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A MIND AT BAY:

A STUDY OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

PhD THESIS - MARCH 1990

JANET LEWISON

'Thesis submitted in accordance with
the requirements of the
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by JANET SUSAN LEWISON'

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for H.B.L.

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Katherine Mansfield: A MIND AT BAY
PhD Thesis Abstract by Janet Lewison

Mansfield's creative and distinctly experiential approaches to her fiction and non-fiction are evaluated critically in terms of her ironic avowal that she and D. H. Lawrence were 'unthinkably alike.' The thesis explores precisely how such 'unthinking' might be made manifest in her fiction, particularly in terms of 'credited' and 'discredited' knowledge, and of the role of the licensed and unlicensed story-teller in her fictions.

Mansfield's fictions are paralleled and imaginatively witnessed by those of Dickens, Woolf and Lawrence, with reference to the above, and also with regard to a particular type of incongruity which forms the basis of Mansfield's comic response, and the creative reflections and refractions generated from a concealed sexual ambiguity and ordering.

Metamorphosis as an avenue and perspective towards a reconstitution of reality (Fuentes) is considered also.

The thesis finally considers the implications of such types of creative narratives for textual form and content and monitors the effects of these imaginative directives and strategies upon meaning.

List of Abbreviations

1. All page references to Mansfield's Stories refer to the Penguin Collected Stories Edition, and are quoted by the Story's name and page number only.

2. All references to Mansfield's Journal (Constable, London, 1954) are abbreviated to Journal and page number only.

3. Mansfield's 'Letters and Journals' edited by C K Stead (Penguin, London 1978) likewise are abbreviated to Letters and Journals and page reference only.

Preface: A Mind at Bay

'Everything has its shadow' wrote Mansfield to her husband Murry in 1920. Two years later and shortly before her death, Mansfield commented in her Journal, "Now perhaps you understand what 'indifferent' means. It is to learn not to mind, and not to show your mind." This thesis seeks to explore the critical and creative possibilities of Mansfield's philosophical deliberations, in terms of her fiction and non-fiction and with relation to her contemporaries Woolf and Lawrence, and one of her great literary inspirations and models, Dickens. The nature of the Shadow in Mansfield's work will be examined in experiential and imaginative terms and its importance to her fiction will be evaluated.

My research has specifically not investigated Mansfield's relation to Chekhov as this avenue has been excellently explored before and seemed unnecessary to my critical aim.

My greatest thanks go to my supervisor at Liverpool University, Dr Helen Wilcox for her unfailing enthusiasm, professionalism, care and astute intellectual criticism, throughout my lengthy and eventful registration for this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

A cloud, small, serene, floated across the moon.
 In that moment of darkness the sea sounded deep,
 troubled. The the cloud sailed away, and the
 sound of the sea was a vague murmur, as though
 it walked out of a dark dream - All was still.¹

The final movement of Mansfield's New Zealand Story, At the Bay, attempts to harmonise, even to integrate, the complex sexual, social and cultural disturbances explored within that fiction. Mansfield's narrative presents the reader with a simultaneously internal and external rendition of consciousness, layering and displacing itself within the apparently meditative narration. Such intense consciousness, such manifest duality of conception and imaginative experience seems particularly Mansfieldian, placing her critically alongside other modernist navigators of the psyche and fictional form such as Woolf, Lawrence and Joyce.

The difficulties encountered by any writer endeavouring to unify the ambiguous pregnancy of the 'dark dream' condition with any type of emotional or stylistic tranquility or control, are explicitly rendered at the close of At the Bay. For the closure in the story seems far too self-conscious, too much a matter of form and expectation, to be anything other than a deliberate type of critical creative exposure. The expectation of the reader is fulfilled only to initiate, perversely, the narrative once again. Endings in Mansfield are closet beginnings. 'All was still' suggests only a temporal

1 Katherine Mansfield, 'At the Bay' The Collected Stories, Second Edition (Penguin, London 1982) p.245

creative inhibition of activity; the past in Mansfield is by no means static or finished, or even resolved. 'All was still' could also be read as a literal Mansfieldian distillation of later criticism of her work, a 'haiku' form of the literary criticism which condemned her fiction for being written 'in a complete hypnotic suspension of the critical faculties,'² In other words that Mansfield contemplates the world, she does not investigate. O'Connor no doubt recognised the danger, literary and morally lurking behind such a suspension, regarding the apparent absence or indifference to mind as a rejection or withdrawal from 'judgement, will and criticism,'³ The purpose of this thesis is to explore precisely what this 'hypnotic suspense,' this absence of mind might look like in terms of both her fiction and non-fiction and to examine its creative potential and possible limitations.

Owing to the obvious restrictions of space and time, I have specifically selected four Mansfield stories for my critical investigation as well as the letters and Journal. The stories selected are chosen for their centrality to the Mansfield opus in terms of their innovation and style, as well as having remarkable critical relations to one another. The Daughters of the Late Colonel, The Doves' Nest, A Married Man's Story and Je ne parle pas francais act as consolidations and exciting refractions of Mansfield's profoundly felt critical dichotomy expressed at the end of At the Bay and in the Journal at Fontaine-

2 Frank O'Connor The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story (London, Macmillan, 1963) p.139

3 O'Connor p.139

bleau, just before her death;

"Now perhaps you understand what 'indifferent' means. It is to learn not to mind, and not to show your mind."⁴

Mansfield at the close of At the Bay is 'indifferent' according to her own creative charter; she is choosing not to show her mind, rather than such concealment of detachment being any lapse of judgement. She presents the reader with a supremely writerly text, a major contribution to the art of the short-story in Western literature.

Furthermore, when the reader superimposes the ending of At the Bay over the earlier story Bliss, the repetition is obvious, 'still' in both fictions attempts to suppress or control sexual disquiet, sexual ambiguity. Some type of refracted critique has occurred. Mansfield's pre-occupation is repeated precisely because it is incomplete, unfinished, unsatisfying. This ability of one story to reveal aspects and sensibilities of another is perhaps a particular tendency of the short fiction.

'there is no doubt that short stories by the same hand do have a bearing on one another. They enhance, they throw light on each other; together they acquire composite meaning...'⁵

Bowen as a novelist and short-story writer was speaking with a close knowledge of such texts. Mansfield's stories therefore offer the reader interpretations and reinterpretations of the author's creative and critical processes, specifically in this thesis, the mind exposed and at the bay. For knowledge in Mansfield may be

4 Katherine Mansfield, Edited by John Middleton Murry Journal of Katherine Mansfield 1904-1922, fourth edition (Constable, London 1984) p.336

5 Elizabeth Bowen, Introduction, Thirty-Four Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield, (Collins, London 1957) p.18

termed credited or discredited; credited in its ready access to acknowledgement or cognition, discredited in its 'otherness,' lack of linguistic response or certainty. The treatment by Mansfield of both types of knowledge is undifferentiated and 'open.' Mansfield rarely intervenes in her stories with any obvious critical and moral value judgement, hence the freedom of the reader in her stories to negotiate the texts largely unguided. If there is any sense of closure it is usually the reader's rather than the authors.'

When Mansfield did intrude in her fictions or 'force' the truth too obviously from a situation or character, she recognised the falsity of such artistry and device. Her 'false starts' occurred when artistic knowledge was self-consciously encouraged or fabricated - intellectually created rather than being intuitively felt and expressed.

'Able and fine as was her intelligence it was not upon that that she depended: intuitive knowing vision, had to be the thing. She was a writer with whom there could be no secondary substitute for genius: genius was vision. One might speak of her as having a burning gaze...⁶

The stories I shall examine in this thesis were written with Bowen's 'burning gaze' very much in evidence. Such a gaze or method of perception contained both types of knowledge, the credited and discredited, knowing and the antithesis, unknowing. Mansfield's landscapes of sharply realised externals are defined in terms of their personal and impersonal 'otherness' specifically the world

6 Bowen p.13-14

of shadow, the world of the 'dark dream.'

'Everything has its shadow' wrote Mansfield to Murry in 1920. Years later and with a marked relevance to this doctrine, the critic Anne McCaughlin wrote of Prelude

It deals with the inarticulate longings and the tumultuous feelings that lie beneath the surface of daily life. It reveals a fascination with violence within harmony, with atmosphere and moments of awareness.⁷

McCaughlin's comment reveals the intensity of perception contained with Bowen's diagnosis of Mansfield's 'burning gaze.' Mansfield's situations in her fiction are not strikingly extreme or colourful. Their interest is generated through their 'otherness' through the disorder that motivate or paralyses the present in which Mansfield retrieves them from anonymity. Mansfield's characters and 'landscapes' are expressed in their ambiguous relations to each other, related in the complex intensity acknowledged or suppressed, of their moment of crisis. The crisis is usually the outcome of some unresolved, uncommitted problem from the past, often more fully revealed to the reader than the characters themselves.

Moments of being in Mansfield are significantly moments of non-being or inarticulacy for her subjects. Her lonely individuals may at best know that they do not know. Depth in Mansfield's fiction is frequently achieved beyond the range of ready critical assimilation or reduction.

7 Ann McCaughlin 'The Same Job' The Shared Writing Aims of Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf' Modern Fiction Studies, Vol. 24 (1978-79) Number 3 Autumn 1978, [Special Issue: Katherine Mansfield] p.381

For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, when the film of the camera reaches only the eye...⁸

A mind at bay in Woolf's terms allows intuition and divination, development and eventual, tentative linguistic expressions. A mind at play, in the Mansfield opus, alternates between shadow and object, minding and not minding, darkness and light, innocence and experience. Significantly, most of Mansfield's 'great stories' are explorations of such creative play. Unsurprisingly the experience of dream, frequently seems synonymous with her fictional style and symbolic form of narrative. The 'secret life' of things, the type of play expressed within the fictions in her 'special prose' are related in terms of opposition and condensed images such as litter the recitation or exploration of a dream or hallucinatory, dream-like experience. As an outsider in terms of sexuality, health and nationality her dream narratives can be construed as attempts to cohere symbolically the sense of alienation envisaged by herself and the inhabitants of her fictions or in their disunity to reinforce the sense of exile and loss undergone by the 'modern' consciousness.

Writing on the subject of exile in literature, Andrew Gurr suggests,

Exile as the essential characteristic of the modern writer anticipates the loss of the community as a whole of identity, a sense of history and a sense of home...⁹

8 Virginia Woolf 'A Sketch of the Past' in Moments of Being, 3rd edition (Granada, London 1982) p.114

9 Andrew Gurr, Writers in Exile, (Harvester Press Limited, Brighton 1981) p.14

Time in Mansfield is a great betrayer, exacerbated by the acute awareness of time that an isolated exiled consciousness must possess. In this Mansfield's stories can be interestingly paralleled to those of Raymond Carver, the American Short-story Writer. The critic James Wood asserted of the Carver short-story;

It is the restless dreaming, a lyricism of hope weighted with a legacy of dread (things may change for the worse as well as for the best) that seems the most consistent theme...¹⁰

Dream narratives are thus potential nightmares as much as dreams of hope. Expectation is manipulated and is dynamically ambivalent. Time is therefore precipitately precious, precipitately undermining. 'All was still' may be the best that can be hoped for. Stasis has become a form of hope, as it has suspended or deferred closure. The Literal linguistic enactment of a mind at bay.

In the first part of the thesis I shall explore Mansfield's sexual 'exile' to reintroduce Gurr's premise, in terms of her bisexuality and corresponding creative and critical response to the fiction of Woolf and Lawrence as well as in terms of her own criticism and fiction. Mansfield's tellingly acute diagnosis of her resemblance to Lawrence as being 'unthinkably alike' him is investigated in its pertinence to the dichotomy between the types of knowledge found in the fiction of Mansfield and also Lawrence. This will be investigated in terms of the

¹⁰ James Wood, 'From the Secular Side of the American Miracle' The Guardian, Thursday April 6 1989, p.22

Journal and the stories.

Years later and in Brasil, a country distinctly 'other' to those early modernists, the writer Clarice Lispector presented a world hardly dissimilar to Mansfield's landscape of exile and alienation.

In her afterword to Lispector's Family Ties collection the critic Pontiero wrote of,

the hunger of the solitary man hemmed in by hostile faces, his awareness of inevitable alienation and the pressing need to overcome its dangers and most forcefully of all, his terror upon recognising the ultimate nothingness.¹¹

Lispector's similarity and indeed familiarity with the work of Mansfield is sharply achieved here. Lispector's predilection for the absurd, with the Satrean 'nothingness' and nausea, may be paralleled with the 'dark dream' in At the Bay. The 'troubled' voice of the sea can be read as the intuition of the absurd, the abyss of nothingness that secretly awaits the thwarted subjects of Mansfield's fictions. The absurd in Mansfield is the night time book, made day. This I shall examine critically in relation to The Daughters of the Late Colonel and The Doves' Nest. The fiction in these two stories is expressed within the confrontation between these two types of book, the absurd from without is a day-book, the absurd from within is a night-time read. In a general way the, the comic in Daughters of the Late Colonel and Doves' Nest is the acknowledged, day-time absurd, the strange, sinister absurdity of Je ne parl pas Francais and Married Man's

11 'Afterword' to Clarice Lispector's Family Ties by Giovanni Pontiero, 2nd Edition (Carcanet, Manchester 1984) p.134

Story the night-time absurd. The Journal appropriately contains both types of knowledge and comic absurdity. Its duality is dynamic and renewing, being unlimited or constructed by form which is the obvious control exhibited in the stories by the author.

In a moment of insight and inspiration, Mansfield recognised the type of novel she was unfortunately never to write.

I suddenly discovered that one of those bouts was exactly what I want the novel to be. Not big, almost 'grotesque' in shape - I mean perhaps 'heavy' - with people rather dark and seen strangely as they move in the sharp light and shadow...¹²

The 'heavy' quality that Mansfield assumes would be the essential description of this fiction suggests the tensions created and exuded by people who are not content to live, but who may fail to diagnose the cause and source of this discontent. Fired by social circumstance, gender, history and even physical exigencies to lead lives other than those conducive to harmony or expansion, Mansfield's characters often inhabit half-worlds, intuiting only what they do not know, without articulating why; 'I'm getting better at climbing stiles, aren't I Kezia?'¹³ asks the hopeful Lottie in At the Bay. Such a question stands symbolically over Mansfield's fiction. Characters may have access only to certain types of language and behaviour. There may be constructive or incomprehensible misapprehension, or lack of self-knowledge in Mansfield is frequently

12 Katherine Mansfield, Letters and Journals edited by C K Stead, 2nd Edition (Penguin, London 1978) p.58

13 At the Bay p.214

exhibited as a type of linguistic behaviour, endured or enjoyed by the subject, suppressing epiphany or revelation.

"Yes, dear. But aren't you going to bathe here?"
 "No-o," Beryl drawled. She sounded vague. "I'm undressing further along. I'm going to bathe with Mrs Harry Kember."¹⁴

Beryl is not being 'Beryl' here. She is 'Beryl' being Mrs Harry Kember. The language is borrowed, the similarity striking, the connotations telling in terms of attitudes to social behaviour, sexuality and Beryl's sense of 'self'. Beryl is highly susceptible to the suggestion and physical presence of Mrs Kember. The language reveals, what Beryl cannot. The drawl, places the reader in the position of Mansfield, we can write the rest of the text. Imitation has become a form of mime, even linguistic possession. Critically this can be valued as a type of imaginative ventriloquism.

It is in this mood that she becomes the most intense practitioner of the technique by which the story reveals itself - the mime form: but a mime in which the characters are suffused with light from within. All the information, the narrative flow, is contained in the words spoken and the scene as it appears in the eyes of the character. The use of internal vision is brilliantly externalised in imagery so that when we enter into somebody's thoughts and feelings we do not leave the world of sensation...¹⁵

Epiphany if achieved at all, may be translated as hallucination, or a defence against this type of self-knowledge. Mansfield, through the mime form, has deliberately presented the reader with an undermining, self-detonating

14 At the Bay p.217

15 T O Beachcroft, The Modern Art: A Survey of the Short Story in English, (Oxford University Press, London 1968) P.

text. This is grounded in her predilection for the absurd and in her ability to achieve revelation through mime or 'possession.' Mime discloses that which would otherwise never be easily or willingly disclosed. Mansfield, like Dickens can imitate the level of behaviour at which disclosure would become apparent to a reader, even if remaining opaque or obscure to the protagonist.

Mime or possession as I shall argue in the second part of this thesis, with particular reference to Dickens, allows the writer Mansfield access to both sides of a mirror-self. Quite simply she has been both the observed and the observer, she has known that which she describes, therefore she can discredit or credit such knowledge according to context and design.

If 'Contemplation'₁₆ is the outcome then such unified knowledge will be the creative conjunction of experience and innocence rather than its antithesis.

Comedy may result when unity is in abeyance, when knowledge is in conflict rather than concord. The comic is frequently at the expense of the victimiser.

"Where are you going to, Kezia?" asked Isabel, who longed to find some light and menial duty that Kezia might perform and so be roped in under her government. "Oh, just away" said Kezia... Then she (Linda) did not hear them anymore... She turned over to the wall and idly, with one finger, she traced a poppy on the wall-paper with a leaf and a stem and a fat bursting bud. In the quiet, and under her tracing finger, the poppy seems to come alive... Things had a habit of coming alive like that...₁₇

16 O'Connor p.140
17 Prelude p.26-27

At any single moment in Mansfield (and Woolf) the 'self' is under close and exacting scrutiny, contending and resisting external limiting forces, suspending creative or critical attempts at closure. 'Away' in Kezia's terms strangely resembles the intense experience of 'otherness' experienced by Kezia's mother Linda; yet for all their stylistic and plotted correspondence, the characters' experiences remain exclusive and solitary. Alienation is uncompromising in Mansfield as in Lispector: 'Family Ties' are tentative and precarious, Isabel remains constricted by her language and that of the text precisely because she is all that she speaks and only that. Isabel's 'shadow' is visible and therefore known. She can be read, there is nothing more to write. Isabel represents a closure in the New Zealand stories, she cannot inhabit the dream-like world of Kezia or Linda because her 'hopes' rest in the curtailing of the hopes of these two characters and indirectly of course those of Mansfield herself. Mansfield's endings are thus always resistant to the type of sterile, non-shadowy closures represented by an Isabel in her fiction. The 'free-zone' of the short story obviously emphasises this reluctance. If form parameters are absent, in the tradition of a Chekhovian short story, so too are the expectations of the reader.

The final section of the thesis will discuss the preponderance of beginnings in Je ne parle pas francais, and the search for an ending which is A Married Man's Story.

Such a discussion will be an accretion of the critical issues raised in the rest of the thesis, an examination of Mansfield which intends to raise the significance of the 'insignificant,' the creative, mental world that is kept at bay, precisely because its knowledge is discredited, different and contradictory.

Mansfield's best work was written in the chasm between opposing knowledge, opposing types of imaginative experience,

With all that one knows how much does one not know? ... The unknown is far, far greater than the known. The known is only a mere shadow. This is a fearful thing and terribly hard to face. But it must be faced.¹⁸

The 'moment of darkness' glimpsed in *At the Bay*, when the discredited 'cloud' eclipsed the still more discredited feminine moon, provided Mansfield with her very own, unique imaginative adventure and eclipse: This mind at Bay.

Chapter One

A MIND AT PLAY

'But if a man knows the vehemence of his impressions, feels every detail of every day as though it were his only day, if - one cannot put it otherwise - he actually consists of exaggeration, but does not fight his facility because his goal is to emphasise, to experience the sharpness and concreteness of all things that make up a life - that man would either have to explode or otherwise burst into bits, unless he could calm down in a diary.'¹

'I have a terribly sensitive mind which receives every impression.'² wrote Mansfield in her Journal in 1922. A reader of the 'definitive' Journal 1954, would be rather inclined to agree with Mansfield's self-assessment.

Indeed Virginia Woolf, a fascinated yet frequently reluctant reader of Mansfield reviewed the first edition of the Journal under the title, 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind'.³

Woolf clearly accepted Mansfield's creative critical position and reacted accordingly, producing a brief study which is highly suggestive and critically flexible. Coming from a historical recorder and uneasy contemporary of Mansfield, Woolf's criticism is indispensable for an initial approach to a reader of the Journal, the Letters and Reviews.

The interest generated by the diary, Woolf argued, was not located specifically in the 'quality of her writing or the degree of her fame, 'but rather by;

- 1 Elias Canetti, The Conscience of Words and Earwitness, translated by Joachim Neugroschel (Picador, London, 1987) p.39
- 2 Katherine Mansfield, Journal of Katherine Mansfield, edited by John Middleton Murry, fifth edition (Constable, London 1984)p.291
- 3 Virginia Woolf 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind' in Women and Writing introduced by Michele Barret (Women's Press, London 1979) p.184

the spectacle of a mind - a terribly sensitive mind receiving one after another the haphazard impressions of eight years of Life. Her diary was a mystical companion ... We feel that we are watching a mind that has so little thought of an audience that it will make use of a shorthand of its own now and then, or, as the mind in its loneliness tends to do, divide into two and talk to itself. Katherine Mansfield about Katherine Mansfield.⁴

This diagnosed condition of the mind divided into two and actually appearing to converse with itself, without any apparent audience, will be explored in the next chapter of the thesis specifically in relation to The Daughters of the Late Colonel.

However at this stage of the thesis I would simply like to compare Woolf's insight into Mansfield with a few alternatives. Twenty years later than Woolf, Canetti in his article "Dialogue with the Cruel Partner." propounded a similar critical response to the strange business of diary-writing.

In a diary one talks to oneself. The man who cannot do this, who sees an audience before him, even a later one, even after his own death, is a forger.⁵

According to Canetti's precepts therefore, Mansfield, or at least Woolf's Mansfield is anything but a forger. Mansfield is her own narrative voice and audience. Perhaps in a perverse way, that is why she wrote in the Journal, 'one thing I am determined upon, and that is to leave no sign.'⁶ For the 'self' who writes may ultimately absolve

4 Virginia Woolf, *A Terribly Sensitive Mind*, p.184-5

5 Elias Canetti, The Conscience of Words and Earwitness, p.44

6 Journal p.254

the self who is described, through a system of continual Linguistic self-effacement. Mansfield in the Journal may be progressively writing 'herself' out of the text and into some form of creative limbo or critical indifference. "This is the moment which, after all, we live for, - the moment of direct feeling when we are most ourselves and least personal⁷'. Disclosure may finally exercise the oppressive limitation of 'personality' especially when that personality is afflicted by illness, isolation and emotional disharmony. It is significant that Mansfield addressed her Journal in the following way; 'It is time I started a new Journal. Come my unseen, my unknown let us talk together.⁸'

Mansfield's 'unseen' and 'unknown' so emphatically claimed as her own, are synonymous for her secret self, articulated of necessity and psychological and creative need in the Journal. Writing in Mansfield's terms is a complex even mystical prowess; a form of creative revaluation and communion. The interest of the Journal then rests with the exciting refractions and reflections of Mansfield's creative preoccupations, desires and selfhood. These processes seem ironically to represent voyages to recovery (in a most expansive sense) as much as discovery.

