1, p. 376.

<sup>20</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 328.



***Tinakori: Critical Journal of the Katherine  
Mansfield Society***

**Call for Papers: Issue 3**

*Tinakori: The Critical Journal of the Katherine Mansfield Society* (ISSN 2514-6106) invites submissions for its forthcoming issue. We welcome scholars conducting research on any aspects of Mansfield's life or work to submit their papers to *Tinakori: The Critical Journal of the Katherine Mansfield Society* (formerly the Katherine Mansfield Society Online Essay Series, ISSN 2397-9046).

Please send submissions of completed essays to the Online Series Editor, Illya Nokhrin at [kms@katherinemansfieldsociety.org](mailto:kms@katherinemansfieldsociety.org) with 'Tinakori CFP' in the subject line by **30 SEPTEMBER 2018**. Submissions to the forthcoming issue will be double peer-reviewed prior to acceptance.

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