I should like to have a secret code to put on 'record' what I feel today. If I forget it, may my right hand forget its cunning... But if I say more I'll give myself away. [Later] I

- 7 Journal p205
- 8 Journal p270
- 9 Journal p206-2

wrote this because there is a real danger of forgetting that kind of intensity, and it won't do.⁹

Language fixes the moment here. However resistant Mansfield may feel to disclosure, the threat of time itself, encourages discovery and recovery. Textual admission preserves the moment of revelation however obliquely. Mansfield's 'secret code' is Woolf's creative 'Shorthand'. The correspondence is clearly realised.

Mansfield's physical and intellectual isolation during her last five years of life left her with progressively restricted outlets for communication and conversation. Mansfield's reference to her 'unknown' and 'unseen' convey an understated but very real sense of pathos, even tragedy.

She goes for two years, is ill, and heaven knows when we shall meet again...¹⁰

I think I never gave her credit for all her physical suffering ...¹¹.

The reader of the Journal like Woolf, whilst being aware of Mansfield's progressive illness remains unburdened by endless medical reports or description. Mansfield preserves the literary indifference of her text. The courageous lack of self-pity recalls John Keats one of Mansfield's 'unseen' companions and fantasy friends. The Journal and the Letters, as I will show, represent the enforced, substitute relationship with life, a form

10 Virginia Woolf, Diary of Virginia Woolf Vol II 1920-1924 edited by Anne Olivier Bell, (Hogarth Press London 1978) 25 August 1920

11 Virginia Woolf, Diary Vol.II, Thursday 15 September 1923

of confession that was transmuted through vigorous creative 'indifference' into art and literature.

This discussion will focus upon four areas of interest exposed and expanded upon by the Mansfield: her sexuality; creative artistry, her literary relationship to Virginia Woolf; her fascination with discredited knowledge, mirrored and articulated in her friendship with D H Lawrence.

Naturally more areas cannot and should not remain exclusive. Their separation does however highlight and accentuate the recurring parallels.

'And here is the kernel of the matter
the Oscar-like thread.' 12

Claire Tomalin's recent biography of Mansfield¹³ uncovered the terrible secret of Mansfield's declining health. She had, in a liaison with the translator Floryan Sobieniowski, contracted the then incurable disease gonorrhoea, which rendered her infertile and accelerated her ill-health. Such an undescribable 'gift' would seem horrendous in itself, but this relationship also led to eventual blackmail over the Chekhov plagiarism scandal concerning the story, 'The Child who was tired.'

Tomalin's second revelation about Mansfield is linked in an indirect manner to the first. Mansfield's visit to Bavaria where she had encountered the ill-starred and charming Sobieniowski, had been dictated by the sudden dissolution of her precipitate and absurd marriage to George Bowden. Mansfield was heavily pregnant

12 Journal p.16

13 Claire Tomalin, Katherine Mansfield, A Secret Life, (Viking Penguin, London 1987) p.69-78

at the time of this marriage, a condition which obviously prompted this unlikely, love-less contract and liaison.

Significantly Bowden and Mansfield's mother, Mrs Beauchamp, insisted upon blaming the failure of the marriage on Mansfield's incipient lesbianism, specifically expressed as they saw it, in her unhealthy friendship with Ida Baker. This public denouncement of Mansfield's 'duality', namely her homosexuality prevented her from ever exposing this aspect of herself again. (Ida Baker was sent to the Canary Island to escape her 'unwise' friendship.) As we will see in her relationship with her fellow writer, Virginia Woolf, Mansfield conspicuously shrouded her bisexual tendencies throughout their friendship, a fact that Vita Sackville-West was to question, in her celebrated 'affair' with Woolf several years later.¹⁴

If Mansfield's bisexuality remained largely unexpressed in any overt physical sense during the remainder of her life, in her relation with Lawrence, she verbally and privately explores this hidden, obscured part of herself. Tomalin ascertains in this enlightening biography that Lawrence's interest in Mansfield's bisexuality, led to the scandal provoking chapter entitled 'Shame' in his novel The Rainbow.¹⁵ Tomalin parallels Mansfield's homosexual experiences with those of Ursula in the novel, citing Edith Bendall as the probable 'loose' model for Winifred Inger. I shall examine this possible parallel

14 Secret Life p.69

15 Secret Life p.37-8

later in this chapter.

Mansfield herself explored sexual ambivalence in several of her stories, including Leves Amores, Bains Tures, At the Bay, Bliss, Carnation and Jeneparle pas Francais. Her literary explorations and expositions had their parallels and antecedents within the Journal and occasionally in her letters. Contained within these explorations are brutally honest descriptions of physical love.

I am here almost dead with cold, almost dead with tiredness. I cannot sleep, because the end has come with such suddenness that even I who have anticipated it so long and so thoroughly am shocked and overwhelmed. Last night I spent in her arms - and taught I hate her - which being interpreted, means that I adore her; that I cannot lie in my bed and not feel the magic of her body; which means that sex seems nothing to me. I feel more powerfully all those so-called sexual impulses with her than I have with any man. She enthrones, enslaves me - and her personal self - her body absolute - is my worship. I feel that to lie with my head on her breast is to feel what life can hold ...¹⁶

Mansfield travelled pregnant and ostracised to Bavaria under the pseudonym "Mrs Bendall." The implications are apparent when Mansfield's diary entry concerning her physical relationship with 'EKB', Edith Bendall is studied. Mansfield was literally inhabiting the taboo, the 'unnatural' relationship that had caused her banishment in the first place; she flaunted convention by a form of 'perverse' naming:

In the passage the sense of echo is striking. Mansfield reflects and then reflects upon the reflection.

'Interpreted' is suggestive, a condensed verbal explanation for the unsayable, the unspeakable 'Love'. Mansfield is her own audience, her own addressed and addresser. Desire is admitted savagely and receives no idealising treatment. The enclosure of 'enthrones' and 'enslaves' signifies erotic possession minus the phallus. Mansfield's ultimate passivity in the passage resembles a death-like state, a satiated condition of knowledge and sexual satisfaction. Interestingly Mansfield has mastered Bendall's 'personal self,' underlining Mansfield's preoccupation with identity and recognition of the different selves that can be inhabited and lived.

The obvious ambivalence of Mansfield's feelings regarding her homosexuality are superbly rendered by the attribution of 'the end' with that of sexual intercourse. Desire is the absence of control, the absence of a judgemental, limiting self. Seduction is a necessity more than any immediate pleasure, yet Mansfield is capable of observation, of detachment even objectivity. Sex is sleeplessness, contradiction and relentless prose.

When Edna O'Brien's love scene in The High Road is compared it is easy to detect the forced eroticism of the latter as opposed to the almost reluctant, savage eroticism of Mansfield. Mansfield has observed her own scene. Writing is the embellishment. O'Brien tries to write desire into being via discordant 'original' expression.

She turned and wakened and there was a kind of quake in the heart of her surprised sigh as she realised where she was and who was next to her. Then I felt the thwack of her arms around me and the clasp of her hands, and I stretched out and cleaved to her, through her opening to life; arms, limbs

even the cheeks letting go of all their scream
and all their grumble and their thousand unspent
kisses...¹⁷

'Thwack' is meant to authenticise the scene. It detracts from the supposed sensuality of the encounter, jarring on the reader's consciousness, registering as being peculiarly over-written. This is not sex, it is idealised voyeurism. Language has replaced the body completely,

The woman who called Murry 'Betsy' and claimed Ida Baker for her 'wife' was capable of a gentler sensuality however. The fiction seems almost a latent expression of the Journal, perhaps because of its very public, designated audience. The ambiguity is still striking in any case.

She told me as we walked along the corridor to her room that she was glad the night had come. I did not ask why. I was glad too. It seemed a secret between us so I went with her into her room to undo those troublesome hooks ... The light filled the room with darkness. Like a sleepy child she slipped out of her frock and then suddenly, turned to me and flung her arms around my neck ...

And youth was not dead.¹⁸

'Night' in Mansfield and in Lawrence as I will indicate is a euphemism for a particular 'type' of sexual encounter, an encounter often riddled with guilt, doubt and secret, furtive pleasures. Mansfield's narrative in this extract is sensually certain where O'Brien's was not. Mansfield's erotic exposition is minimal, expectation precludes exposition. 'Somewhere between fear and sex, passion is' writes Jeanette Winterson in The Passion¹⁹ Mansfield in her Journal and fiction seems to have captured the raw vulnerability and erotic sensitivity that are both

¹⁷ Edna O'Brien, The High Road (Penguin, London, 1989) p.157

¹⁸ Secret Life p.260

¹⁹ Jeanette Winterson, The Passion (Penguin, London 1988) p.62

universal and particular. Such erotic sensitivity did not remain confined to overt or covert descriptions of seduction, sexuality in Mansfield is far more pervasive and engrossing than a single physical act of consummation.

In the yard the very fence became terrible. As I stared at the posts, they became hideous forms of Chinamen - most vivid and terrible. They leant idly against nothing, their legs crossed, their heads twitching ... I leaned further out and watched one figure. He bent and mimicked and wriggled - then his head rolled off under the house - it rolled round and round! A black ball - a cat perhaps - it leapt into space ... I drew close to her warm sweet body, happier than I had ever been, than I could ever have imagined being - the past once more buried, clinging to her, and wishing that this darkness might last forever₂₀

Creative energies abound in the Journal, searching almost for any outlet for expression. In Bulgakov's dazzling novel The Master and Margarita, such a passage would have represented some darkly surreal political satire; in Mansfield the satire is sexual and it is a terrifying reflection or displacement of Mansfield's own secret self. Sexual guilt, emotional isolation and discernible terror, are visited almost supernaturally on the external landscape. 'Darkness' as sexual desire becomes imaginatively yet realistically fixed; indeed 'night' offers both solace and protection from and for the sexual passion. Mansfield's fears inhabit the external world as grotesque parodies of their perpetrator. Ironically the only relief from this internal and external hostility is desire itself. Mansfield returns to her partner, ambiguously wishing that 'this darkness might last forever',

Darkness in Mansfield is therefore an expansive term, full of contradictory impulses and sensations. Mansfield cannot have her acceptable erotic darkness, without the censoring, disapproving darkness of the other world. As with the title and content of Djuna Barnes's novel Nightwood, darkness and night are inclusive metaphors for desire and its companions fear and repulsion.

Lawrence in his novel The Rainbow using an episode from Mansfield's past, most likely as Tomalin suggests, the Bendall relationship described above, interestingly renders his characters' lesbian experiences in a strikingly similar manner. Is it emulation one wonders or a creative agreement offering an easily located parallel?

'It will thunder,' said Ursula.
The electric suspense continued, the darkness stark, they were eclipsed. "I think I shall go and bathe," said Miss Inger, out of the cloud-black darkness.
'At night?' said Ursula.
'It is best at night. Will you come?' 21

Seduction has become the strange mingling of two voices, almost ironically at this point, disembodied. Lawrence's use of repetition is suggestive in the extreme. Desire has become the only unifying agent in a fragmentary, disconnected world. The estrangement felt by more voices entering the uncharted, dangerous consciousness and physical territories of the 'Love that dare not speak its name,' is visibly articulated here. This is not sexual celebration, it is a perilous necessity. Ambiguity is converted into seduction through the isolation of the characters, in the human and non-human worlds. Significantly

21 David Herbert Lawrence, The Rainbow, Twenty-second edition, (Penguin, London 1979) p.339

however the liaison is claustrophobically described from its beginning. The explicit parameters of their relationship, their reliance on 'night' for the articulation of their desire, predicts the affair's downfall and eventual failure. The tentative reluctance of Ursula in relation to Miss Inger is also reflected in Mansfield's Journal too,

Yet Mansfield did offer other readings of her sexuality. There is a triumphant quality to some of her writing that indicates that 'guilt' was not always the norm. As Winterson suggests passion can exist of itself as well as (in a sense) 'mutating' into love or sex.

Adonis was - dare I seek into the heart of me -
nothing but a pose. And now she comes - and
pillared against her, clinging to her hands, her
face against mine, I am a child, a woman, and
more than half man,²²

This flexible response to identity, this highly active articulation of desire remained with Mansfield throughout her life. If L.M. was the 'wife' then Murry was also the female lover to his wife's active, masculine persona.

Mansfield's capacity for impersonation, as I shall explore in the next chapter, ranged over both her literary and non-literary lives. Illness naturally reduced the possibilities for role-playing, specifically of course in relation to Murry, a fact which the latter found difficult to accept.

I had been the man and he had been the woman
and he had been called upon to make no real
efforts. He'd never really 'supported' me.
When we first met, in fact, it was I who
kept him, and afterwards we'd always acted

22 Journal p.13

(more or less) like men-friends. Then his illness - getting worse and worse, and turning me into a woman ...²³

and also;

I wish to God I were a man. Somehow I seem to have grown up, gone bald even, without ever becoming a man; and I find it terribly hard to master a situation. I keep on trying ...²⁴

The distortion of the Murry marriage, indeed of their relationship throughout Mansfield's life, came from the exchanged roles and progressive failure of both parties to accept their non-static, newly attained positions in the relationship. 'She was too brutal for life'²⁵ ascertained Brigid Brophy in her extraordinary article on Mansfield. This brutality can be seen in the aggressive honesty that shapes her Journal entries and the more controlled exorcism in her stories. Just as with her women lovers, Mansfield took the sexual initiative with Murry.

Murry was eminently a man who had to be chosen. It was she who proposed herself for his mistress (he at first resisted); she who chose to stick to him despite their incompatibility and his supineness in the whole affair .. With the terseness of literary genius, she summoned him up in two syllables when she nicknames him Betsy.²⁶

Just as with the female lovers, Mansfield was the and dictator of the relationship's course. Conspicuously her distaste for Murry (and indeed Francis Carco) focused upon Murry's passive, ineffectuality and lack of traditionally 'male' characteristics.

23 Journal p.183

24 The Letters of John Middleton Murry to Katherine Mansfield, Edited by C A Hankin, (Constable, London 1983) p.238

25 Brigid Brophy 'Katherine Mansfield's Self-Depiction,' Michigan Quarterly Review Volume V, (1966) p.89-93

26 Brophy p.91

If as Tomalin suggests, the character of Dick Harman in Jeneparle pas Francais is 'easily recognisable as Murry himself'²⁷ then Mansfield's brutality or honesty is apparent.

It was impossible not to notice Dick. He was the only Englishman present, and instead of circulating gracefully around the room as we all did, he stayed in one place leaning against the wall, his hands in his pockets, that dreamy half-smile on his lips.²⁸

'Mouse' in the story is deserted by her lover Harman, who flees his responsibilities to return to his draconian mother, and by Duquette who abandons the naive Marie en Paris out of a lethargic selfishness that remains largely unexplained, except in terms of possible perverse pleasures or indulgences.

Of course you know what to expect. You anticipate fully, what I am going to write. It wouldn't be me otherwise.

I never went near the place again.²⁹

Just as Woolf could so expertly ensnare and preserve Vita's often straying affections by writing a novel about the latter's fictional life in Orlando, Mansfield could expose her feelings of anger, rejection and frustration in her stories. Grieving isolation may of course have left her little else. Just as Woolf could continue loving 'Orlando' in fictional infinity, Murry ironically would continue abusing the hapless 'Mouse.' The non-static experience was captured permanently and irreversibly

27 Tomalin p.169

28 Katherine Mansfield, The Collected Short Stories, Second Edition (Penguin London 1982) p.70-71

29 Jeneparle pas Francais p.90-91

through Art. Revenge had become a stylistic device.

The Journal however attains some aspects of its 'Art' through the falsification, or 'forgery' (Canetti) that pronounced self-consciousness communicates. Mansfield's theatrical self 'O Oscar! am I peculiarly susceptible to sexual impulse?'³⁰ occasions some possibly voyeuristic writings and description.

When the bells were striking five the man came to see me. He gathered me upon his arms and carried me to the Black Bed. Very brown and strong was he ... It grew dark. I crouched against him like a wild cat. Quite impersonally I admired my silver stockings bound beneath the knee with spiked ribbons, my yellow suede shoes fringed with white fur. How vicious I looked! We made love to each other like two wild beasts ... I crushed against me - shook back my hair and laughed at the man. I felt mad with passion - I wanted to kill ... By and by he left me.³¹

The male actor in this episode appears incidental to the studied, self-conscious description of the female. The wry, ironic symbolism is contrived and unspontaneous. 'Quite impersonally' the theatrical nature of the narration is suggested this is a copyist's perspective. One eye is very much on the written exposition of the encounter, rather than the event itself. Darkness is once again a sustaining background for sexual experiences that are highly personal even personally unusual. The emphasis on the 'Black Bed' and the anonymity of the 'Man' despite his symbolic universality, stresses the ambiguity of sexuality in Mansfield. For, set alongside the 'great blind bed' in 'The Stranger' it is noticeable that it is the female who manipulates and inhabits the sexual description rather

30 Journal p.14

31 Journal p.45-46

than the male. Potency is located in the female rather than with her masculine companions or characters. The detailed interest Mansfield or the Mansfield 'persona' takes in her physical attractiveness and appearance is extended to other women too. Women are definitely present in Mansfield; men are at times little more than an idea or cipher, simply because that is all their women may acknowledge or allow them to be.³³

Lois has just been. She is so beautiful that I see no other beauty, and content myself with the sweet Lois. Her slim body in the grey frock - her hands cradling her vivid hair - she lay on the yellow pillows ...³⁴

Beauty overrides any prurient discomfiture; indeed 'Lois' is lyrically appreciated in this description which is almost a homage. There is nothing ashamed here. The narrator does not significantly even resort to self-consciousness for perspective. Contenting 'myself' is a term of artistic control or thrift. A writer with a tendency to extravagance in detail and description, Anais Nin offer an interesting parallel here. The reader notices a similar tone of appreciation as well as resistance to effusion, despite the hyperbole.

A startling white face, burning eyes, June Mansfield, Henry's wife.
As she came towards me from the darkness of my garden into the light of the doorway I saw for the first time the most beautiful human on earth.³⁵

33 The Voyage p.321-333

34 Journal p.47

35 Anais Nin, Henry and June Edited by Rupert Pole, Second Edition (W H Allen London 1988) p.14

The object of desires obliterates all others in the Nin as with Mansfield. Superlatives abound where the attraction is acknowledged. The pace and style enhance even emulate the adored object of desire. Nin's darkness again parallels Mansfield's night associations with homosexuality. Significantly June Mansfield will inhabit both the light and darkness of Nin's sexual self. The fact that Mansfield will 'content' herself with a detached, romantic admiration of Lois, prevents the introduction of any 'night' into the position. Like Nin, the woman can be appreciated and admired in the light. Such admiration breaks no social conventions or boundaries, developed sexual thoughts and interest would introduce darkness and corresponding conflict in the pleasure. The doorway in Nin's description is a metaphor for the parameters of sexual behaviour; in later life, Mansfield preferred to remain admiring in the light, as she does with Lois here.

Then the advent of Bella - her charm in the
dusk - the very dusk incarnate - Her strange
dress - her plaited hair and shy swaying
figure ...³⁶

A very lovely young woman - married and curious -
blonde - passionate ...³⁷

Dusk in Mansfield is ambivalence itself. Mansfield's early aestheticism so readily located in Wilde, had become her aim. Indeed the description of Bella recalls Tolstoy in The Cossacks. Fascination and writerly indifference had distilled her early aestheticism into a well achieved

36 Katherine Mansfield, The Urewera Notebook Edited by Ian a Gordon, (Oxford University Press London 1978) p.51

37 The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield Edited by Vincent O'Sullivan with Margaret Scott, (Clarendon Press Oxford 1987) 22 March 1915, p.164

style. Mansfield's short description of a Parisian encounter with a beautiful young woman contains the italicised adjective 'curious', which is at once circum-spect and telling. Mansfield is perhaps taunting Murry with her 'conquest'. The preoccupation with the hyphenated phrase is significant in both examples. Mansfield is exploring an attitude or position that is defiantly confined to the margins of society; her interest in both women is accumulative and layered, Memory re-enacts the initial fascination; the hyphens are carefully wrought forms of silences.

Murry's reply to Mansfield's letter is naive yet unconsciously knowing. Perhaps his discretion was the best form of self-preservation he knew.

I know too that what really upsets you in her now is the completeness of something which was perhaps only a little bit - in you, that used to terrify me and almost killed me dead - I mean the Cabaret bit ... (You is a type - the wonderful type from Aspasia to B.B. (Beatrice Hastings) - Colette Vagabonde and you above all the moderns.) Naturally the tendency is to be extravagant and outrageous, retaliating against the hostility that puts up right and wrong against you. ...³⁸

Murry expresses admiration and fear for that mysteriously unexpressed 'something' that existed in Hastings, Colette and Mansfield herself. Bisexuality as being the 'Cabaret bit' renders such behaviour safe, because its correspondence is defined and therefore defused. Language detonates subversive sexuality.

38 Letters of J M Murry, 25 March 1915, p.53-54

Mansfield may have taunted Murry with her alternative experiences, but the security and moral 'status' of her marriage provided the necessary haven from her pursuit of unlicensed and disruptive pleasures.³⁹ Perhaps the defined parameters of her existence made the enjoyment of her homosexual self more exciting. Vita Sackville-West despite her more obvious sexual ambivalence, remained married to Harold Nicholson, even when tempted beyond measure. Firtation remained the tantalizing play-ground of pleasure. Anything more than flirtation represented danger and pronounced insecurity.

I don't want to fall in love with you all over again, or to become involved with you in a way that would complicate my life as I have now arranged it ... You and I can't be together. I go down country lanes and meet a notice saying 'beware - unexploded bomb.' So I have to go round another way.

You are the unexploded bomb to me. I don't want you to explode. I don't want to disrupt my life ...⁴⁰

Winterson in The Passion expresses a similar feeling;

One more night. How tempting. How innocent ...
If I give in to this passion, my real life, the most solid, the best known, will disappear and I will feed on shadows again like more sad spirits whom Orpheus fled.⁴¹

Canetti's description of the diary as a place where one can 'calm down'⁴² finds direct exposition in Sackville-West and indirect expression in Winterson's fiction. Exhortation in both is a means of control, self-control specifically. Emotional explosions have to be diffused or detonated in order to live a chosen, designated, orderly life. Passion is as much a creative force as

39 Secret Life p.136

40 Victoria Glendinning, Vita, The Life of Vita Sackville-West Sixth Edition, (Penguin London 1986)

41 The Passion p.146

42 Canetti p.39

writing itself; it is a darkness, a chaos of conflict that may engulf or deter the 'known' entirely. Just as Mansfield would produce her stories Vita would look to her novel Challenge and to Woolf's Orlando for the artistic rendition and testimony to the darker, unsayable self. Modern writers in general since Conrad, seem to be exploring or seeking to acknowledge their own personal and at times universal Heart of Darkness. What such darkness may consist of is a matter of course of persistent negotiation.

Henry Miller in a letter to Lawrence Durrell offered the latter some advice on the creative prowess, the 'labour' of fictional production to use Mansfield's term.

If as you say you can't write real books all the time, then don't write. Don't write anything, I mean. Lie fallow. Hold it in. Let it accumulate. Let is explode inside you.⁴³

The underlining is my own. Accretion or accumulation is one of Mansfield's creative methods and styles.

Areas of darkness or vulnerability can be exorcised through gradual tempered distillation into articulation and 'safe' expression. Denial or withdrawal serves to intensify the artistic perspective and attitude. The 'explosions' in Mansfield's Journal testify to both her absorption in the world another ability to stand outside, the observer and the observed. As Mansfield became, or was reinforced as an exile through ill-health, her talent for observation became strengthened and polished. Artistic explosions became the main staff of her life rather than the other way round. Sickness deprived Mansfield of her

43 The Durrell-Miller Letters 1935-80 Edited by Ian S MacNiven, (Faber and Faber 1988) p.85

ability to choose. Perhaps this is what makes her late fiction so final, sparse and absolute.

The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket. But such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened ...

What was it? It was ... He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember.⁴⁴

The emptiness of the boss in emotional and spiritual terms is terminal. There is no room for manoeuvre. The imaginative explosion is singular and the fiction is the grey residue.

Early Mansfield, however, had great creative 'gaps' or possibilities for exploration, even within her 'dark' diary entries. In July 1909, Mansfield enamoured with Maata Matiupuku, asked whether others felt like her, 'so absolutely powerfully licentious, so almost physically ill?'⁴⁵ She continued with the Mansfield suggestive already present:

I alone in this silent clockfilled room have become powerfully - I want her as I have had her - terribly. This is unclean I know but true. What an extraordinary thing - I feel strangely crude - and almost powerfully enamoured of the child.⁴⁶

Tension is magnified by the claustrophobia of the 'clockfilled room.' Desire is magnified by the external lack of reciprocation. Sex is an explosion, energetic possession as reflected in the particularly male vocabulary used to describe sexual intercourse. Writing is revealed as the process of self-revelation and self-

44 The Fly p.418

45 Antony Alpers, The Life of Katherine Mansfield, Third Edition, (Constable London 1983) p.49

46 Alpers p.49

disclosure. Guilt is secondary to the sheer force of desire.

But desire also has its obverse side, namely repulsion. Years later Mansfield's vehemence regarding her sexual consciousness was applied to her 'virgin-wife' Ida Baker.

What I feel is: She is never for one fraction of a second unconscious. If I sigh, I know that her head lifts ... There is something profound and terrible in this eternal desire to establish contact.⁴⁷

The physical disgust magnified by the claustrophobia is apparent. Mansfield is repulsed by that which she has lived and known. Even something as ordinary and everyday as eating can be provoking and disturbing.

L.M. is also exceedingly fond of bananas. But she eats them so slowly, so terribly slowly. And they know it - somehow; they realise what is in store for them when she reaches out her hand ...⁴⁸

Mansfield's description offers another facet to repulsion. Mansfield observes, satirically and without sentiment, the decay of a relationship through parasitic detail and disbelief. The pause between conquest and dismissal whether sexual or platonic may be lengthy or brief: the actual event we may reluctantly admit, Mansfield captured perfectly in her Journal.

Lawrence in the Rainbow depicted Winifred Inger's rejection in similar terms; once again there is a correspondence of view and tone, notably realised in

47 Journal p.215-16

48 Journal p.270

the resonant vocabulary of the following description.

She still adhered to Winifred Inger. But a sort of nausea was coming over her ... A heavy clogged sense of deadness began to gather upon her, from the other woman's contact ...⁴⁹

I kissed her. Her flesh felt cold, pale, soft. I thought of nuns who have prayed all night in cold churches... She was chill, severe, pale ...⁵⁰

Physical withdrawal, the ending of an affair, realistically find linguistic expression in stale, static vocabulary. Lack of phallic consummation becomes the obvious target for such romantic exclusions. Sterility is the excuse both Lawrence and Mansfield use to explain the failure of love. The terms by which Mansfield had rejected EKB in the *Journal* are the same as those she used to repulse Ida Baker. Lawrence had obviously listened to Mansfield with great care. His interest was hers.

Ironically of course, despite her 'active' role in their relationship and marriage, the unproductive contact of Mansfield's homosexual experiences was mirrored in her heterosexual liaisons. Mansfield was to die childless, finally rejecting sexual experience altogether. The darkness and the final deadness of Mansfield's secret sexuality affected others beside herself and her friend Lawrence.

In Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, published in 1925, three years after Mansfield's death, the two central characters Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway, both experience uncertainty and sublimated guilt about their wavering sexuality. Such a theme was cathartic for Woolf, in

49 *The Rainbow* p.343-344

50 *Journal* p.220

that her affair with Vita began after the publication of Mrs Dalloway. (December 17 1925 at Longbarn according to Bell). The affair also began after the death of Mansfield and Woolf's subsequent resolutions about the friend and rival. Mansfield's attraction for Woolf, aside from her intellect and love of writing was surely her range of experiences. diverse and erratically colourful, which the more conservative Woolf could not and would not experience first hand. Mrs Dalloway being Woolf's first published novel after Mansfield's death thus exhibits the results of the relationship. Indeed Maurois suggested in POINTS OF VIEW: From Kipling to Green that Mrs Dalloway is perhaps the only novel which KM might possibly have written,⁵¹ Woolf, like Mansfield and Lawrence, was an acknowledged and talented copyist.

Look on it, if you like, as copy - as I believe you look upon everything, human relationships included. Oh yes, you like people through the brain better than through the heart forgive me if I'm wrong...⁵²

Vita was not mistaken or 'wrong' at least with Woolf's predilection for 'copy' as Woolf's letter to a previous 'love' Violet Dickinson testifies.

It was very noble of you to buy two copies of Katherine Mansfield's book. I hope you'll like it and I think you will. She is a woman from New Zealand, with a passion for writing, and she's had every sort of experience wandering about with travelling circuses over the moors of Scotland...⁵³

Woolf's relationship with Mansfield I shall develop later, but for the moment it is important just to register the interest and susceptibilities that Woolf may have

⁵¹ Andre Maurois, Points of View, Forward by Walter Allen(London) 1969, p.339

⁵² Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf, edited by Louise De Salvo and Mitchell Leaska (William Marrow, New York 1985) p.51

⁵³ The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Vol.II 1912-22, edited by Nigel Nicholson (Hogarth Press, London 1976) 10 June 1918

extracted from Mansfield's recitals and experiences.

'Star-gazing?' said Peter.
It was like running one's face against a
granite wall in the darkness! It was
shocking; it was horrible!⁵⁴

The Bourton summer has been transformed in markedly violent terms. Clarissa's most 'exquisite moment' in the Company of Sally Seton has become as tormented and physically self-destructive as Heathcliff's despair after Cathy's death. 'Darkness' is uncivilised, uncultivated passion, the nihilistic frustration of sexual desire.

My mind is a very complicated, capable instrument.
But the interior is dark. It can work in the dark
and throw off all kinds of things...⁵⁵

The external world in Woolf, encapsulated in the confident, complacent sexuality of Peter, is prepared to destroy the transitory beauty of Clarissa's desire for Sally Seton by refusing arrogantly even to acknowledge or discuss the homosexual alternative. Only later in Mrs Dalloway, through a nostalgia that borders on the erotic, will Clarissa be able to acknowledge her darkness in the manner of Mansfield. Ultimately Clarissa's recognition of the 'night' fears, allows her correspondence with Septimus Smith to be acknowledged and even articulated. Darkness permits epiphany - however delayed, symbolising the aggressively redundant passion that may be subjugated to the external status quo.

Septimus Smith receives a similar gift of rejection from society. In Smith's case, this rejection has become

54 Virginia Woolf, Mrs Dalloway, Eleventh Edition, (Collins Grafton, London 1986) p.33

55 Katherine Mansfield, The Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield, Edited by C K Stead, Second Edition (Penguin London 1978) p.261

internalised as a progressively estranging, alienating guilt. Madness in Woolf is another form of darkness, sexual, emotional even practical.

No crime; love; he repeated, fumbling for his card and pencil, when a Sky Terrier snuffled his trousers and he started in an agony of fears. It was turning into a man! He could not watch it happen! It was horrible, terrible to see a dog become a man! At once the dog trotted away,⁵⁶

Septimus's horror is Mansfield's terror when she stares out of the window and sees the fence turn into hideous Chinamen. Naming the unspeakable desire, the never to be articulated affection remains beyond Septimus. He converts himself and the object of his desire, Evans, into a pair of 'innocent' animals. Yet his imagination and passion refuse to be compromised or inhibited by such control. He must become what he is irrevocably; a man. The distortion is clear and convincingly exhibited by Woolf. These mad-scenes were, as she states in her Diary, achieved only 'by clinging as tight to fact as I can'.⁵⁷ Woolf was writing from experience, an experience that also contained the enigmatic Mansfield, a figure who would haunt Woolf right up until her death.⁵⁸

Could the aptly named Kilman have been created without Lawrence's Chapter 'Shame' or Mansfield's Journal entries?

Elizabeth rather wondered whether Miss Kilman could be hungry. it was her way of eating, eating without intensity, then looking, again and again, at a plate of sugared cakes on the table next to them ... She must not let parties absorb her, Miss Kilman said, fingering the last two inches of chocolate éclair... It was too much; she could not stand it. The thick fingers curled inwards...⁵⁹

56 Mrs Dalloway, p.61

57 Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, Edited by Leonard, Fourth Edition (TVI Granada, London 1981) p.65

58 Secret Life, p.205

59 Mrs Dalloway p.116-7

Kilman is not too far from Ida Baker or Winifred Inger here. Desire has become repulsion, redirected by the narrator, into the desperate process of eating a chocolate eclair. Woolf could not present or even idealise the Sally Seton relationship without shouting its antithesis; lesbianism is not an idyll in Woolf, it is yet another 'moment of being', susceptible and vulnerable to change like any other. Mansfield and Woolf seem to hold parallel views here. What Woolf and Mansfield shared critically is finally a matter for subtle conjecture, but that they shared something is technically indisputable.

And I was jealous of her writing - the only writing I have every been jealous of ...
Yet I have the feeling that I shall think of her at intervals all through life ...⁶⁰

Mansfield was perhaps the original whom Vita could only emulate and follow in Woolf's affection and literary admiration.

Would you not like to try all sorts of lives - one is so very small - but that is the satisfaction of writing - one can impersonate so many people.⁶¹

'What fun we will have in Gower Street. She will play all the games I love best. Pretending to be other people and dressing up and parties.
Carrington Sept 8 1916' ⁶²

Mansfield's Journal and letters are littered with Mansfield pseudonymns, 'spare personalities' as Brophy suggests, Kass, KM, Katerina, Kissienka, Katherine Beauchamp all offer aspects of the fluctuating 'Mansfield' self.

60 The Diary of Virginia Woolf Vol.II 1920-24, Edited by Anne Oliver Bell, (Itogarth Press,London 1978) Tuesday 6 March 1923

61 The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield, Vol.I 1902-17 Edited by Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, Second Edition (OUP, Oxford 1984) p.18

62 Carrington: Letters and Extracts, introduced by David Garnett, Second Edition (Jonathan Cape, London 1970) September 8 1916

This urge for creating impersonation even literary trans-vesticism links directly with her theatricality, and dissatisfaction with the fixed existence. Her ambiguous sexuality, enjoyed, disregarded and reinvestigated perhaps found most expression in her refusal to conform in other areas of her life. Her free personalities, in emulation of Wilde and importantly Colette.⁶³

It's very quiet. I've re-read L'Entrave. I suppose Colette is the only woman in France who does just this. I don't care a fig at present for anyone I know but her. But the book to be written is still unwritten.⁶⁴

Colette obviously engaged Mansfield's critical and creative empathy. The unconventionality and sexual license of Colette may have provided Mansfield with an importantly female role-model in more ways than one. The 'unwritten' book remained unwritten by Mansfield; she abandoned her proposed novel Maata and remained dissatisfied with her artistic achievements, which is probably why she achieved so much with time being limited and at a physical premium.

I am tired of my little stories.
Like birds bred in cages.⁶⁵

What the 'unwritten' material may have contained is impossible to predict, but Mansfield obviously intended something new, perhaps in content as well as style. Perhaps she was going to investigate one of the unseen areas of her experience and personality. The dislocation of Mansfield's sexuality, through guilt, fear, necessity and physical debility, seems echoed in her feverish restlessness

63 Letters of Katherine Mansfield to John Middleton Murry 1913-22
Edited by John Middleton Murry, (Constable London 1951) p.65

64 Journal p.62

65 Letters and Journals p.285

so vividly articulated in the Journal. She had no 'alternative' to Murry as she had no future life or sexual energy to offer any one else.

Impressions become progressive substitutions for all aspects of life. Perspective is the last recourse of the isolated individual; a critical imperative rather than creative selection.

I associate, rightly or wrongly, my marriage with the death of my father in time. That other links exist, on other levels, between these two affairs is not impossible. I have enough trouble as it is in trying to say what I think I know...⁶⁶

Beckett, like Mansfield, is communing with his 'other' self, through the syntactical precariousness of narrative. Woolf's earlier critical evaluation of the Journal being a type of 'shorthand' is reinforced by Beckett in his story and Mansfield in the following example

... I've touched bottom. Even my heart doesn't beat any longer ... Now the dark is coming back again; only at the windows there is a white glare...⁶⁷

As in Beckett, Mansfield seeks internal direction and validation through the construction and parameters of the external world and events. 'Links' are prerequisites of the social, integrated personality. Both writers attempt to resist the all-encompassing estrangement from reality that illness has encouraged by offering a challenging linguistic perspective upon their predicament. Beckett and Mansfield are alternately spectator and spectacle in order to survive imaginatively and mentally.

66 Samuel Beckett 'First Love', A Beckett Reader, edited by J Calder, (Picador, London 1983) p.86

67 Journal p.90

The spare personalities of Mansfield that were also echoed in the similarly sexually ambiguous H.D., Djuna Barnes and Marina Tsvetaeva, were finally abandoned as abstract, intellectual excursions. Her early behaviour could never be revisited or re-explored. The 'lives' she hankered after became confined to static masks, rather than being part of some active role-play. As the milieu became confined, so Mansfield's experimentation became focused on obtaining the single truth from a situation or event. Mansfield decided to be herself and only that.

Were we positive, eager, real, alive? No we were not. We were a nothingness shot with gleams of what might be. But no more. Well, I have to face everything as far as I can and see where I stand - what remains.⁶⁸

Being 'only' Mansfield was a considerable task. Deprived of company and relationships, fantasy would have been a natural reaction. Instead she opts for self-revelation through confrontation; she looks upon her residual self and that alone. The honesty is savage even unsettling. Being 'Mansfield' alone, the chronically ill woman as well as the lover and daring artist proved disquieting and difficult to Murry. Murry not unusually and certainly not for the first or last time, found such a relationship beyond him. Mansfield's name was finally unrecognizable to him except in his own terms. If Mansfield had made 'Murry' a fiction, the delusion was reciprocated.⁶⁹

68 Journal and Letters p.277

69 Journal p.295

There are many forms of love and affection, some people can spend their whole lives together without knowing each other's names. Naming is a difficult and time consuming process, it concerns essences and it means power. But on the wild nights who can call you home? Only the one who knows your name.⁷⁰

The reader's progress through the Journal reaches towards the fulfilment of Woolf's axion, that Mansfield in her Journal was talking completely and utterly to herself of herself: 'Katherine Mansfield about Katherine Mansfield,' Mansfield has produced a map of a mind, a mind in search of a name, a character in Pirandellian terms, 'in search of an author'. When Mansfield is most a writer, perhaps she is most herself. Writing may define or even bring into being the elusive self or identity. Digression through story is just one of the possible self-revelating styles.

Let me remember when I write about that fiddle how it runs ups lightly and swings down sorrowful; how it searches, ... The thin dog, so thin that his body is like a 'cage on four wooden pegs,' runs down the street. In some sense, she feels the thin dog is the street. In all this we seem to be in the midst of unfinished stories here is a beginning; her an end. They only need a loop of words thrown round them to be complete ...⁷¹

Woolf on Mansfield is as enlightening as Mansfield about Woolf. The Journal centred as it was through the editorship of Murry,⁷² operates as some creative map for Mansfield. Mansfield practises her art freely and expressively through this relatively unrestrictive medium. The 'sharpness and relaiity' which Woolf identified in Mansfield to Vita, provide the reader of the Journal with a constantly vital stream of perceptions, each encouraging

70 Jeanette Winterson, Oranges are not the Only Fruit, Second Edition (Pandora, London 1985)

71 Virginia Woolf "A Terribly Sensitive Mind" p.185

72 Ian A Gordon, 'The Editing of Katherine Mansfield's Journal and Scrapbook, Landfall 1951 March p.62-9

a slightly askew (in a creative sense) shade of meaning, each offering some 'unfinished' story or glimpse.

The last day in September - immensely cold, a kind of solid cold outside the windows. My fire has played traitor nearly all day, and I have been, in the good old fashioned way, feeling my skin curl,⁷³

The search for the 'bon mot' is closely aligned to that of the poet. The short-story writer has to extract the exact essence of a situation in order to convey concisely the observation itself. Translation from feeling and thought to expression has to be instinctive and pure.

You give to words their first sense, and to things their first words, eg when you say 'magnificent' you say wreaking great things; as it was meant to mean originally (now 'magnificent' is no more than a hollow exclamation mark of sorts).⁷⁴

The mind in the Journal is reassessing the language by which it assimilates and reconstructs the world; a kind of linguistic absolutism. In the Journal the artistic playing is apparent; Mansfield watches formulates and suggests. A stroke here, a resolution made, questions are asked.

I walk along the broad, almost deserted street. It has a meaningless, forsaken, careless look - like a woman who has ceased to believe in her beauty...⁷⁵

The search for the new phrase, the fresh simile or metaphor, establishes Mansfield within the Modernist canon. The restless dissatisfaction with established literary precepts, impels her to create anew. Mansfield's curiosity and detachment as artistic and social outsider is of course

73 Journal p.142

74 Letters Summers 1926: Pasternak, Tsvetayeva Rilke, (Jonathan Cape, London 1986) p.61

75 Journal p.4

a recurring sensibility in all forms of artistic self-expression.

... Even as a boy I often looked up with infinite sympathy, and even with respect, into a half-faded woman's face, on which was written as it were; 'Life in its reality has left its mark here...'76

Empathy suspends reductive judgement. Creation occurs before the social external confrontation with morality and civilised conformity. Interpretations may only be suggested not forced. This distillation of consciousness was strikingly described by Kafka, an artist similarly isolated like Mansfield, by illness, thwarted love affairs and temperament.

When I arbitrarily write a single sentence, for instance, 'He looked out of the window,' it already has perfection....77

Naturally Kafka's 'arbitrarily' is profoundly paradoxical! Is he perhaps discovering or recovering that which is already written? The notion of 'perfection' being the result of writing out what was already there and completed within seems to exhibit a Mozartian temperament rather than that of a Beethoven. Mansfield in her Journal and letters, suggests that she produced her stories in several artistic ways.

Wrote the Dove's Nest this afternoon. I was in no mood to write; it seemed impossible. Yet when I had finished three pages, they were 'all right! This is a proof (never to be too often proved) that once one has thought out a story nothing remains but the labour,78

The story appears 'complete' as it were as some kind of automatic handwriting almost. Certainly the Journal

76 The Letters of Vincent Van Gogh, edited by Mark Roskill, Tenth Edition (Collins, London 1983) p.141

77 Franz Kafka The Diaries 1910-23 (Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd London 1976) 19 February 1911. p.611

78 Journal p.279

supports her claim. There are fragments scattered amongst the entries that clearly contained the nucleus of a story. As Woolf stated in her article, all that was required in some instances was 'a loop of words thrown round them to be complete'

'The little lamp. I seen it.'
And then they were both silent,⁷⁹

On - these nights - sitting up in bed, waiting for the black trees to turn into green trees. And yet, when dawn does come, it is always so beautiful and terrible... And then, as the hours strike through the night I wander through cities - in fancy - slip along unfamiliar streets invisible ... One's own life - one's own secret private life ... Nobody has the remotest idea who you are even.⁸⁰

The Doll's House and a Married Man's Story manifest themselves visibly here. The tone is one of confidence and certainty. The stories are creatively finished and known. They are the articulated private worlds of Mansfield's internal linguistic experience. Mansfield has seen and felt all that she requires to give her jottings the finality and purity of Art. Purity of expression perhaps signified to Mansfield purity of soul, at any rate her 'false starts' occurred when her perception was incomplete or ill-defined in an artistic sense.

I finished Mr and Mrs Dove yesterday. I am not altogether pleased with it. It's a little bit made up. It's not inevitable ... I want to be nearer - far, far nearer than that ...⁸¹

Curiously one particular 'problem' led to one of her most accomplished stories, At the Bay. It also mirrored Woolf's own question, sketched in her diary too.

80 Collected Letters Vol.II 12 June 1919 to Ottoline Morrell
81 Letters and Journals p.225

... And yet one has there 'glimpses'.
 ... The waves, as I drove home this afternoon,
 and the lush foam, how it was suspended in the
 air before it fell, ... What is it that happens
 in that moment of suspension? It is timeless.
 in that moment (what do I mean?) the whole of
 life is contained ...82

One sees a fin passing far out. What image can
 I reach to convey what I mean? Really there is
 none I think ...83

Expression is a wrestling after truth.

Both Mansfield and Woolf were aware of the intangibility and power of 'moments' externally and internally retrieved; in both these extracts the writer remains uncertain and questioning as to the actual meaning and articulation of the initial thought. There is a literal creative suspension. The metaphysical concert lacks its exposition.

The finale to To the Lighthouse where Lily Briscoe finally expresses, albeit obliquely, the elusive meaning of her experience, seems a satisfying 'explanation' or reaction to the dilemma.

She looked at the steps; they were empty. She looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision,84

An artistic and personal absence has been made momentarily acute, transmitted into a creative arrival. "I have had my vision." Mansfield of Woolf share a corresponding consciousness here. 'The whole of life

82 Journal p.202-203

83 Writer's Diary, Thursday September 30 1926

84 Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse, Fifth Edition (Granada, (Granada, London 1980) p.191-192

is contained.' Triumph and completion. Art is not imitating life. Life has become Art. To paraphrase Balzac, reality has taken great pains to imitate fiction.

Mansfield reconciled this problem in her Journal in a critical as well as a literary sense when she wrote;

Art is not an attempt of the artist to reconcile existence with his vision; it is an attempt to create his own world in this world. That which suggests the subject to the artist is the unlikeness to what we accept as reality. We single out - we bring into the light - we put up higher,^{84b}

Mansfield's axiom appears close to the gap that the surrealist painter Magritte noticed between words and seeing in the painting "The Key of Dreams."⁸⁵

Like Woolf Mansfield is very concerned with the failure of her writing to reproduce her intention, her artistic aim. None was a more astute critic of the Mansfield 'failings' than the author herself.

[Of Mr and Mrs Dove]

I am not altogether pleased with it I mean to imply that these two may not be happy together... I want to be nearer - far - far nearer than that...

Device was no substitute Mansfield felt for successful, certain writing. Mr and Mrs Dove is a story that exhibits contrivance rather than literary, creative instinct. Too much is given, little is suggested or implied.

To and fro, to and fro, over the fine red sand on the floor of the dove house, walked the two doves. One was always in front of the other. ...'You see,' explained Anne, 'the one in front she's Mrs Dove' and gives that little laugh and runs forward, and he follows her, bowing'⁸⁶

84b Journal, p.273

85 John Berger, Ways of Seeing Seventeenth Edition (Penguin, London 1982) p.7-10

86 Mr and Mrs Dove p.291

The fiction is self-consciously achieved here. Mansfield was being only Mansfield and no more. It is an intellectual rather than instructive construction, and Mansfield was definitely the latter type of writer.

I don't think I am a good writer; I realise my faults better than anyone else could realise them. I know exactly where I fail... I look at the mountains, I try to pray and think of something clever.⁸⁷

The 'sediment' that taints some of her stories could only be eradicated by writing truthfully within the creative 'explosion' itself. When Mansfield 'overwrote' her stories, then comparative failures, like 'Mr and Mrs Dove' and 'The Ideal Family' were the result.

I didn't get the deepest truth out of the idea, even once. What is this feeling? I feel again that this kind of knowledge is too easy for me; it's even a kind of trickery. I know so much more. This looks and smells like a story, but I wouldn't buy it ...⁸⁸

The balancing act that Mansfield acknowledged in Chekhov, the 'larger breath'⁸⁹ that could be attained through artistic selectivity and certainty, remained absent in Mansfield's false fictions. Woolf was aware of this problem in her own writing as well.

One must write from deep feeling, said Dostoersky. And do I? Or do I fabricate with words, loving them as I do?⁹⁰

Fabricating with words is Mansfield's easy knowledge. There is no artistic convulsion. Significantly this diary entry was precipitated by Woolf reading Mansfield's

87 Journal p.269

88 Journal p.257

89 Journal p.168

90 Writer's Diary Tuesday June 19 1923

self-criticism on the 'Dove's Nest'. Once again, the reader of the Journal and the Writer's Diary senses an underlying correspondence of feeling and thought.

Woolf's reaction to James's Wings of the Dove, 'never do the thing and it will all the more impressive,'⁹¹ indicates the recognition of an artistic cul-de-sac a form of creative over-representation. Sometimes it was possible to carry out a salvage operation as Woolf did with 'tinselly' Clarissa Dalloway. 'Then I invented her memories. But I think some distaste for her persisted.'⁹²

At others the final product remained vulnerable to attack; Mansfield's stories in particular suffered this fate.

I threw down 'Bliss' with the exclamation, 'She's done for!' Indeed I don't see how much faith in her as a woman writer can survive that sort of story ... For Bliss is long enough to give her a chance of going deeper. Indeed she is content with superficial smartness.⁹³

Again the accusation of 'smartness' again the charge of superficiality. Woolf recognises it clearly because she was susceptible to this charge herself.

The form that Mansfield chose to employ to express her artistry perhaps revealing here (and in the Journal entries) that like poetry, the short-story is unforgiving and uncompromising. Unlike the novel there can be no rescues or second chances. Mansfield's illness and sense of mortality must have encouraged such 'smartness'. Ironically in her haste to leave some work visibly behind her.

91 Writer's Diary Monday September 12 1921

92 Writer's Diary Tuesday June 18 1925

93 Writer's Diary August 7, 1918 p.7

Imagination needs time and leisure. Feeling requires consolidation and artistic space.

Thought is a flash of lightening, feeling is a ray from the most distant of stars. Feeling requires leisure; it cannot survive under fear.⁹⁴

The climatically ill Mansfield, could not always enjoy that which was artistically required; leisure. The Journal frequently presents a tension between the creative intention and the eventual outcome. Being patient when time was anything but abundant required pronounced self-discipline.

The truth is one can get only so much into a story: there is always a sacrifice ... It's always a kind of race to get in as much as one can before it disappears.

But time is not really in it. Yet wait. I do not understand even now. I am pursued by time myself. The only occasion when I ever felt at leisure was while writing the Daughters of the Late Colonel. And then at the end I was so terribly unhappy that I wrote as fast as possible for fear of dying before the story was sent,⁹⁵

'Everything has its shadow' wrote Mansfield in 1920. In many ways this shadow was nothing less than 'time's winged Chariot' itself. Creative abstinence in the face of such a deadly pursuit required supreme artistic confidence and surety. When Mansfield was guilty of falsity in her writing, the falsity of self described in her Journal. If writing had become a substitute for living, it had also become a sometimes uneasy mirror-reflection

Another proof of my divided nature.
All is dis-united. Half boos, half cheers.⁹⁶

94 Tillie Olsen, Silences (Virago, London 1980) p.145

95 Journal p.287

96 Journal p.293

to see Mansfield's difficulty as being the necessary imaginative, fallow period, even as the 'shadow' itself before being exploded through the consciousness into accumulated, concentrated detail. Waiting, or artistic limbo could be construed as a form of necessary meditation.

It is the experience and the meagre work of every day which alone ripens in the long run and allows one to do things that are more complete and more true. Thus slow long work is the only way, and all ambition and resolve to make a good thing of it false...⁹⁹

A creative performance has to be perhaps a distillation of other 'false' performances. Getting it wrong is inseparable from getting it right; artistic failure and success are companions not enemies.

One method of writing 'successful' stories in Mansfield's opus was the supposed reworking of a series of early memories. The 'New Zealand Stories' are in this sense memory-scapes, creative reconstructions of the past, a past perceived with what Woolf called 'a burning glass.'

For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, When the film on the camera reaches on the eye...¹⁰⁰

Also it was partly what my mother's death unveiled and intensified; made me suddenly develop perceptions as if a burning glass had been laid over what was shaded...¹⁰¹

Woolf's ideas obviously found artistic expression in her novels, for example through the 'travelling'¹⁰² that generated the characters' experiences in Mrs Dalloway. Mansfield applied a similar process actively in Prelude,

- 99 The Letters of Vincent Van Gogh Edited by Mark Roskill, Tenth Edition, (Collins, London 1983) p.330
 100 Virginia Woolf 'A Sketch of the Past' Moments of Being, Third Edition (TRAD/Granada, London, 1982) p.114
 101 Woolf 'A Sketch of the Past' p.108

At the Bay, and The Garden Party too. The artistic desire voiced through the painful perspective of grief serves to frame all her successful fictions.

Now, really what is it that I do want to write?...
Is the need to write less urgent? ... Only the
form that I would choose has changed utterly ...
The plots of my stories leave me perfectly cold...

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 both 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 review them in writing. 103

Chummie's death, like Woolf's mother's death, served to intensify and refine Mansfield's creative perspective. The fusion of thought and feeling, without reductive sentiment or nostalgia in the New Zealand Stories produced a layering of fictional representation, an imaginative re-editing of the past. Cleverness is avoided; Mansfield like Winterson in the 'autobiographical' Oranges are not the only Fruit has the good sense and artistry to write lower than the head!

'Exhausting' her store of memories of New Zealand involved a shaping and patterning of those experiences as they were described and articulated. Indeed Mansfield's 'experiences' through her stories are probably as significant as the original experiences themselves. (If the two can ever be satisfactorily separated at all).

We all tell the story of ourselves all the time
and this is part of the experience of life ...
The experience of living a life also involves
inhabiting a structure of meanings and feelings
which is culturally as well as personally specific... 104

103 Journal p.93-94

104 Her Own Life, Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth Century Women, Edited by Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby
Helen Wilcox, (Routledge, London and New York 1989) p.17

Fiction is a disclaimed form of ostentatiously 'other' writing fiction or autobiography fixes the moment, fixes however ambiguously some 'self' to the parameters of language and expression, covering for a finite period that which is essentially incoherent and fluid.

Is it not possible that the rage for confession, autobiography, especially for memories of earliest childhood, is explained by our persistent yet mysterious belief in a self which is *continuous and permanent*... This is the moment, which, after all, we live for - the moment of direct feeling when we are most ourselves and least personal ...105

Being 'personal' in Mansfield's terms is to obstruct narrative clarity; the medium of language and form to which it applies, distant the text from author as a necessity, rather than choice. Being most 'ourselves' instead of 'personal' is a problematic dichotomy, but one which Mansfield clearly sought to articulate in her fiction. Mansfield's moments of clarity and being in her fiction are sudden constructions of an essential aspect of self, within a text. Fragmentary knowledge inhabits a fragmented narrative experience, personality has to be subdued or even extinguished.

On the one hand there is truth; on the other there is personality. And if we think of truth as something of granite like solidity and of personality as something of rainbow like intangibility and reflect that the aim of biography is to weld these two into one seamless whole, we shall admit that the problem is a stiff one...106

The fusion of truth and personality in Mansfield or course did not have to result in the fictional biography of a Harold Nicholson or Lytton Strachey. Yet her 'special kind of prose' was reliant upon her intention to

105 Journal p.205

106 Virginia Woolf, 'New Biography' Collected Essays, Volume IV, Edited by Leonard Woolf, Seventh Edition (Hogarth Press, London, 1967) p.229

renew, through her imagination the past that she thought she had, with the pasts she might have had. All, in the end is story.

I generally don't know what I made up and what was reality. It's become a story to me.¹⁰⁷

Fiction immediately negates the author from any claustrophobia, limiting responsibility for the text. Re-enactment credits new writers, new perspectives on the nebulous 'original' experience. It may be as much a form of grief as celebration.

'I believe in pretty girls having a good time' said Mrs Harry Kember. 'Why not? Don't you make a mistake my dear. Enjoy yourself' And suddenly she turned turtle, disappeared and swam away quickly like a rat ... Beryl thought that she was being poisoned by this cold woman, but she longed to hear...¹⁰⁸

The summer term came, and with it the swimming class. Miss Inger was to take the swimming class. Then Ursula trembled and was dazed with passion ... 'I will race you, Ursula,' came the well modulated voice. Ursula started violently. She turned to see the warm, unfolded face of her mistress looking at her, to her. She was acknowledged...¹⁰⁹

The object of desire in both extracts operates at first in terms of voice, and then consummates the inarticulate desire by becoming suddenly physically present. The correspondence and difference between these versions of a 'life' suggest just how many versions there can actually be. Essentials may remain, the rest is arbitrary and as fluid as character itself.

107 Louise Chunn 'First Fruit' Guardian (Wednesday January 3 1990) p. 17 (In conversation with Jeanette Winterson)

108 At the Bay p.51

109 The Rainbow p.337-338

How remote they looked, those two, from where Linda sat and rocked. The green table, the polished cards. Stanley's big hands and Beryl's tiny ones, all seemed to be part of one mysterious movement. Stanley himself, big and solid, in his dark suit, took his ease, Beryl tossed her bright head and painted...110

Artistry has converted even redeemed the 'original'. Repetition enlarges and expands in Mansfield's art; memory is not reductive, it is infinitely complex and resonant. Memory may make concessions, may serve to clarify, it may also remain significantly silent.

My father spoke of my returning as dammed rot, said look here, he wouldn't have me fooling around in dark corners with fellows. His hands, covered with long sandy hair, are absolutely cruel hands. A physically revolted feeling seizes me. He wants me to sit near...111

The recurring 'Pa-man' of the New Zealand Stories is markedly more sympathetic than the original. The initial comment 'rot' applied to Mansfield's wish in the Journal to to return to England, was revisited upon the Murry figure in 'Man without a Temperament'. An early vulnerability was sustained and reapplied elsewhere. Mansfield's capacity for copy was as persuasive as Woolf's. The physical repulsion that Mansfield felt for her father was more subtly expressed by Linda, the wife in 'At the Bay' and 'Prelude'. Mansfield had been as 'least personal' as she dared. Her distaste for obtrusive, overt physicality was as discernable in her relationships with men and women. Her wilderness phase was truly over.

110 At the Bay p.51

111 Journal p.6

The isolated and penniless Mansfield derived both income and emotional sustenance from reading and reviewing the works of others. Her Journal is a literary journal in every sense of the word. Responses are made, re-examined, redefined and set against other ideas. Excitement and enthusiasm abound.

Page 37. The story of Nastasya
That change in her when she appears in Petersburg - her knowledge almost 'technical' of how things are done in the world, is not at all impossible. With such women it seems to be a kind of instinct (Maata was just the same. She simply knew these things from nature)...¹¹²

Having read the whole of the Idiot through again... I feel slightly more bewildered than I did before as regards Natasya. She is not well done. She is badly done. And there grows up as one reads on a kind of irritation, a balked fascination, which almost succeeds finally in blotting out those first and truly marvellous 'impressions' of her. What was Dostoevsky really aiming at?¹¹³

Instinct revels in intellectual analysis here. Mansfield approaches the novel in the same manner as she treats a short story with curiosity and precision. She searches out her exact critical response; the 'balked fascination' which is Natasya Filippovna. Another word or phrase would have been a fabrication, a critical lie. Her reaction to Dostoevsky as I will explore later in the thesis with specific reference to *Jene parle pas Francais*, transcended admiration. She possessed a sensibility that could be termed truly Dostoevskian. 'Why do I feel like this about Dostoevsky - my Dostoevsky ... he knew the dark, dark, places,'¹¹⁴ Mansfield grappled with the problem

112 Journal p.35 - In the pocket of an old coat I found one of Ariadne's gloves -... And it has been there two years. But it still holds some exquisite suggestion of Carlota ... O Carlotta have you remembered?

113 Journal p.110

114 Letters KM toJMM p.370

that is Dostoevsky's heroine, as with a single idea or phrase. Her analysis unconsciously reinterprets the rest of the novel. It offers an interpretative frame-work which paradoxically resolves the novel's comparative 'failure' in organisational or structural terms.

Mansfield in the Journal also researched The Possessed. She offers this comment upon Shatar's wife in childbirth.

'I curse him before he is born, this child!'
This vindictiveness is profoundly true.
...Are his women ever happy when they torment
their lovers? No, they too are in the agony of
labour. They are giving birth to their new selves.
And they never believe in their deliverance.¹¹⁵

Mansfield's criticism is both near and distant here. She is both reader and writer of the text. Mansfield's rhetoric suspends retaliation through its pace, focus and closure. The knowledge that Mansfield had of 'wild places' and 'real hiding places'¹¹⁶ was clearly extolled here. If some of Mansfield's stories appear to represent her own 'Songs of Innocence' then it would not be impossible to ascribe Journal her 'Songs of Experience.'

Surely I do know more than other people: I have
suffered more, and endured more ... I have had
experiences unknown to them ...¹¹⁷

Such knowledge could make her perspective indifferent, 'least personal'. When Mansfield succeeded in maintaining an objective, 'mind at bay' then she could utilise her experiences with most artistic success. This 'indifference' as she called it, was most fully articulated in her acknowledged philosophy of life, 'the defeat of the personal.'¹¹⁸ Mansfield's hero Chekhov expressed a similar

115 Journal p.111
116 Journal p.234-5
117 Journal p.188
118 Journal p.195

attitude in his diary too.

The job of the writer is to depict only who, how and under what circumstances people have spoken or thought about God or pessimism. The artist should not be a judge of his characters or of what they say, but only an objective observer.¹¹⁹

Judgement would narrow the perspective, intrude an authorial personality into the text. A short-story writer to Chekhov should present, not discuss.

When Mansfield expressed her dislike of Joyce's *Ulysses*, her reaction combined both the personal reading and the critical overview.

It took me about a fortnight to wade through, but on the whole I'm dead against it. I suppose it was worth doing if everybody was worth doing... Of course, there are amazingly fine things in it, but I prefer to go without them than to pay that price. Not because I am shocked (though I am fearfully shocked, but that's personal ... but because I simply don't believe ...'¹²⁰

Mansfield clearly felt the need to resist the temptation to reject *Ulysses* on purely personal grounds; the critical problem suggested here was a recurring creative problem too.

I can't get over the feeling of wet linoleum and unemptied pails and far worse horrors in the house of his mind - He's so terribly unfeeling, that's what it amounts to...¹²¹

Mansfield's preoccupation with Joyce underlines his obvious importance to her, despite her frequent, even physical disgust. Woolf too felt a peculiar fascination for *Ulysses*.¹²² Mansfield and Woolf recognised its importance even if they disliked it intensely.

119 The Selected Letters of Anton Chekhov, Edited by Lillian Hellman (Picador, London 1984) p.54-55

120 Journal p.314-5

121 Collected Letters Vol.II January 15 1922

122 Diary of Virginia Woolf 1936-41 Edited by A.O.Bell (Hogarth Press, London 1981) p.352

As fellow modernists, the 'new word' of Joyce had some correspondence with that of Woolf and Mansfield, even if this version of the word was reduced to being a matter of critical taste. The critical and personal reaction to Joyce were thus uneasily separated. The writing had to be free from prejudices.

It only makes one feel how one adores English Prose - how to be a writer is everything. I do believe that the time has come for a 'new word' but I imagine the new word will not be spoken easily. People have never explored the lovely medium of prose. It is a hidden country still. I feel that so profoundly....¹²³

Once again Mansfield's position within the development of modernism must be evaluated. Pound's 'Making it New' and Mansfield's 'new word' are the ideological backbones of twentieth century fiction. Mansfield's reaction to Ulysses justifies her own philosophical premise her harsh criticism being the outcome of her own awareness of her creative failings. The Waves, Mrs Dalloway and To The Lighthouse were unfortunately chronologically beyond her; Eliot's Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock She admired as a 'Short-story' and read at Garsington to an assembled company in 1917.

Eliot-Virginia? the poems look delightful. But I confess I think them unspeakably dreary. How can one write so absolutely with emotion - perhaps that's an achievement. The potamus really makes me groan. I don't think he is a poet - Prufrock is after all a short story, ¹²⁴

Significantly Eliot's apparent lack of 'emotion' parallels Joyce's 'unfeeling' narrative. Yet Mansfield was prepared to acknowledge that what she construed as an

123 Collected Letters II 1918-19 p.343

124 Alpers p.239

absence or lack, could in fact be an 'achievement.' Once again Mansfield had diagnosed a condition even if she did not recognise the prognosis directly

Is that all? Can that be all?
That is not what I meant at all,¹²⁵

In the famous essay 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' Woolf rebuked the Edwardian 'materialistic' vision, which had dominated the novels of Galsworthy, Bennett and Wells.

But the Edwardians were never interested in character in itself or in the book in itself. They were interested in something outside...^{125b}

Woolf went on to define precisely what this 'something' actually consisted of:

he (Mr Bennett) is trying to hypnotize us into the belief that because he has made a home, there must be a person living there...^{125c}

Detail Woolf believed had been used to falsely suggest or substitute 'life. 'Character' had been assembled from the outside rather than from within. The modernists of course reacted to this artistic image by eradicating 'character' in the Edwardian sense of the word altogether. 'I insubstantiaze, wilfully to some extent distrusting reality - it's cheapness.' ¹²⁶

Mansfield in a letter to Murry recognised this technique in the work of Tolstoy. (Mansfield was chastising the quality of the novels she was forced of necessity to review).

The writers (practically all of them) seem to have no idea of what one means by continuity. It is a difficult thing to explain. Take the old waiter in Anna who serves Levin and Stepan - Now Tolstoy only has to touch him and he gives out a note, and this note is somehow important.

125 Journal p.124

125b Virginia Woolf in Captains' Death Bed and other Essays, 'Mr Bennet and Mrs Brown' (Hogarth Press, London 1924)p.99

125c Bennet and Brown p.103

126 Writer's Diary, Tuesday June 13 1923

persists is a point of the whole book. But all have other men, they introduce their cooks, aunts, strange gentlemen, and so on, and once the pen is off them they are gone - dropped down a hole ...¹²⁷

Mansfield's critical text responds in artistic and intellectual spirit to that of Woolf. Both reject the 'cheap reality' of fabricating, substitute novels, where narrative interest is purely of a materialistic nature rather than a psychologically curious one. Little wonder that Mansfield wrote to Woolf in 1920.

I wonder if you know what your visits were to me - or how much I miss them. You are the only woman with whom I long to talk work. There will never be another.¹²⁸

And Woolf noted in her own Diary in June 1920,

I lunched with KM and had two hours priceless talk - priceless in the sense that to no one else can I talk in the same disembodied way about writing; without altering my thought more than I alter it in writing here (I except L. from this)¹²⁹

Woolf's 'disembodied way' is perhaps Mansfield's 'defeat of the person,' a reciprocated understanding is clear. The friendship 'gift' between Mansfield and Woolf was of greater depth and emotional warmth than either writer would openly admit, based as it was upon writing and the love of writing itself. Woolf's honesty in her Diary is frequently as bitchy and brutally 'acerbic' as Mansfield. Her disclosure in this extract is therefore all the more telling. The exception Woolf makes with regard to Leonard adds still further praise to Mansfield's artistry and talent; Leonard Woolf was his wife's most valued

127 Letters KM to JMM, p.544

128 'Fifteen Letters from KM to Virginia Woolf' Adam International Review 1972-3, p.19-24

129 Diary Vol.II 1920-1924 Saturday 5 June 1920

critic and adviser throughout her writing life. Woolf's 'disembodied' talk with Mansfield perhaps fulfilled the question Mansfield had posed to Sydney Schiff in 1920;

The intimacy of two beings who are essential to each other - who is going to write that?,¹³⁰

'Essential' perhaps in the most creative, disembodied sense? Parallel thus to Mansfield's reaction to the Post-Impressionist exhibition when Mansfield saw Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers' for the first time.

They taught me something about writing, which was queer, a kind of freedom - or rather a shaking free....¹³¹

This 'shaking free' identifies both the similarity between the creative impetus in the texts of Mansfield and Woolf and also describes the nature of their personal relationship too.

...I understand exactly what you say about Virginia - beautiful brilliant creature that she is and suddenly at the last moment turning into a bird and flying up to a topmost bough ... she is not of her subject - she hovers over, dips, skims, makes exquisite flights - sees the lovely reflections in water that a bird must see but not humanly....¹³²

Mansfield's choice of symbol (or Woolf, the soaring 'bird', non-human, intellectually searching beyond the ordinary parameters of reality is particularly appropriate.) For Woolf's Mrs Dalloway manipulates the bird symbolism in terms of Clarissa and Septimus, so that they are paralleled, even rendered doubles, without them ever actually meeting. Being bird-like is synonymous with

130 The Letters of Katherine Mansfield, Vol.II Edited by John Middleton Murry, (London, Constable 1928) NOV.4 1920 to Sydney Schiff.

131 Letters Volume II, December 5 1921 to Dorothy Brett

132 Collected Letters II 27 June 1919 to Ottline Morrell p.333

being an outsider, a critical observer in Woolf, even a sexually ambiguous figure. Woolf, of course, had the experience of Mansfield, and Mansfield's interpretation of her, before she wrote Mrs Dalloway

'Bird' in the Journal are attached to disquiet, disharmony, even grief. 'There is a great black bird flying over me, and I'm so frightened he'll settle - so terrified. I don't know exactly what kind he is.' Mansfield can describe Woolf in bird-symbolism because she identifies precisely the significance of such symbolism. Mansfield's own 'black bird' is untranslatable; it suggest an emotional complexity that could be termed her own 'heart of darkness,'

Naturally Mansfield's vantage point, from chaotic, full-bodied experience, encouraged her recognition of Woolf's detachment and objectivity as being non-human and cool. Yet if there was an unconscious link between Woolf's symbolic representation and Mansfield's, then perhaps the latter had recognised their mutual vulnerability, susceptibility and ambiguity. For Woolf's objectivity was as much an instinct (or self-preservation and survival) as Mansfield's enigmatic series of chameleon masks. At any rate it seems likely that Mansfield had intuited more than she every really consciously knew for certain. The writers came together and parted, bewitching and provoking mysteries to each other, uncertain of their feelings for each other until the end, artistically and creatively similar as I shall now further explore.

'Farewell dear friend (May I call you that?)
Yours ever Katherine.¹³⁴

Katherine Mansfield has dogged my steps for three years - I'm always on the point of meeting her, or of reading her stories, and I have never managed to do either... We go to Cornwall in September, and if I see anyone answering to your account on a Rock or in the sea I shall accost her ...¹³⁵

Virginia Woolf met Katherine Mansfield in 1917. Woolf had been very ill after the publication of The Voyage Out in March 1915, with a severe mental breakdown. With a relative remission and recovery in 1916, Leonard Woolf suggested an occupation that would divert attention and emotional energies from writing any novels. Thus the Hogarth Press was born at Richmond in 1912. Mansfield was suggested as a writer with a reputation to be made,¹³⁶ and the Woolf's accepted a story that was renamed Prelude.

In her article on Prelude and To the Lighthouse. Angela Smith suggested that the fact that Woolf had carried out most of the typesetting for Prelude, must have encouraged an intimate knowledge of this text. 'It is possible to argue that it affected her more deeply than she knew'¹³⁷ At any rate such a familiarity and knowledge with Prelude and its 'living power'¹³⁸ formed the basis of Woolf's uneasy respect and affection for Mansfield the writer and the friend. Charles Palliser in his thesis on Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield stated that although there were great temperamental

134 Fifteen Letters p.19-24

135 Letters of Virginia Woolf Vol.II 1912-22, 25 July 1916 to Lytton Strachey

¹³⁶ Secret Life p.161

137 Angela Smith, Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: Prelude and To the Lighthouse Journal of Commonwealth Literature (Vol. XVIII November 1 1983) p.107

138 Woolf: Diary Volume I p.167

differences between them, especially affecting their views on life, there was a marked similarity between them in their perceptions of Art. 'It is the near identity of their views on the Art of fiction and its situation during the critical years of the First World War Period,¹³⁹ that Palliser was particularly interested in. I have already suggested some parallels between the writers earlier in this thesis. I now wish to extend these ideas, and put them in the central context of their reaction and response to each other in literary and non-literary terms. If Maurois could propose that 'Mrs Dalloway is perhaps the only novel which KM might possibly have written,¹⁴⁰ then Lyndall Gordon in her study of Woolf, A Writer's Life¹⁴¹ offers a consolidating and expanding view of this premise. Gordon argued that Mansfield had advised Woolf to 'merge' with some one alien to herself in order to transcend the 'modish disillusion of the post-war period.' In the characters of Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway it is possible to perceive Woolf doing precisely this. Indeed the entire novel seems to be an explanation of alienation; Woolf investigates 'underworlds' in terms of non-conformist sexuality and madness, through the duality of the human self and psyche. Mansfield and Woolf perhaps tentatively perceived this duality in their own friendship and literary relationship.

139 Charles Pallister, The Early Fiction of Virginia Woolf and her Literary Relations with Katherine Mansfield, (Oxford University Wolfson College BLITT Unpublished) p.91

140 Points of View p.339

141 Lyndall Gordon, A Writer's Life, (Oxford University Press, 1984) p.189

Katherine disconcerted Virginia because she reflected the dark side of Virginia's In this sense, their friendship, though so brief and erratic, was more serious than the much publicised 'affair' with Vita who adored her more surface attributes...¹⁴²

I go weekly to see KM up at Hampstead, for there at any rate we make a public of one or two. On Thursday Murry came in, and we had an awkward, interesting talk; too self-conscious to be enkindling. I think something or other is a little unharmonious in both of them; in my arrogance, I suppose I feel them both too much of the underworld...¹⁴³

Woolf's discomfort at Mansfield's pervasive 'dark' temperament perhaps was more related to some reluctant transference or self-recognition than she was willing to acknowledge. Mansfield's underworld or private chaos, was a matter for private self-examination even meditation on the part of Woolf. Through Mansfield, Woolf obtained a method of private, prismatic forms.

I should have liked a closer and thicker knowledge of life. I should have liked to deal with real things sometimes. I get a sense of tingling and vitality from an evening's talk like that; one's angularities and obscurities are smoothed and lit. How little one counts I think...¹⁴⁴

Mansfield's 'experiential' existence was only a refracted, alternative version of Woolf's conspicuously narrow upbringing. Both writers felt isolated and at times fragmented by their chosen and fated paths, a feeling that was visited upon their fiction.

142 Writer's Life p.187

143 Diary Vol.I Saturday 30 November 1918

144 Writer's Diary, p.134 (Saturday October 27 1928)

But he himself remains high on his rock, like a drowned sailor on a rock. I leant over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought I went under the sea. I have been dead and yet am now alive...145

Septimus Smith and Eliot's Phlebas the Phoenician appear inseparable; both estranged from any coherent overview of life and experience. Death offers the constant, tempting resolution, of the life that cannot or dare not speak its name. Estrangement permeates Mansfield's stories too, explicitly in the dark stories like 'The Woman at the Store,' 'Ole Underwood,' 'Jene parle pas francais' and 'A Married Man's Story,' but implicitly suggested also even in the lighter New Zealand fictions. Her Journal provides further instances too.

I am in the sitting-room downstairs. The wind howls outside, but here it is warm and pleasant. It looks like a real room where real people have lived...146

I must not forget my timidity before closed doors. My debate as to whether I shall ring too hard or not hard enough...147

..and I am the little colonial walking in the London garden patch - allowed to look... but not to linger, 148

Mansfield perhaps by isolation, perhaps due to temperament or philosophy is both the observed and the observer, the signifier and the signified. Her self-consciousness is distinctly female, for as John Berger argues in Ways of Seeing, a woman has from an early age been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. And so she comes to consider the surveyor and surveyed within herself

145 Mrs Dalloway p.62

146 Journal p.70

147 Journal p.142

148 Journal p.157

149 Ways of Seeing p.46

as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman.

Beryl at the end of At the Bay is anxious about her single state. Her innate optimism about some suiter suddenly appearing in the middle of the countryside becomes threatened with doubt, even closure.

Beryl dismissed it. She couldn't be left. Other people, perhaps, but not she. It wasn't possible to think that Beryl Fairfield never married, that lovely fascinating girl. 'Do you remember Beryl Fairfield?' Remember her! As if I could forget her! It was one summer at the Bay that I saw her....'150

Beryl about Beryl. She ponders and reflects upon her own 'construction.' It was an experience Mansfield could well appreciate and describe. The self and the mirror. The mirror may be distorted, some concentrated refraction as in the case of Septimus and Clarissa or deceiving as in the case of Beryl and Mrs Harry Kember. Identity in Woolf and Mansfield has become a matter of advances and retreats; absences and arrivals.

In this room. Almost before this is written I shall read it from another room, and such is life...151

Language fixes; it is the paradoxically ever-present rendering of the past. Images may be refracted and juxtaposed so that the meaning becomes a matter of deferral or indirect exposure.

In the 'Lady and the Looking Glass' Woolf takes a room, empties it and puts a mirror on the wall. The

150 At the Bay p.243

151 Journal p. 41

mirror becomes the entire world; annihilation has never been so restful or so easeful. Humanity remains absent for half an hour. Thirty minutes for an idea to coalesce. (This is of course a technique manipulated also in the Interlude in To the Lighthouse and the confrontation of time and event in Prelude and At the Bay),

Half an hour ago the mistress of the house, Isabella Tyson had gone down the grass path in her thin summer dress, carrying a basket and had vanished, sliced off by the gilt rim of the looking glass. She had gone presumably into the lower garden to pick up the flowers; or as it seemed more natural to suppose...152

Isabella has vanished into her own fiction. Her resurrection is also a matter of fiction. The mirror operates as the narrator's perception, 'presumably' and 'as it seemed' clinging syntactically and narratively as tightly to the looking-glass as possible.

Isabella's absence is followed by a false arrival in fictional terms. For when we 'follow' Isabella into the garden, inconsequence, and vagueness results. We are not interested in the passage of Isabella beyond the 'clarity' and 'reality' of the mirror, and neither is the language itself.

The 'moral' of the fiction is as deliberately trite and unremarkable as Woolf could assemble; fiction should be left to its own devices and reflections.

People should not leave looking-glasses hanging in their rooms,153

152 Virginia Woolf, 'The Lady in the Looking Glass',
A Haunted House, (Granada, London 1982) p.88
153 A Haunted House, p.93

As in The Portrait of Dorian Gray the projected imagined Isabella Tyson has more reality than the woman herself. The Maugham-like ending deflects the very Woolfian story from its real concerns.

In Nabokov's 'First Love' Woolf's thirty-minutes has become transmuted into something and someone tangible and overtly present. He rolls a glass-marble under a grand piano and it reappears years later, as Colette, a girl, his 'first' love. The movement between the original perception and the revisiting of the perception is the movement between childhood and adulthood, the memory and the manner in which we actually enjoy our memories. The courageous adherence of Nabokov to the looming challenge of the projected dream - personality, accentuates the vitality of the image; the narrator was once young and he did fall in love. And if proof is required, then here is the marble.

I would put myself to sleep by the simple act of identifying myself with the engine driver ... exchanging knowing smiles, nodding, dozing; the waiters and cooks and trainguards (whom I had to place somewhere) ... And then, in my sleep I would see something totally different - a glass marble rolling under a grand piano....'154

Nabokov works with an assimilated solidity of image and argument - ultimately. He defines in particular terms, exactly what absence and arrival felt like. Woolf and Mansfield preferred to defer this exactitude or even the approximation of this definition.

154 Vladimir Nabokov, 'First Love' Nabokov's Dozen, Third Edition (Penguin, London 1980) p.45-46

In the 'Lady and the Looking Glass' we are sent off in the wrong direction by both the narrator, who is not Woolf, and the author, who just might be. The mirror is not responsible for the story; yet no-one else will accept responsibility. The fiction is a consistently abnegating narration. The ending is a deliberate deception; a fictional cul-de-sac.

Writing to Roger Fry, in a letter that 'might be speaking for Katherine Mansfield as well as herself,'¹⁵⁵ Woolf refused to be categorical about the significance of the symbolism in To the Lighthouse.

I meant nothing by the Lighthouse...
I can't manage symbolism except in this vague generalised way. Whether its right or wrong I don't know, but directly I'm told what a thing means, it becomes hateful to me...¹⁵⁶

Language is too fluid, too anarchic in its origins and definitions to be just one thing. Like Beckett, Woolf felt particularly resistant to 'over-interpretation,' Mansfield too, felt that uncontrolled, overly-interpreted symbolism detracted from the autonomy and authority of the text and the reader.

And I shall never see sex in trees, sex in the running brooks, sex in the stones and sex in everthing. The number of things that are really phallic, from fountain pen fillers onwards. But I shall have my revenge one of these days - I suggested to Lawrence that he should call his cottage 'The Phalus' and Frieda thought it was a very good idea...¹⁵⁷

Mansfield prepared to explore indirectly and obliquely those areas of the mind that dictate or suggest behaviour

155 Angela Smith, p.117

156 Virginia Woolf, A Change of Perspective, Vol.III 1923-28, Edited by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (Chatto and Windus, London 1977) p.385

157 Letters and Journals, p.76-77

and attitudes to others in relationships. A mirror as a sudden 'arrival' seemed to be a profoundly satisfying device.

Suddenly I realised that quite apart from myself, I was smiling. Slowly I raised my head and saw myself in the mirror opposite. Yes, there I sat, leaning on the table, smiling my deep, sly smile....'158

The hard easefulness of the narrative adds brilliance to the exposition. The positioning of apart is conspicuously precise. It separates the "I" from 'myself' with challenging even devastating results. Mansfield's dangerous creative temperament and tendency towards superficial smartness, or 'brilliance'¹⁵⁹ is wonderfully controlled and exploited here. The second 'I' is subsequently alien is threatening; the third 'I' is almost unidentifiable. Language dislocates the very possessive terms it employs. The use of 'apart' also bring an immediate crisis to the passage. Meaning and reaction are parallel. There is a sustained refraction of image by the repeated use of the present participle. Perception and meaning are undermined, underplayed. The passage is poised on the point of arrival. Expression has become that which describes; when we meet Duquette we have already met him before, through his choice of metaphor and phraseology. Mansfield's 'apart' operates as an estranging mirror in the passage; Woolf had pushed Isabella into the garden in order to achieve a similar result. Mansfield continues to corrupt or defer meaning by reducing our experience through a lack of

158 Je ne parle pas francais p.63

159 Woolf Letters Vol.II March 20 1922

external reference.

No paper or envelopes of course, only a morsel of pink blotting paper, incredibly soft and limp and almost moist, like the tongue of a little dead kitten, which I've never felt....', 160

Duquette, indulgently and self-consciously pretends to absent himself from his expression. The act of imagination is ostentatiously denied; the story becomes a seeping, expanding web of possibilities and arrivals. The sense of reserve in this story parallels that of Woolf in the 'Lady in the Looking Glass'. The reader is excited rather than befriended; the vocabulary, the image, is being continually refilled. Access has been granted to the hidden resources which extend and underline each vision. The near silence in both these stories renders the fictions paradoxically a disturbing, noisily discordant critical experience. Silence is never of course truly silent; it always enjoys some determining, even directing consciousness on the part of the listener. In Woolf and Mansfield the avenues for interpretation are wide and obliquely suggested. One can arrive if, and when one so desires; absence is always a possibility.

Do you know - its very absurd - but as I pushed open the door for them and followed up the stairs to the bureau on the landing I felt somehow that this hotel was mine...., 161

Duquette's 'absurd' revelation operates as both an absence and arrival. The one undercuts the other so that the intensity of both states is reciprocated and fulfilled

160 Je ne parle pas Français p.63

161 Je ne parle pas Français p.81

we cannot follow his thinking as it is very personally absurd. Yet this absurdity contains some universally familiar tone and we are unnerved. Our absence from Duquette may be little more than a cleverly devised narrative exclusion. Our arrival at Duquette may be in fact imminent, not to say probable. The method of the narration has just constructed a very subtle exclusion zone! There is a creative swell and a creative retreat from the overt literality, even theatricality of 'mine'. Consciousness maps its own fictions, and any single narration involves several different types and degrees of consciousness. When V S Pritchett likened Mansfield's stones to being 'as clear as glass,'¹⁶² perhaps he omitted to contemplate the various types of glass available to the writer. A further comment, in the same article provides another touchstone to an investigation of Mansfield's relation to Woolf.

We see through all these people, one by one,
as they will never see through themselves...¹⁶³

Woolf's 'burning gaze' obtains an interesting rendition here. Pritchett cited an example of this premise in At the Bay but Mansfield's stories and Journal abound with other offerings too. To convert Baudelaire's axion that we 'live and die in front of a mirror' into her own phrase, Mansfield would just have inserted the word 'blind' at the end of the phrase. 'Sharpness' and reality' she reserved for herself at work and at play.

162 V S Pritchett, 'Books in General'
New Statesman and Nation (February 2 1946) p.87
163 'Books in General' p.87

I must put down here a dream. The first night I was in bed here, i.e. after my first day in bed, I went to sleep. And suddenly I felt my whole body breaking up. It broke up with a violent shock - an earthquake - and it broke like glass. A long terrible shiver... When I woke up I thought there had been a violent earthquake. But all was still. It slowly dawned upon me - the conviction that in that dream I died...¹⁶⁴

The reader of the Journal is party to the most intimate and disquieting passages imaginable; death has actually formed its own perspective. Self as copy has been ironically redefined. Mansfield's narration is between the unconscious and conscious world, death-in-life and life-in-death. Boundaries have been redefined, re-written. Being the 'spectacle' that Mansfield is in this passage, distinctly challenges the process of spectating and reading in a fundamental manner.

The resolution that 'all was still' was revisited upon the ending of At the Bay, engendering in the terms of the Journal passage, a permanence that was more absolute than might be apparent. Ambivalence as ever in Mansfield would also be playing a role. Mansfield's struggle for the defeat of the personal, for a full, unconditional acceptance of life; 'one must submit. Do not resist. Take it. Be overwhelmed. Accept if fully. Make it part of life,¹⁶⁵ seems fully articulated in this cross-over fusion of life and fiction. There is no self-pity, there is no struggle. 'All was still', Sexuality, unhappiness

164 Journal P.184-185

165 Journal p.228

sickness have all been incorporated and accommodated within. The text gives a permanence and certainty to a life that was markedly neither of these two states.

Woolf in To the Lighthouse presents her own interpretation of Pritchett's axion. The isolated worlds of Woolf's characters emphasise the lack of communication and understanding between them. The reader perceives what the characters cannot. Moments of being or signification are solitary experiences; reading is the only method of their unification.

With stars in her eyes and veils in her hair,
with cyclamen and wild violets... she was fifty
at least,...

He took her back...
Charles Tansley felt an extraordinary pride;
felt the wind and the cyclamen and the violets for
he was walking with a beautiful woman for the first
time in his life ...
"No going to the Lighthouse, James," he said, as he
stood by the window...
Odious little man, thought Mrs Ramsay, why go on
saying that?, 166

Tansley's moment of 'extraordinary pride' means little to the external social world. Indeed it falsely encourages him in further, estranging behaviour though he paradoxically feels nearer to Mrs Ramsay, than he has possibly ever felt with any human being before. Woolf brilliantly depicts the complex, contradictory impulses that generate and modify human interaction. Mrs Ramsay has no empathy for him, at the precise moment when he is exulting in the tenderness and concern he feels for her. No-one is seen as we see them or as we see ourselves. Mansfield's

pessimism is shared by Woolf. As in Mansfield we are isolated at our most intimate moments; epiphany is a singular activity. Hardy naturally agreed. 'Nobody did come because no-one does.'

To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped cave of darkness, something invisible to others..167

Woolf's 'wedge-shaped cave of darkness' is the indefinable sense of sense, self as other: Mrs Ramsay to Lily Briscoe. Her most personal stranger. Mrs Ramsay through Woolf's linguistic impressionism becomes that which is perceived and yet perceives. Mrs Ramsay's premise that painting or art is reductive, that it is a shrinkage, is reassessed by Lily Briscoe at the end of the novel. The 'Briscoe' who had resisted the vision of Mrs Ramsay throughout the course of the novel, redefines the latter, through art, into her own terms. As in Mansfield, Mrs Ramsay the character can be renewed if not recovered. The wedge-shaped 'cave of darkness,' the 'fin' of the Diary, and Briscoe's 'line' down the centre of her picture are one and the same thing.

Indeed in The Waves Woolf was reinvigorating her recurring metaphor for the disunity and fragmented compatibility of experience with those who experience.

'Like' and 'like' and 'like' - but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing?...

There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they

make a perfect dwelling place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation...'¹⁶⁸

Creativity is excitingly defined here; experience is imagistically clarified. The text and the writer are very explicitly confronted; a marvellously creative collision in this particular instance. Satisfaction is obtained in spite of the incompatibility, the obvious difference. Creativity is therefore concerned with confronting the 'unconfrontable.' There will always be contradiction, always be undefined 'otherness,' yet the imaginative foundation will be secure. Approximation is the most, and best that can be achieved. Hence Art's triumph and consolation. Mansfield's exhortation to the 'realists' the Edwardians in her Journal appears to reach a similar conclusion to that of Woolf in The Waves

Art is not an attempt of the artist to reconcile existence with his vision; it is an attempt to create his own world in this world...
That which suggests the subject to the artist is the unlikeness to what we accept as reality...¹⁶⁹

Art may console only when its innate otherness is recognised in its own terms. Impressions are the staff of life and fiction. Woolf's repeated metaphors for her artistic search were the central concerns of her major novels; there Mansfield never had the opportunity to read, dying as she did before the publication of Jacob's Room Woolf's first formative novel. Mansfield however clearly

168 Virginia Woolf The Waves, Fifth Edition, (Granada, London 1982) p.110

169 Journal p.273

possess knowledge of these concerns of Woolf, a knowledge which surely was a matter of professional and personal consolation to Woolf.

Katherine was marmoreal as usual, just married to Murry and liking to pretend it a matter of convenience. She looks ghastly ill. As usual we come to an oddly complete understanding. My theory is that I get down to what is true rock in her, through the numerous vapours and pores which sicken or bewilder most of our friends. It's her love of writing I think...170

Woolf and Mansfield enjoyed a method of communication that contained essences, all the more precious because of their infrequent meeting and uneasy attraction and fascination for each other. The estrangement within and within their fictions was dissolved by their shared 'Love of writing.'

I think that Virginia and Vanessa... are the two women with whom you and I have most in common (except; perhaps Brett),171

...I realised how much she liked you. I think her affection for you is quite genuine and real. But you are, I am sure, A PERFECT MYSTERY TO HER...172

Murry unmistakably asserts Woolf's affection for Mansfield; being Murry he cannot prevent asserting his own standing with Woolf too. Mansfield was 'mysterious' to Woolf being 'marmoreal' and 'inscrutable! Yet she was also a valued intellectual, creative companion; something Murry could never approach in his relationship with Woolf. Mansfield was never more acerbic than this.

Middleton Murry is a posturing Byronic little man; pale penetrating with bad teeth,173

170 The Diary of Virginia Woolf Vol.I 1915-1919 Edited by A O Bell Hogarth Press, London 1977 May 1918 p.150

171 JMM to KM Letters p.223

172 JMM to KM Letters p.224

173 Woolf Letters Vol.II March 20 1920 to Janet Case

Woolf admired Mansfield despite the latter's liaison with Murry; her tolerance of the 'posturing Byronic little man' emphasises her attraction to Mansfield.

If Mansfield 'missed' the great Woolf novels by her premature death, then she did have several opportunities to respond to Woolf's seminal earlier work. Before embarking upon an analysis of Mansfield's reactions to 'Kew Gardens' 'Mark on the Wall' and Night and Day, it is worthwhile to consider and compare her criticism of Richardson with that of Woolf. (Richardson as a contemporary and female writer who used the 'stream of consciousness' technique is a useful foil to both Mansfield and Woolf) Mansfield's desire for a 'new word' in modernist fiction did not prevent her adopting a cautious approach to the experimentation that surrounded her.

... There is Miss Richardson holding out her mind, as it were, and there is life hurling objects into it as fast as she can throw...
 ...There is one who could not live in so tempestuous an environment as her mind - and he is memory...174

We find ourselves in the dentist's room, in the street, in the lodging house bedroom, frequently and convincingly, but never, or only for a tantalizing second, in the reality which underlines these appearances...175

Richardson's comparative failure to reconstruct reality in her terms was blamed by Mansfield and the former's inability to suggest or define memory within the parameters of her text. Streams of apparently unrelated even inconsequential details require artistic cohesion, imaginative unit; selectivity is as important as ever

174 Katherine Mansfield 'Three Women Novelists' Novels and Novelists, Edited by J M Murry (Constable, London 1930)

175 'The Tunnel' Novels and Novelists 13 February 1919

in a text which supposedly reconstructs the 'myriad impressions' of a mind and its conscious and unconscious words. Memory is dependent upon selectivity for resonance, concentration and strategy. Richardson has perhaps over-reacted to the laboriously rendered 'life' of the Edwardian novelists. She underestimated the need to shape the new novel through the medium of a focused consciousness. Woolf similarly found Richardson's experimentation less than successful. The type of memory or recollection which serves to resolve or reshape the nature and importance of the 'glimpses' contained in the work of Woolf and Mansfield was significantly absent in Richardson's work; and Woolf and Mansfield did discuss the former's novels which must surely have aided their own work?

The inscrutable woman remains inscrutable I'm glad to say: no apologies due. At once she flung down her pen and plunged, as if we'd been planted for 10 months, into the question of Dorothy Richardson...176

Mansfield's stories are permeated by a creative and structural reliance on memory and the characters' sense of the past; especially perhaps the New Zealand fictions. Woolf too paid homage to her brother Thoby Stephen in Jacob's Room and to her parents and their marriage in To the Lighthouse. Analysing Richardson may have shaped their own thoughts on the role and significance of the past in their own work. The shared 'job' of writing and the means to achieving this career became clear;

discussion bred definition, consolidation and even innovation. Mansfield's ability to find 'reality' in her increasingly difficult, self-undermining present enlarged the importance and role of the 'job' and its experiences. Woolf was a most unique part of these special irreplaceable experiences.

Woolf's experimentalism in 'Kew Gardens' had a story Mansfield reviewed and had the opportunity to study, consisted in her new 'lyrical oblique approach in which her best later works would be written'¹⁷⁷ 'Kew Gardens' with 'The Mark on the Wall' represent the literary expressions of the ideas Woolf exhibited in her now famous essay 'Modern Fiction' published in 1919. If Mansfield was not present at the staging of the later works, she certainly was an active observer on the earlier manifestations of these works. The 'Modern Fiction' essay expresses the literary ideology behind Mansfield's own fiction.

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this.' Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day.

The mind receives a myriad impressions - trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engrained with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they came, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from old; the moment of importance came not here but there...¹⁷⁸

These 'myriad impressions' are showered abundantly in 'Kew Gardens' abundantly in Mansfield's concentrated meditative story 'Bank Holiday.' The voices of 'Kew Gardens' would

177 Phyllis Rose 'Woman of Letters' (Pandora, London 1986) p.94

178 Virginia Woolf 'Modern Fiction' The Common Reader, First Series, Fifth Edition, (Hogarth Press, London 1942) p.189

be eventually transmitted into the novel The Waves, perhaps being even distilled there into a single voice that fragments itself into six, before reverting to one against the final closure in fiction, death itself.

And in me too, the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!

The Waves broke on the shore,¹⁷⁹

Woolf's triumph in The Waves was the outcome, the accumulation of careful literary innovation. Fourteen years had passed since the publication of 'Kew Gardens', eight since the death of Mansfield. 'On attends Toujours' quotes May Sarton in her Journal. If The Waves was the outcome of a creative waiting after 'Kew Gardens' what could have been the outcome of Mansfield's literary postponement after 'Bank Holiday' or even "A Married Man's Story'?

And up, up the hill, came the people, with ticklers and golliwogs and roses and feathers. Up, up, they thrust into the light and heat, shouting laughing, squealing, as though they were being pushed by something, far below, and by the sun, far ahead of them - drawn up into the full, bright dazzling radiance to ... what?¹⁸⁰

The concept of literary evolution in Mansfield's case is of course hypothetical, but nevertheless far from redundant or dull.

Aside from its significance in the Woolf evolutionary opus, and its accessibility to Mansfield, 'Kew Gardens' may have a further relevance to the relationship between Mansfield and Woolf. Writing to Ottoline Morrell in

179 The Waves p.200

180 Bank Holiday p.367

August 1917, Mansfield described at length the famous garden at Garsington.

Apparently Mansfield had also written to Woolf as well about this celebrated garden. Woolf's letter has not survived. Fortunately Morrell's is still in existence.

Your glimpse of the garden - all flying green and cold made me wonder again who is going to write about that flower garden. It might be so wonderful, do you see how I mean? There would be people walking in the garden - several pairs of people - their conversation their slow pacing - their glances as they pass one another - the pauses as the flowers 'cave in ' as it were...

The pairs of people must be very different and there must be a light touch of enchantment - some of them seeming so extraordinarily 'odd' and separate from the flowers, but others quite related and at ease. A kind of musically speaking, conversation set to flowers. Do you like the idea? ... It's full of possibilities. I must have a fling at it sometime...¹⁸¹

The proposed Mansfield story is strikingly similar to the exposition that is 'Kew Gardens'¹⁸² Alpers noted that the emphasised 'who' and the presence of the word 'again', indicated that Mansfield was repeating herself. In other words that Mansfield had written a very similar letter to Woolf before the quoted letter to Morrell. Alpers interpretation of this curious parallel between Mansfield's proposal for a fiction and Woolf's own story is worth quoting here for its concise articulation of the problem.

On returning to London after the weekend with her Prelude typescript. Katherine wrote Virginia a bread and butter letter containing a sentence that has often been cited as evidence in general terms of the literary relationship between the two;

181 Alpers p.250

182 Woolf 'Kew Gardens', A Haunted House (Granada London 1982) p.33-34

"We have got the same job, Virginia and it is really very curious and thrilling that we should both, quite apart from each other, be after so very nearly the same thing"

But the letter also contained a much more specific piece of information. "Yes," it said, 'Your flower bed is very good. There's still a quivering changing light over it all and a sense of those couples dissolving in the bright air which fascinates me,' 184

Some connection between Mansfield's letter and Woolf's story seems likely. Woolf did not yet know Garsington though she was familiar with Kew. Woolf had written one novel when she met Mansfield; soon after their first meeting she wrote 'Kew Gardens' and the 'Mark on the Wall.' Mansfield's garden at Garsington had perhaps been metamorphosised into Kew. 185

From the oval-shaped flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves...

The figures of these men and women struggled past the flower bed with a curiously irregular movement not unlike that of the white and blue butterflies who crossed the turf in zig-zag flights from bed to bed...186

'A kind of, musically speaking conversation set to flowers.' Mansfield's original idea seems to have found brilliant expression in Woolf's fiction. Literary talk obviously identified critical and imaginative preoccupations; why not to the point of textual interchangeability? Mansfield perhaps is the unacknowledged, indirect author of 'Kew Gardens'. With the story's 'standing' in terms of the modernist style in prose, perhaps Mansfield should also be credited more with her capacity for innovation and stylistic force.

184 Alpers p.251

185 Alpers p.251

186 'Kew Gardens' A Haunted House p.33

Woolf's fiction 'The Mark on the Wall' moves from one conscious form to another. History and the inhabitants of history stray freely into the mind of the narrator as the possibilities are suggested for the existence of the 'mark on the wall' Woolf in this story as in 'Kew Gardens' is experimenting with narrative perspective and the wakings of memory, within the conscious and unconscious mind.

It is interesting that Prelude contains its own 'Mark on the Wall.' Linda is resting in bed after the departure of Stanley for work. The household sounds drift away and she enters into another type of consciousness.

She turned over to the wall and idly, with one finger, she traced a poppy on the wall-paper with a leaf and a fat bursting bud. In the quiet, and under her tracing finger, the poppy seemed to come alive. She could feel the sticky, silky petals, the stem.. Things had a habit of coming alive like that. Not only large substantial things like furniture butcurtains and the patterns of stuffs and the fringes of quilts and cushions...187

'Things had a habit of coming alive like that.' Mansfield's imaginative excursion is shared by Woolf. Both have a similar response to the possibilities of detail through a considered perspective that could be labelled a form of Linguistic meditation. Reality has been reconstituted via the vagaries of a wandering mind, a mind by itself, even talking to itself, to recall Woolf's 'reading' of the Mansfield who inhabits her Journal. This is not an advocacy of some 'loose' prose style or technique, the style reads with consummate direction and certainty.

Externals in Mansfield and Woolf are receptive to the transference of the self and the workings of this self upon the external world and its objects. Charlotte Perkins Gilman obviously wrote her earlier story 'The Yellow Wallpaper' upon this premise as well. Self-image can be articulated in all sorts of unexpected ways. Mansfield in Prelude and Woolf in 'Mark on the Wall' direct their reader into the unconscious workings of the mind through some form of guarded fictional sign-posting. 'Reality' is established and then is gradually subverted; the effects are therefore controlled and considered. Disbelief is not permitted or encouraged.

'Where are you going to, Kezia?' asked Isabel, who longed to find some light and menial duty that Kezia might perform ...
'Oh just away,' said Kezia...188

Kezia has converted an imperative, restrictive world into her very own construction, even fairy-tale. 'Away' is nebulous, personally abstract to Kezia and is nowhere that the pedantic Isabel can ever find! Like Dickens with Mrs Nickleby and Dick Swiveller, Mansfield gives the narrative control to the greatest, most liberating, story-teller.

'Oh, Kezia has been tossed by a bull hours ago,' said Linda, winding herself up in her shawl again. But no, Kezia had seen a bull through the hole in a knot of wood in the paling that separated the tennis lawn from the paddock. But she had not liked the bull frightfully, so she had walked away back through the courtyard...189

The 'hole in a knot of wood' has become a metaphor for all

188 Prelude p.27

189 Prelude p.32

the perspectives in this scene. The focaliser dominates, reinforcing Kezia's artistic continuity and supremacy. Illustration is vividly given here to the stream of consciousness method. Linda's careless premise that Kezia has come into contact with a bull is actually adhered to and then qualified. Literality suggests the unconscious workings of the narrative. Kezia and Linda are linked by the centrality and response to the matter of the 'bull', We look through Linda's suggestion and watch Kezia, in turn spying on this creature. As in Hardy,¹⁹⁰ a narrative is made up of a series of 'eyes' the watcher and the watched, each in turn being the subject or object of another. The scene is made from an uninterested comment of Linda, that in another text would have had little or no credibility whatsoever. Crediting the 'bull's' existence and significance underlines this imaginative point of view or tendency. The author has chosen to follow the 'unintended' perspective. 'I'm telling you stories: Trust me.' says Jeanette Winterson in The Passion, Mansfield's narrative follows precisely this creative route. George Eliot and Henry James would have still been describing the threads in the shawl. In Mansfield the shawl is Linda's defence, her imaginative secrecy, her retreat to the 'marmoreal' self.

The publication of Night and Day Woolf's second novel caused some friction between Mansfield and its author.

190 Thomas Hardy, Far From the Madding Crowd Second Edition (Macmillan, London 1966) p.12

Mansfield had to review the novel and was uncomfortable with this task on two counts.

Firstly she was feeling extremely ill and even anxious about her eventual prognosis. Secondly she was torn between reviewing the text with critical honesty and by showing loyalty to her friend.

As Alpers says 'in sixteen days, nine letters refer to her anxiety over the review.'¹⁹² Reading both her review in Novels and Novelists and her comments to Murry in a long letter, Night and Day seems to have been analysed with intelligence and applied sensitivity (in every sense.) Despite Woolf's grudging belief that there was 'spite'¹⁹³ in the review, she never wrote a novel like Night and Day again. Furthermore Woolf's deserved Literary reputation lies with the novels that were reactions against the world and range of Night and Day. Mansfield's 'spite' was in fact a highly beneficial influence on Woolf.

'Night and Day' sailing into port serene and resolute on a deliberate wind... There are moments indeed, when one is almost tempted to cry it Jane Austen up to date. It is extremely cultivated, distinguished and brilliant, but above all deliberate... We thought that this world was vanished for ever, that it was impossible to find in the great ocean of literature a ship that was unaware of what has been happening. ...we had never thought to look upon its like again!'¹⁹⁴

Woolf's aloofness that encouraged Mansfield's symbol of a 'bird' for her, had been taken too far in Night and Day. Not only was the style and form a repetition of existing styles and forms, the content was also stale and well-

192 Alpers p.258

193 Woolf, Diary Vol.I, 28 November 1919

194 'Night and Day' Novels and Novelists, November 21 1919 p.111

trodden. With the aftermath of the First World War so close to the novel and the author and critic, its absence from the text seemed ratified to the point of inhumanity. Woolf had written a novel within an elitist, cultural vacuum. Night and Day was far too precious for the culturally conscious Mansfield, especially perceptive from her outsider's perspective and with her knowledge of Woolf's own desire for a 'new word' in prose. Night and Day is a novel that contains no stylistic breakthrough, no artistic friction. Ironically the absence of 'life'¹⁹⁵ that Mansfield detected in Woolf's novel was precisely the quarrel that the latter had had with the Edwardian novelists in 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown'. If Night and Day was a necessary literary mistake for Woolf, a piece of archaic obsolete literature that Woolf would abandon in order to find her voice in Jacob's Room and Mrs Dalloway. then it was Mansfield who identified and alerted Woolf to this very conspicuous literary aberration.

Mansfield's letter to Murry more fully articulates precisely the nature of her critical and emotional objections to Woolf's novel.

My private opinion is that it is a lie in the soul. The war has never been: that is what the message is. I don't want (G-farbio!) mobilisation and the violation of Belgium, but the novel can't just leave the war out. There must have been a change of heart... ...I feel in the profoundest sense that nothing can ever be the same, - that, as artists, we are traitors if we feel otherwise... But Jane Austen could not write Northanger Abbey now - or if she did, I'd none of her...¹⁹⁶

195 'Night and Day' Novels and Novelists p.111
 196 Letters of KM to JMM 1913-22 p.380

The detachment of Woolf, her intellectual milieu perhaps made it difficult for her to become sufficiently involved with the 'world at large'. Woolf's precarious health (of which Mansfield was generally ignorant) made her cloistered, sheltered environment a necessity. However Mansfield's almost impassioned pleas for some emotional response to the catastrophe that was the First World War, seems both just and deserved.

Mansfield's preoccupation with her review indicates both her artistic and humanistic dismay at the novel and her indisputable feelings of treachery towards Woolf. She was more susceptible to Woolf than the latter realised. Their relationship was a concentrated series of brilliant readings and misreadings of each other. Mansfield's own ill-health and proximity to death no doubt accentuated the importance of the war in her life, its horrific effects were all too real to her.

...Speaking to you I'd say we have died and live again. How can that be the same life?... In a way it's a tragic knowledge; it is as though even while we live it's devilish hard. Talk about intellectual snobbery...¹⁹⁷

Again we face death. But through life; ... I couldn't tell anybody bang out about those deserts: they are my secret ('deserts of vast eternity'). I might write about a boy eating strawberries or a woman combing her hair on a windy morning, and that is the only way I can ever mention them. But they must be there...

My review of Virginia haunts me...¹⁹⁸

197 Letters of KM to JMM p.391

198 Letters of KM to JMM p.392-5

Night and Day enjoyed the reviewer it deserved.

Woolf's assertion that there was 'spite' in Mansfield's review is obviously more applicable to the psychology of Woolf than Mansfield. Mansfield demanded some form of catharsis in Woolf's novel, knowingly or unknowingly she was the personification of such catharsis in Woolf's creative life.

Mansfield from her haunted, penurious position in literary society viewed Woolf with more than a little envy. To Mansfield it seemed that Woolf had everything money, leisure, position and a supportive husband in a happy marriage. Night and Day therefore seemed all the more disquieting. Throughout her literary career, Woolf was in possession of her own "room of one's own. Mansfield was by contrast constantly trying to obtain one.

You know it's madness to love and live apart.
That's what we do... How I envy Virginia; no wonder she can write. There is always in her writing a calm freedom of expression as though she were at peace - her roof over her, her possessions round her and her man within call...199

Mansfield believed in Woolf's talent, even genius; she wanted better than Night and Day from a woman who had more congenial surroundings than her for such productions. With Woolf's space, emotional and material, she could afford to experiment. And of course she did. Mansfield's own dictum about having to express the War, without describing it 'bang out' was expressed later by both writers with consummate skill.

...The last blot fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the draggled fly lay in it and did not stir. The black legs were stuck to the body;

the front legs were not to be seen.
 'Come on,' said the boss. 'Look sharp!' and he stirred it with his pen - in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead. 200

Mansfield's fiction displayed a specific type of psychology' transference. The Boss's strange behaviour indicates his inability to come to terms with the death of his son in the war. His sadistic treatment of the insect (symbolically a fly) reveals obliquely the causes of this repressed grief. The fly is treated with great humanity by the author; it is the symbol of the bosses moral decay and of course that of the age in which he lived. As in Lawrence a very particular even inconsequential incident has become a universal signified.

[Mr Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but, Mrs Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, he stretched his arms out. They remained empty] 201

[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death mercifully was instantaneous.] 202

Woolf's bracketed dismissal of both her central character and a minor character as well is as indifferent as the life it reproduces. Fiction retaliates and says such things are impossible, inhuman; life retaliates and asks why? The 'Times Passes' section of the novel is the result; so is 'The Fly' Night and Day had been a method of recognition and innovation for both Mansfield and Woolf.

Finally in my discussion of Mansfield and Woolf I would like to comment upon the infamous disclosure of

200 The Fly p.418
 201 To the Lighthouse p.120
 202 To the Lighthouse p.124

Woolf upon Mansfield that she stank like a 'civet cat.'
 In Beginning Again Leonard Woolf mentions Mansfield's
 'cheap scent and sentimentality'.²⁰³ How can such
 criticisms of a deeply personal nature be set alongside
 the other Woolf comments that Mansfield was 'all kinds of
 interesting things'²⁰⁴—and that 'her hard composure is
 much on the surface.'²⁰⁵ As the Woolf-Mansfield relation-
 ship was so ambiguous and personally intense, I think it
 is necessary to question such non-literary concerns
 closely. There were no easily defined boundaries between
 the two women. Alpers in his typically 'gallant' way
 defends both Woolf and Mansfield with this account.²⁰⁶

Katherine was fond of a rather expensive
 perfume called Genet Fleur... Whether this is
 what she was wearing on the night she went to
 Hogarth House, her biographer must not presume
 to say... That it was a capital error to use
 scent at all when going to dine with Leonard
 and Virginia ... is obvious of course.²⁰⁷

The protective attitude of Alpers to Mansfield is
 obvious. The research is however certainly a credible
 explanation for what seems a pretty appalling attack on
 Mansfield's person. Indeed it seems likely that Woolf's
 reaction was a conspicuous exaggeration of her dislike of
 the perfume, if it was that at all. No critic could ever
 accuse Woolf of undue sensuality in her work. Her novels
 are largely devoid of any intense physicality or suggest-
 iveness. Mansfield with her colourful life - experiences
 must have presented a remarkable contrast to Woolf: the

203 Leonard Woolf Beginning Again, Second Edition (Harvest, New York
 1964) p.203

204 Woolf Letters Vol.III to Katherine Arnold-Foster 1073

205 Woolf Letters Vol.II Thursday 17 April 1918

206 Angela Carter Nothing Sacred Second Edition (Virago London 1985)
 p.161

207 Alpers p.253

sexual abivalence of both, probably rendered the sensual aspects of their relationship significantly important. Woolf and Mansfield were reacting physically as well as intellectually and emotionally to each other. Woolf's reaction of course is enlightening more on Woolf herself than Mansfield. Woolf's account of the meeting is rather different than that of Leonard Woolf.

The dinner last night went off; the delicate things were discussed. We could both wish that she stinks like a - well civet cat that had taken to street walking. In truth I'm a little shocked by her commonness at first sight; lines so hard and cheap. However, when this diminishes she repays friendship ...We discussed Henry James and KM was illuminating I thought...208

Fascination can take many forms. Its linguistic expression may frequently be rather at odds with meaning. Mansfield's 'acid'²⁰⁹ that Woolf feared was anything but indifferent to Mansfield.

I was happy to hear K - abused the other night...I must think her good since I'm glad to hear her abused, 209b

Woolf's relationship with Mansfield was one of reaction and response - sometimes delayed. Woolf 'courted' Mansfield for the majority of the time, time and health were on her side rather than Mansfield's. Mansfield's inscrutability perhaps operating as a defence against all possibilities however attractive they might be.

208 Woolf Diary Vol.I Thursday 11 October 1919

209 Woolf Diary Vol.I Wednesday 19 March 1919

209b Woolf Diary Vol.I 12 December 1920

My God, I love to think of you Virginia as my friend. Don't cry me own ardent creature or say with your head a little on one side, smiling as though you knew some enchanting secret: "Well, Katherine, we shall see,"... But pray consider how rare it is to find someone with the same passion that you and I have, who desires to be scrupulously truthful with you...210

The affection and warmth is apparent here. Mansfield like Woolf acknowledged that it was possible in their relationship to get down to what was 'rock' or 'essential' in each other. Mansfield's inscrutability as we can detect from this letter was a shared secret with Woolf. Too much lay hidden and vulnerably suppressed for a more openly expressed - even dangerous affection. Their relationship was fragmented, shattering in emotional and literary terms and artistically intense. It had a profound effect on them both. Mansfield was Woolf's first and possibly most important visitation of Orlando.

And then she was inscrutable. Did she care for me? Sometimes she would say so - would kiss me - would look at me as if (is this sentiment?) her eyes would like always to be faithful. She would promise never never to forget. That was what we said at the end of our last talk. .. I was jealous of her writing - the only writing I have ever been jealous of. This made it harder to write to her; and I saw in it, perhaps from jealousy, all the qualities I disliked in her... When I began to write, it seemed to me there was no point in writing. Katherine Won't read it...
Where is she, who could do what I can't_{210b}

Woolf's dissection of her friendship with Mansfield and vice-versa borders on the romantic; the tentative questions, uneasy qualifications, the unsatisfying answers. Woolf's honesty in this extract no doubt encouraged by the death of her friend and the sense of

210 'Fifteen Letters from KM to Woolf' p.19

210b Collected Letters Vol.II To Virginia Woolf 13 August 1919

finality that produced, is circumspect. Ironically the tense used in 'I began to write' suggests that Woolf's great literary writing was to take place after the loss of her friend and rival. Woolf had to distill Mansfield emotionally and creatively in order to learn and benefit from their liaison and relationship, Woolf's acknowledgment that Mansfield 'could do what I can't!' undermines the significance and real importance of the destructive bitchiness that had so marred their contact with each other.

Mansfield too did not forget the benefits of Woolf's presence in her life and destiny. 'You would not believe me if you knew how often you are in my heart and mind,²¹¹ and later 'you are the only woman with whom I long to talk work. There will never be another.'²¹² Mansfield's choice of emphasis is telling; Woolf affected her in the two most important areas of her self. Her heart and her fiction. The strange, almost preternatural knowledge that haunts Mansfield's Journal and Letters was unnervingly proved correct once again.

Mansfield's reading of Woolf, expressed in a letter to Ottoline Morrell in 1917 stands as one of the most intuitive, instinctive versions of Virginia Woolf ever written.

"She seemed to me to be one of those Dostoevsky women whose 'innocence' has been hurt. Immediately I decided I understood her completely..."²¹³

211 Collected Letters Vol.II to Virginia Woolf 13 August 1919

212 Alpers p.260

213 Collected Letters Vol.1 3 JULY 1917 p.315

Mansfield's Woolf, a combination of literature and a very special tragic sense of living seems finally interchangeable with Mansfield herself. Ambiguity as ever dominated their union.

Lawrence and the discredited self

"You look all dark." He drew back the curtains and called it an effect of light, but when I came into my studio to dress I saw it was not that. I was a deep earthy colour, with pinched eyes. I was green.

Strangely enough these fits are Lawrence and Freida over again. I am more like L. than anybody. We are unthinkably alike in fact.²¹⁴

Mansfield met Lawrence in June 1913 at the office of the Blue Review. The friendship with Lawrence and Freida has been much publicised in both literary and non-literary accounts; it was certainly one of the most important non-sexual relationships that Mansfield ever formed and its significance to Lawrence can be discerned in Women in Love, The Rainbow, The Fox and his play Touch and Go. Tomalin in her biography of Mansfield, A Secret Life extensively researches the biographical relationship within and without their literary representation. In this section of my analysis, I wish to focus my attention on the Journal and Letters in discussing Lawrence's strange attraction and fascination for Mansfield, which was intensively reciprocated and repulsed at various stages

of their personal and artistic involvement.

In what ways could Lawrence be so 'unthinkably alike' Mansfield and why the strange use of unthinkably?
215

In an Essay on the letters of Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield, Louis Cazamian remarked,

...it is a strange fate that these two human beings so different in most respects, should appear to be definitely linked, not only by their actual contacts, but by some analogues of destiny, and even of temper...216

Destiny is perhaps discernible in their parallel consumptive illnesses; both would die from tuberculosis. Mansfield and Lawrence were forced to travel abroad as exiles, in order to attempt various dubious 'cures' for their chronic conditions, accentuating their sense of alienation in literary London. Solitary minds in isolating, alien places. They were both inhabitants of the tangential Bloomsbury; more of the 'underworld' than the class-conscious Garsington. Notably, Lawrence's relationship with Garsington was terminated irrevocably after his caricature of Ottoline Morrell as Hermione Raddice appeared in Women in Love.217

Sexually, Mansfield had more in common with Lawrence than the naive or self-protective Murry could easily grasp.218 Her revelations to Lawrence about her early lesbianism that led to infamous chapter 'Shame' in The Rainbow, indicate a level of trust even fascination, that was shared with the novelist and remained absent understandably from her relations with Murry. Lawrence was

215 Letters and Journals p.1q27

216 Louis Cazamian, Essais en deux Langues (Paris 1934) p.269

217 A Secret Life p.155

218 A Secret Life p.147

Mansfield's more exposing, dangerous relationship. Lawrence's own preoccupation with his troubled and suppressed homosexuality remained largely unperceived by Murry. (The homoerotic 'Prologue' to Woman in Love was suppressed.) However such sexual ambiguity was more obvious, even confirmed within Mansfield's friendship with Lawrence. Mansfield's bisexuality perhaps alerted her to it in others. 'Unthinking' in Lawrence or Mansfield could therefore represent a state of suspended sexual guilt, a form of sexual repression. (In the same way that Mansfield's metaphor of darkness or night approximates this ambiguity as well. Energies that are denied or inwardly expressed and channelled away from the desired object perhaps attained a power that was almost pathological. At any rate the destructive tendencies that are so frequently documented by Mansfield and others in the Journal and Letters, were also paralleled and darkly expressed in the Lawrence letters too. Naturally the physiological nature of their shared sickness must be taken into account as well.)

Everything has a touch of delirium, the blackbird
on the wall... even the apple blossom. And when
I see a snake winding rapidly in the marshy place
I think I am mad...219

The symbols of Lawrence's madness are curious. The blackbird is touched by delirium; the very presence of a snake in Lawrence possesses its own resonances. The marshy place almost becomes a metaphor (or the mind, and a particularly disturbed mind too,)

The blackbird recalls both Mansfield and Woolf as well. It is as if madness within this cultural moment had very specific linguistic expression. Lawrence's 'black bird' and that of Mansfield are interchangeable, no doubt linked to their consumptive febrility. but also surely to their similarity of temperament? The distaste for life is acidic, it is Mansfieldian, 'K will do 4 novels every week - pray to God she won't do mine! I feel the acid in her once more,²²⁰ Illness has significantly tampered the perception, so that distaste has become the tone by which the world is seen. Keats unsurprisingly expressed a further parallel in his letters;

What a set of little people we live amongst.
I went the other day into an ironmongers shop,
without any change in my sensations - men and
tin kettles are much the same these days...²²¹

Keats lacks Lawrence's pervasive darkness, but the sensibility is shared. Delirium, or such a particular type of concentration has rendered the compromises undertaken by the external world disgusting; and distasteful. Abhorrence has become the restricted maintenance of a single tone, a single part of view. Gaps in perspective signify acceptance or at least ambiguity; these examples are expositions of relentless consciousness; gap-less and estranging.

Writing to Murry from Bandol in February 1918 Mansfield expresses her fears of madness in the following way (I am quoting here more fully than earlier in thesis as it is particularly appropriate).

220 Woolf Diary Vol.I Wednesday 19 March 1919

221 Letters of John Keats Edited by Robert Gittings, Seventh Edition (Oxford University Press. Oxford 1987) (To BR Hayden 8 March 1919) p.201

But there is a great black bird flying over me,
 and I am so frightened he'll settle - so terrified
 I don't know exactly what kind he is... If I were
 not working here, with wars and anxiety I should
 go mad, I think. My night terrors here are rather
 complicated by packs and packs of growling,
 roaring ravening prow-and-prowl around dogs...222

Mansfield's metaphor for madness is historically placed. Ironically some forms of 'madness' namely 'war and anxiety' serve to displace others. Interior thoughts are horrifyingly exploited in a material sense by the outside world. Confrontation with the 'black bird' is feared, implicitly suggesting that such a confrontation is a form of death-in-life. The inability of Mansfield to precisely locate and identify the nature of the bird adds to the sense of terror. Anonymity breeds 'night terrors,' in the same way that Keats' men are comprised kettles.

Ironically the identity of the black-bird is now known. A few days after this letter, Mansfield started to cough blood. Mansfield's fears were proved intuitively well-grounded. The intimidating threatening 'dogs' described in the letter, and which appear to be both physical and imaginative symbols of fear, recur in Mansfield's stories. Stanley Burnell's sexual interest in Linda is likened to that of some big dog for example. Mansfield and Lawrence with their impending doom-like 'black birds' share a parallel metaphor for estrangement. 'Unthinkably alike' is thus an anti-rational state, intuitive, encroaching, a place of instinct and liberated fears, a place of 'night terrors'

I seem to spend half of my life arriving at strange hotels. And asking if I may go to bed immediately...

The strange door shuts upon the stranger, and then I slip down in the sheets. Waiting for the shadows to come out of their corners and spin their slow, slow web over the ugliest wallpaper of all...223

Mansfield has gone outside of herself once again. Biography has been converted into fictional art, with an underlying psychological perspective. The repetition of 'stranger' and 'strange' charts the process and progress of self-definition. The estrangement is simultaneously emotional and literary, 'The Ugliest Wallpaper of all' is the stranger redefined, is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's heroine discerning her refracted self behind the conscious facade that that masquerades as the permanent self, the self in front of the wall-paper. Wallpaper is almost metonymy, but can't be. The 'Ugliest wallpaper of all' suggests a distinct method of perception. Indeed it was where Mansfield wrote many parts of her stories. With the strange 'A Married Man's Story' it seems the only method of perception. As relationships 'spin their slow, slow web' re-editing is taking place, with the dark areas of the human psche. Definition has become a matter of anti-thesis.

Lawrence's treatment of identity in The Virgin and the Gypsy exhibits another example of re-editing. This time as a method of denial.

She - who - was - Cynthia. Let the white
snow-flower bloom inaccessible on the heights
of the past. The present is another story.²²⁴

Syntactically Cynthia is dead. Her name has become estranging from its own sense of personality - even from itself. The only reference point for her identity is the past and that has been converted too. 'She' has become a matter of self-conscious fiction. 'Do I make J. up?'²²⁵ Mansfield asked herself once. Undoubtedly and unthinkably so!

In the novella The Fox, Lawrence's treatment of a triangular relationship was significantly influenced by his knowledge of Mansfield,²²⁶ The sense of claustrophobia, as in The Virgin and the Gypsy, relates to suppressed sexual desires, uncertainty of sexual orientation and barely acknowledged guilt.

Both girls dreaded these times. They dreaded the almost continuous darkness that enveloped them on their desolate little farm near the wood. Barford was physically afraid. She was afraid of tramps, afraid lest someone should come prowling around. March was not so much afraid as uncomfortable, and disturbed. She felt discomfort and gloom in all her physique.²²⁷

There is an unmistakable critical and emotional judgement at work here. Mansfield would not have been so obtuse, nor would she have shown herself as obviously as Lawrence is prepared to do here. 'Darkness' is again ambivalent in every sense. The unease of March is particularly Lawrencean. Mansfield would have engaged detail, been ironically more physical in her depiction. Lawrence's

224 D H Lawrence, St Mawr, The Virgin and the Gypsy, Fourteenth Edition (Penguin London 1981) p.169

225 Journal p.295

226 A Secret Life p.186

227 D H Lawrence, 'The Fox' in Three Novellas, 15th Edition (Penguin London 1981) p.91

abstractions are meant to bely his intrusive premise.

The latter came first:

The imminent masculine invasion of the farm by the youth, has been pre-empted by Lawrence, the author. His knowledge is personally uncertain, so he resorts to the safety of philosophy and his pervasive feminine version of the Lawrentian blood-consciousness.

Sexual vulnerability is a frequent concern of Mansfield in her stories; as in the early In a German Pension. Sketches, where young abandoned females are brutally confronted by sexual desire.

'...what are you doing?' she whispered. He let go her hands, he placed his on her breasts, and the room seemed to swim round Sabina... In the silence the thin wailing of a baby, 228

And in the later stories where wives are reluctant to participate in their conjugal duties.

And it was always Stanley who was in the thick of danger. Her whole time was spent in rescuing him and restoring him, and calming him down... And what was left of her time was spent in the dread of having children... 229

In a letter to Murry, Mansfield lamenting her isolation and physical discomfort, recalls a further and almost parallel disturbance.

And then the past is so new; it's not past yet. Why, Bogey, on Thursday when the wind blew and I was not well, I suddenly relived the afternoon you and I were in the kitchen - and I came down and you 'teased' me... I didn't know what to do. It was like great black birds dashing at one's face. What can I do? I thought... 230

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- 228 At Lehmans p.729
 229 At the Bay p.222
 230 Letters KM to JMM p.406

Mansfield's illness, her uncertainty about Murry's loyalty and affection precipitate this outburst. What is particularly interesting is her choice of simile: the black birds again. Obviously they suggested or represented an area that was extremely painful to admit and bear. But the correspondence in the value of these symbols in terms of extreme feeling is difficult to exactly interpret: 'Night Terrors' were many and were interrelated, yet Mansfield alone and fearing madness in her solitary room was afflicted in a similar way to her horror before Murry's physical teasing. The shared symbolism is extensive, unresolved and pervasive. Physical and mental fears are inseparable. Raw vulnerability, almost to the point neurastheric consciousness in painfully rendered. Hardly surprising then that this woman would exhort herself to 'cover yourself - cover yourself quickly - Don't let them see'²³¹ Mansfield's inscrutability was a carefully constructed defence - more of an imperative obligatory mask than even she was prepared to readily admit. Despite Lawrence's infamous and severing comment to Mansfield "I loathe you. You revolt me, stewing in your consumption..."²³² Mansfield's final sentiments to her brutal friend and once ally were of affection and understanding. At Fointainebleau she remarked,

He (DHL) and E M Forster are two men who
could understand this place if they would...²³³

231 Letters KM to JMM p.431
 232 Letters KM to JMM p.470
 233 Letters KM to JMM p.688

With Mansfield's conviction that she had found peace and enlightenment at Gurdjieff's Institute (if only in its alternative to the ineffectual philosophy of Murry) this was a compliment indeed.²³⁴

Aside from a similarity of temperament perhaps, of what was Lawrence's relationship with Mansfield constructed? Writing naturally as with Woolf.

If Mansfield's criticism of Woolf was constructive and acute, then her reaction to Lawrence's novel, The Lost Girl was also illustrative of her commitment to writing and to those writers she admired and even loved.

It's important. It ought not to be allowed to pass.

The Times gave no inkling of what it was - never even hinted at its dark secret.

Lawrence denies his humanity. He denies the powers of the imagination... This is the doctrine of mindlessness... Oh, don't forget where Alvina feels 'a trill in her bowels' and discovers herself with child. A TRILL - what does that mean? And why is it so peculiarly offensive from a man? Because it is not on this plane that the emotions of others are conveyed to our imagination. It's a kind of sinning against Art...^{234b}

Mindlessness is not unthinking; the former represents a systematic denial of the imaginative process and creative potential. The latter is the area that is too near the core of the imaginative origins and nature for harmony. Lawrence in The Lost Girl is guilty of something that dogged Mansfield throughout her literary career, the inability always to strike the right note, to get near enough her subject.

234 A Secret Life p.228-237

234b Letters and Journals p.208-209

No, it was too difficult. "I'll - I'll go with them, and write to William later. Some other time. Later. Not now. But I shall certainly write, "thought Isabel hurriedly.
And, laughing in the new way,
She ran down the stairs.²³⁵

Manfield's 'glass' here fails to ignite. All is intelligent construction, imaginative fabrication. Mansfield is writing from the outside looking in. Isabel is described, not seen. Lawrence in The Lost Girl is reducing the liability of Language, like Mansfield in 'Marriage a la Mode,' by an organised facade.

A glass stopper of a decanter, a tin soldier
a couple of tadpoles, a kitten with only one eye...
(Mark Twain: The Adventures of Tom Sawyer)
Not true!²³⁶

Twain, unlike Dickens in Oliver Twist was guilty of
²³⁷
a similar fabrication to Lawrence and Mansfield. Lawrence of course did possess knowledge and highly enlightened knowledge at that of what art should consists.

The great thing to do in a short story is to select the salient details - a few striking details to make a sudden swift impression. Try to use words vivid and emotion quickening; give as little explanation as possible...²³⁸

The 'emotion quickening' language in The Lost Girl appears conspicuous by its absence. Mansfield fully aware of Lawrence's talent, even genius, wanted better. Aaron's Rod provided this.

There are certain things in this book I do not like. But they are not important, or really part of it. They are trivial encrusted, they cling to it as snails to the underside of a leaf - no more - ... But apart from these things

235 Marriage a la Mode p.321

236 Journal p.159

237 Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist 18th Edition (Penguin London 1982)p36

238 D H Lawrence Letters Vol.1 To Louie Burrows Letter 66

is the leaf, is the tree, firmly planted,
 deeply thrusting, outspread, growing frandly
 alive in everything. All the time I read
 this book I felt it feeding me...239

Aaron's Rod Mansfield believed had been written with conviction it was not predigested. Lawrence had 'broken through' into artistic and critical certainty. He had achieved knowledge, instead of hypothesis. Mansfield judged other texts by the same exigencies as she judged her own. It is also perhaps significant that Mansfield's recurring sensibility of corruption, the 'snail under the leaf' should appear in a reaction to Lawrence. Lawrence, Mansfield believed was capable of triumphing over this artistic and moral blight as well as sometimes succumbing like her to its temptations. Murry as Harmon in Je ne parle pas Francais seems less confidently conquering.

I subtitled this section Lawrence and discredited knowledge and perhaps it is now time to explore the latter's significance. Toni Morrison writing in Black Women Writers expressed this view on the Song of Solomon

But within that practicality we also accepted what I suppose could be called superstition and magic, which is another way of knowing things. But to blend those two things together at the same time was enhancing, not limiting. And some of those things were discredited knowledge,²⁴⁰

The underlining is my own. Morrison's notion of discredited knowledge takes in those areas of experience that have had little or no external social validation and relates specifically to the knowledge attained by outsiders. Morrison is writing here about the Black Experience

239 Letters and Journals p.268

240 Black Women Writers, edited by Mari Evans (Pluto Press, London 1985) p.342

obviously but her notion is universally applicable. Any experience or perspective that has been denied or suppressed could be termed 'discredited knowledge' and Mansfield as the 'little colonial' and 'inscrutable' woman certainly had her share of discredited experiences. Illness and enforced physical estrangement from intimacy and contact served to accentuate the importance of such discredited experiences and knowledge. Lawrence also seems to inhabit this word. 'Superstition and magic' as a means of reading experience are closely related to the act of creativity. Inspiration ungoverns and then perversely governs those who endeavour to use it.

When I am, as it were, completely myself, entirely alone ... say travelling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal, or during the night when I cannot sleep; it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly. Whence and how they come, I know not; nor can I force them...²⁴¹

Duquette and his arrestingly strange state of being 'quite apart from myself' is recalled here. Mozart is suggesting that the self is not unified, is not inimitable. The act of creation appears as lightning, unlooked for and with its own ruling.

Yet these areas of consciousness and knowledge are kept silent and gagged. They are antisocial even to those who use them. Illness perhaps exaggerates their importance or conversely reduces resistance to them.

My soul is black and turgid. I feel always filled with corrosive darkness, and cut off from everybody...²⁴²

241 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 'A Letter' CREATIVITY Edited by PE Vernon Seventh Edition (Penguin, London 1980) p.55
 242 D H Lawrence Letters Vol.II p.933

'I' is estranged by its own darkness, forced into different relationships with people, destructive and antisocially 'other'. The 'I' has become its own personal stranger. 'Corrosive' indicates the degree to which such ambiguity endangers its own 'self'. A modern Prospero in search of a Caliban? Or Caliban in search of creative light and expression? The ambiguity discredits the narrative. Hence its concentrated power. Words are operating almost supernaturally. Their choice of symbolism appears as mysterious to the narrator as the reader.

But sometimes I am afraid of the terrible things that are real in the darkness, and of the unreality of these things I see. It becomes like a madness at last, to know one is all the time walking in a pale assembly of an unreal world... and I can't escape. So I think with fear of having to talk to anybody, because I can't talk. 243

Dante's Inferno meets Eliot's Wasteland with Beaudelaire acting as arbitrator. We have the psychological, unwritten philosophy of A Married Man's Story. The mind has usurped that which it perceives. Even the social responsibility for verbal communication has been discharged. Lawrence's Finnegans Wake is within; his silence is a form of darkness and vice-versa. The discredited world has moved outside. This entire process is brilliantly rendered in Mansfield's Journal; again a story is being repeated, retold, re-explained.

What I felt was, he said, that I wasn't in the whole of myself at all. I'd got locked in, somehow, in some little ... top room of my mind, and strangers had got in - people I'd

never seen before were making free of rest of it. There was a dreadful feeling of confusion, chiefly that, and ... vague noises - like things being moved - charged about in my head. I lit the candle and sat up in the mirror I saw a dark brooding strangely lengthened face...244

Estrangement crosses sex-gender boundaries. 'I' immediately becomes 'he'. One self becomes an object to another, a focalised fragment of narrative. 'Being in the whole of myself' is set against the unthinkable state of not being in the whole of myself; dislocation has become absolute. The state approaches a layman's version of schizophrenia. Artistic 'possession' has mutated into something extremely, disquietingly personal. Recognition has ceased to occur.

It often happens to me now that when I lie down to sleep at night, instead of getting drowsy, I get wakeful and, lying here in bed, I begin to live over either scenes from real life or imaginary scenes. It's not too much to say they are almost hallucinations. They are marvellously vivid. I lie on my right side and put my left hand up to my forehead as though I were praying. This seems to induce the state...245

Detail is ritualistically employed in the passage. The 'right side' and the 'left hand,' As with the previously quoted passages, the incontatory nature of both Mansfield's and Lawrence's prose is apparent. Physical disability has engendered mental activity: 'Excursion' has taken on a new meaning. Mansfield's awareness of the Other life or the other possibilities, transcends her understandable feelings of despair. She accepted the

244 Journal p.169

245 Journal p.186

discredited, singular experiences with spirit and largesse.

But I know it is not all ... Let me take the case of KM. She has led, ever since she can remember, a very typically false life. Yet, through it all, there have been moments, instants, gleams, when she has felt the possibility of something quite other...²⁴⁶

Mansfield's spirituality or mysticism is still defiantly located within her maligned and maligning self. She remains human and difficult so. Her objectivity is humourless and succinct. Her appreciation of life unmis- takeable and rendered with a perspective that engenders pathos and dignity at the same time.

A queer bit of psychology: I had to disappear behind the bushes today in a hollow. That act made me feel nearer to normal health than I have felt for years. Nobody there; nobody wondered if I was alright, i.e. there was nothing to distinguish me, at the moment, from an ordinary human being,²⁴⁷

Lawrence in spite of his similarities to Mansfield, could never have written the passage above. His glacial detachment so obviously discernible in his letters to others, could never be so honestly applied to himself. Philosophy and Lawrence would have got in the way.

He rarely in his letters, strikes the note of 'full-dress description', his sense of hostility to all approved modes of expressions was too strong for that...²⁴⁸

Lawrence would have converted Mansfield's human need into something self-consciously discredited and dark. Mansfield simply and movingly just celebrates her brief reunion with the rest of mankind.

246 Journal p.330
 247 Journal p.320
 248 Essais en Deux Langues p.266

This gives the note of grandeur and pathos. Shadow and light combine.

And then suffering, bodily suffering such as I've known for three years. It has changed for ever everything even the appearance of the world is not the same - there is something added. Everything has its shadow. Is it right to resist such suffering? Do you know I feel it has been an immense privilege. Yes, in spite of all... Darling its only the fairy tales we really live by,²⁴⁹

Credited knowledge needs its 'shadow' its discredited self. Discredited and credited as they are, Mansfield's Journal and Letters offer the reader something unthinkably like ourselves.

Chapter TwoMansfield, Dickens and the Absurd:The Daughters of the Late Coloneland The Doves' Nest

In Dickens and the Scandalmongers published in 1965, Edward Wagenknecht₁ devotes an entire chapter to the 'literary relationship' between Dickens and Katherine Mansfield. This chapter enlarges upon a much earlier critical evaluation, expressed by Wagenknecht in the 'English Journals'₂ of 1928, that Mansfield's work often conveyed a 'decidedly Dickensian flavour.' The three paragraphs of 1928 had become a chapter in 1965, suggesting that the critic's interest in his early idea was sufficient to impel him to return to it all those years later. Claire Tomalin₃ and Kate Fullbrook₄ also make reference to the Dickensian influence upon Mansfield, underlining the importance of this view.

As my own discussion of Mansfield's Dickensian sensibility includes an investigation of some of the literary possibilities expressed by Wagenknecht, I include several excerpts from his innovative criticism here.

Many of Katherine Mansfield's descriptive passages have a decidedly dickensian flavour. The eighth section of 'At the Bay' - the interlude of Alice and Mrs Stubbs is quite in the Dickens tradition. She had Dickens' ability to 'tug' a character through the description of some single characteristic action...₅

The emphasis on ridiculous and ludicrous detail, the flair for eccentric physical characteristics, the

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- 1 Edward Wagenknecht, Dickens and the Scandalmongers (Norman University of Oklahoma Press 1965)
 - 2 Edward Wagenknecht, 'Katherine Mansfield' in The English Journal Vol.XVII (1928) p.272-84
 - 3 Secret Life p.58, 60, 171, 213
 - 4 Fullbrook p.43, 93
 - 5 The English Journal p.280-1

sharp eye for vivid contrasts, the absurd, unexpected - yet true psychological reaction, and the far-fetched at the same time amusing and suggestive - comparison - all this presented as it appears here, seems to me distinctly Dickensian.⁶

I am much more interested in... the eager response of the one artist to the other, and this seems to me an honour to them both. It is evident from the passages already cited (from the Journal and Letters) that Katherine Mansfield's real experience with Dickens came in her last years... The most important consideration that emerges is... the striking resemblance between what I have called the dramatic or the experiential approach in both of them.

This is superbly theatrical. That is, it is exactly the opposite of what most people mean when they say theatrical; it is genuine and vital and unashamed.⁷

Mansfield's ability to suggest or summarise a character through the manipulation of a 'single characteristic action' obviously has a particularly useful role to play in the short story. If time and space are at a premium then the talent for salient detail is a great necessity, for the achievement of 'concentration, suggestiveness and enfranchisement' the three things advocated by short story writers and analysts of the genre in Hermione Lee's introduction to The Secret Self.⁸ Such concentration also expands the parameters of the fiction, encouraging the possibilities (unspoken) of other stories, other avenues for fictional explanation, with the distinct absence of beginnings and endings in the short modern fiction. (Woolf in her essay on the Journal obviously reinforces this view.)⁹

⁶ The Scandal mongers p.100

⁷ The Scandal mongers p.108

⁸ Hermione Lee 'The Secret Self: Modern Short Stories by Women' in The Fiction Magazine VolIV No.IV, August/September 1985 p.36-38

⁹ Woolf 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind' p.84⁸⁷

The parallels between Mansfield's utilisation of the comic and Dickens's I shall explore with specific reference to what is now commonly known as the 'Absurd.' I shall also examine the manipulation of 'theatre' in her fiction, in this chapter. Wagenknecht's emphasis upon Mansfield's 'experiential' approach to her fictional writing is reinforced naturally in her non-fiction, significantly in her Journal where even at an early stage of her writing career, she is advocating life as copy, experience for fiction's sake and so on. 'Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always reaching for new sensations... Be afraid of nothing.'¹⁰ Mansfield's interest in Wilde later became transformed into a more concentrated and controlled creative response to Dickens, as I shall detail in this chapter of the thesis. However this experiential approach of Mansfield and Dickens needs outlining initially here as it represents the tone and key to any reading of the Dickensian Mansfield. Dickens' singular method of creating the characters who sprawl across his fiction was described interestingly by his daughter Mamie in a series of recollections entitled My father as I recall him. The book is a generally affectionate portrayal of a difficult and domineering parent, and includes this glimpse of Dickens at work.

I was lying on the sofa endeavouring to keep perfectly quiet, while my father wrote busily and rapidly at his desk, when he suddenly jumped from his chair and rushed to a mirror which hung near, and in which I could see the reflection of some extraordinary facial contortions which he was making. He returned rapidly to his desk, wrote furiously for a few moments, and then went again

10 Journal p.10

to the mirror. The facial pantomime was resumed, and then turning towards, but evidently not seeing me, he began talking in a low voice...¹¹

This is not simply a quaint, idiosyncratic recollection. The intensity of Dicken's creative energies are apparent as he 'furiously' endeavours to recapture what he has feelingly lived, vocally and physically. Transmutation has become a literal not a figurative experience. It is therefore all the more challenging, exciting and even creatively disturbing. This approach to fiction was also detailed by the critic George Henry Lewes:

Dickens once declared to me that every word said by his characters was distinctly heard by him; I was at first not a little puzzled to account for the fact that he could hear language so utterly unlike the language of real feeling, and not be aware of its preposterousness; but the surprise vanished when I thought of the phenomena of hallucination.¹²

Lewis is obviously making a very personal critical judgement here. But it is interesting that he diagnoses a direct link between language which is preposterous and hallucinatory experience. The correspondence between Lewes's account and that of Mamie Dickens is thereby revealed. If hallucination does intensify language beyond that which can be easily termed credible, then that would emphasise the relevance of the fantastic to a critical evaluation of Dickens and indirectly, Mansfield herself. Any notion concerning the possible existence of 'credible' language insinuates the existence of a rational ordered linguistic order and naturally by the laws of relativity its antithesis. Dickens hallucinatory

11 Mamie Dickens, My father as I recall him, (Roxburghe Press, London) p.48

12 Philip Collins Dickens' Interviews and Recollections (Macmillan, London 1981) p.27

hallucinatory language could be construed as the language of the inverted world, the confrontation of reason with all all that 'it traditionally refuses to encounter,'¹³

As language confronts its objects then 'if there is no soul and no action possible, the striving spirit will precisely express itself in abnormal and irregular manifestations.'¹⁴ Dickens's 'incredible' language seems a marvellous expression and example of Dostoevsky's premise.

Another form of creative experience enjoyed by Dickens was that of mimicry, an experience that he often made public use of. Hallucination was not just a private enclosed occurrence.

Dickens took great interest in (the old woman who used to sweep out the offices) and would mimic her manner of speech, her ways, her excuses, etc. to the very life. He could imitate, in a manner that I have never heard equalled, the low population of the streets of London in all their varieties... He told me he had often taken parts in amateur theatricals before he came to us...¹⁵

Dickens's ability to absorb (in every sense) the defining characteristics and vocal attributes of certain members of the population, and his theatrical background were paralleled years later by Mansfield. If the 'very life' in this example was incredible to Lewes, then perhaps these two conclusions are different only in the matter of degree to which they are applicable to Dickens's characters. Leonard Woolf's account of Mansfield's

13 Rosemary Jackson, Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (Routledge, London and New York 1981) p.21

14 Jackson p.17

15 Collins, Dickens Interviews p.11-12

theatrical talents reinforces the latter's similarity to Dickens, and the integration of art with personality and style.

Katherine was a very different person. I liked her, though I think she disliked me. She had a mask face and she, more than Murry, seemed to be perpetually on her guard against a world which she assumed to be hostile... When we first knew her she was extraordinarily amusing. I don't think anyone has ever made me laugh more than she did in those days. She would sit very upright on the edge of a chair or sofa and tell at immense length a kind of saga, of her experiences as an actress... There was not the shadow of a gleam of a smile on her mask of a face, and the extraordinary funniness of the story was increased by the flashes of her astringent wit...¹⁶

Leonard Woolf emphasises Mansfield's inscrutability, wit and comic manipulation of experience, particularly her own experiences. Mansfield's theatrical recital appears close to Dickens's public and private mimicry, even to the point of some manifestation of chameleon-like possession. Anne Estelle Rice in her recorded memories of Mansfield enlarges still further upon these exciting similarities to Dickens.

In a subtle way, she assumed the character of the costume she wore... mimicry was there for our enjoyment. She was good company and great fun, witty, satirically assessing friend or foe... characteristically she was a chameleon...¹⁷

Rice's account encourages critical assumptions about Mansfield's creative 'possession' and her Romantic affinities with Keats' 'annihilation' in the company of others. Mansfield had also in Rice's recollection realised the value of mimicry in entertaining any audience, any possible, susceptible 'readers' of herself and her-

16 Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again p.204

17 Anne Estelle Rice 'Memories of Katherine Mansfield in ADAM INTERNATIONAL REVIEW Vol.300 (1965) p.76-85

self as fiction. That such ability gravitated towards the comic perhaps suggests that Mansfield's frequent sense of alienation in a 'hostile' world could only be redeemed through the healing, integrating powers of comedy. (Naturally the comic can be socially destructive too, but its position on the virtual precipice of social expression makes its usage ambiguous. I shall explore this further later in the chapter.) If Mansfield in mimicking others for effect suspended her own sense of social personality is not being herself, being 'not herself' then such suspension finds correlation with Keats as well as Dickens and perhaps underlines the liberating effects of the comic and the type of creative possession enjoyed by all three writers.

When I am in a room with people if I ever am
free from speculating on creations of my own
brain, then nor myself goes home to myself
even now I am not speaking from myself; but
from some character in whose soul I now live...¹⁸

The imaginative state of being 'not myself' perhaps encourages a sense of the fantastic or as in Lewes's account a sense of the 'preposterous.' Private and public social parameters are eroded and explored not just from the physically emulating outside, but also from within. Mimicry is as much an expression of the unconscious reading of the 'other,' as a conscious one. The mime is a refracted prismatic mirror, breaking 'the limits of possibility and the agreement between reader and author'¹⁹ Meaning has become relocated and redrawn

18 Keats Letters (Richard Woodhouse October 27 1818) p.158

19 Jackson p.27

upon new contexts and materials. This transference may be termed or evaluated as absurd because the public/private parameters have been extinguished or rewritten. Mansfield, Dickens and Keats in miming others, are also writing others through their acting and sensitive susceptibility to suggestion and idea. All writers may be actors, but I would argue that it is the extent to which such acting or possession is manipulated that makes such imaginative excursions a critical concern.

Charlotte Bronte's fears for her sister's emotional welfare after the writing of Wuthering Heights were expressed in the now famous 1850 preface to the novel. In a sense, the preface represents a warning to all writers, including herself, about the dangers of a particular type of creative writing. More particularly it admonishes those writers who seek to exploit the individual consciousness and unconsciousness without precise boundaries being respected and adhered to.

Whether it is right or advisable to create things like Heathcliffe, I do not know: I scarcely think it is. But this I know; the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always the master - something that at times strangely wills and works for itself...²⁰

Charlotte Bronte significantly withdraws from the all engrossing, encompassing though of Heathcliffe. As in Mansfield's own withdrawal into 'unthinking' with respect to her similarity to Lawrence, explored in Chapter Three of the thesis, Bronte believes that being 'not myself'

20 Charlotte Bronte 1850 Preface to Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights (Penguin, London 1983)

opens the writer to imaginative invasion and ambivalent 'possession'. Mansfield read widely as her Journal and Letters indicate. She was acquainted with Bronte's²¹ work so it is highly probable that she was also conversant with Charlotte Bronte's views in Wuthering Heights.

Mansfield's susceptibility to literary suggestion both in her personal and working writing life is well-documented in the Journal. Mansfield's relationship with Murry obviously reinforced her susceptibility and access to literary materials of a diverse nature and appeal. (Murry wrote a book on Keats and one on Dostoevsky amongst others) Ida Baker, Mansfield's life-long friend 'wife' and companion, reveals in her biography,

They (Katherine and Murry) spent weeks discussing Proust and later Keats... I think she (KM) had planned to study and write on Keats herself...²²

Discussion implies considered thought, and Mansfield in the loneliness and personal isolation of her later life had plenty of opportunities for such literary questioning. The proposed book of criticism on Keats no doubt would have encouraged views on Keats's own creative technique and methods of achieving his poetry as well. Keats was perhaps not 'just' a poet or fellow writer to the solitary Mansfield, he was also a mystical, strangely present companion. If the Journal was her 'second-self' 'come, my unseen, my unknown, let us talk together' (Journal p.270), perhaps Keats was a further exploration or dissection of such a visitation. Fellow artists, long-

21 Secret Life p.34

22 Ida Baker, Katherine Mansfield, The Memories of LM (Virago, London 1985)

dead in the Journal and Letters were companions and friends to share experiences with, to inhabit the same world.

The I dreamed that I went to stay with the sisters Bronte who kept a boarding house called the Bronte Institute - painfully far from the railway station and all the way there through heather. It was a sober place with linoleum on the stairs. Charlotte met me, at the door and said 'Emily is lying down.'²³

Mansfield's dream is saturated by Bronte concerns. The institute 'painfully far' from the railway station reinforces Mansfield's ability to 'possess' her subjects in life or fiction, for the sense of illness pervades the narrative. Ironically of course this anticipated Mansfield's own consumptive condition. In 'reading' the Bronte's here Mansfield was also writing herself at a later stage. Perhaps illness and isolation encouraged or exacerbated her Dickensian temperament - even of a necessity. For her need to invent companions seems the logical and very human extension of her earlier, Wildean wish to live many lives and experiences. Mansfield's creative energies were channelled in a direction that seems strikingly consistent with Keats's paradoxically conscious state of being 'not myself.' Mansfield being other, her own personal stranger could be companion to the Bronte's, Chekhov, Keats - whoever she so desired. Hallucination has become in experimental terms a method of socialisation, integration and coherence.

23 Letters of KM to JMM. Vol. 2 (8 May 1915) p.178

Would you not like to try all sorts of lives - one is so very small - but that is the satisfaction of writing - one can impersonate so many people...²⁴

Impersonation may be a method of defence, the necessary deflection of the encroaching loneliness of the relentlessly solitary self, as well as an exciting expansive method of imaginative investigation. Mansfield's emphasis on 'all sorts of lives' refreshes the limiting critical adage that writing should always be from immediate experience and knowledge. Mansfield's impersonation and possession appears the consummate anarchic, anti-text to this enclosing experience of being oneself, and one self only.

What can one do, faced with this wonderful tumble of round bright fruits, but gather them and play with them - and become them, as it were... There follows the moment when you are more duck, more apple or more Natasha than any of these objects could every possible be, and so you create them anew.²⁵

Identity is thus fluid, as much written in terms of what one is not, a what is and can be. Significantly Mansfield equates becoming some other self, with writing that self. identity is the moment of confrontation between subject, object and linguistic expression, an interdependent relationship of similarities as well as opposites.

It often happens to me now that when I lie down to sleep at night, instead of getting drowsy, I get wakeful and, lying here in bed, I begin to live over either scenes from real life or imaginary scenes. It's not too much to say they are almost hallucinations: they are marvellously vivid. I lie on my right side and put my left hand up to

24 Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield Vol.1 (To Sylvia Payne, 24 April 1906) p.18

25 Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield Vol.1 (To Dorothy Brett 11 October 1917) p.330

my forehead as though I were praying. This seems to induce the state.²⁶

Possession is an active process. Charlotte Bronte's fears are exploded in this extract. Mansfield is not the passive receiver of her hallucinatory experiences or writing; she is both instigator and channel instead. The detailed description of the inducing of such a state convinces the reader of its veracity. The familiar co-incides with the unfamiliar, the one appears the metamorphosis of the other; Language is being explored through otherness and difference to oneself. Hallucination is possibly the strategic labelling of the metamorphic undermining of the static, centrality of the self. Mansfield's and Dickens's 'preposterous' language in its odd sensitivity and vulnerability to suggestion could be termed overly-sensitive as well as hallucinatory. Conrad Aiken in A Reviewers ABC questions the utilisation of compulsive prose, fearing the limitations that he felt certain such a creative sensibility would impose.

One was inclined to question... whether this perpetual coruscation, this amazing sensitiveness to rhythms and sounds and almost shuddering awareness of texture, was not symptomatic of a sort of febrility which would ... impose on Miss Mansfield's work its very definite limitations...²⁷

There is another, perhaps more positive reading of this artistic febrility, that is to assimilate such acute sensitivity as a form of artistic ventriloquism and expression. Aiken's view of 1922 may have been transformed into Peter Kemp's 'high fidelity ventriloquism' of 1985.²⁸

26 Journal p.186

27 Conrad Aiken 'Katherine Mansfield' in Freeman Vol.V June 21 (1922) p.357-8

28 Peter Kemp 'Despatches from Solitude: The Stories of Katherine Mansfield' in the Sunday Times 28 April (1985)

Steven Newman in his versatile Dickens at Play²⁹ credits Mansfield's fellow perpetrator of febrile language or artist ventriloquism, Dickens with employing vertiginously fantastic prose in his novels, due to such expression being 'like conversation heard in sleep.' Newman in this instance referring specifically to the Old Curiosity Shop but his criticism is pertinent elsewhere, including certain of Mansfield's stories, especially the four examined in this thesis, The Daughters of the Late Colonel, The Doves' Nest, A Married Man's Story and Je ne parle pas français. Newman also quotes from Mamie Dickens, celebrating rather than decrying the literary ventriloquism employed by Dickens and as Kemp argues, Katherine Mansfield.

Mamie's account restores in a flash the radical meaning of impersonate: less an act of possession than of being possessed by another identity. Such mimicry is an act of dramatic apprehension.³⁰

Perhaps it is the very 'Radical' nature of such an artistic method that tends to misunderstanding; it could be construed as anti-individual or subversive even nihilistic in its destruction, however temporary of the original 'self'

Certainly when possession and ventriloquism are linked to comic experience, the final outcome may be perceived as being deeply unsettling, even anarchic and socially undermining in certain contexts and cases.

29 Steve Newman Dickens At Play (Macmillan), London 1981) p.68

30 Newman p.10

George Orwell who knew plenty about anarchy and its origins and repercussions, stated in an essay on Dickens, that 'a joke worth laughing at always has an idea behind it, and usually a subversive idea.'³¹ Many of Dickens's characters are little more than single expressions of an idea, they are 'caricatures' in the same way that Mansfield's Germans are in In a German Pension. Characters are used to serve an idea, rather than embodying the idea themselves. However, in a more positive reading of caricature (if that is what it is) in Mansfield and Dickens, could construe such characterisation being a type of emphasised obsession rather than two dimensional caricature. Dickens and Mansfield could thus be glimpsing characters only or solely in terms of their personal preoccupations, giving the characters a kind of neurotic autonomy instead of their being objects to the author's device. The focaliser Fagin in Oliver Twist correspondingly taints his environment through his own personality and perspective. Environment and character in the following extract are interchangeable and fluid. They frame each other in the same way in which a short-story may frame an incident memory or mood.

The mud lay thick upon the stones and a black mist hung over the streets; the rain fell sluggishly down... It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along... the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved...³²

31 George Orwell in The Dickens' Critics edited by George H Ford and Lauriat Lane (Cornell, New York 1961) p.168

32 Oliver Twist p.186

Aside from the rather pernicious anti-semitism of the extract, the passage could have been written by Fagin himself. There are no parameters between narrator and focaliser, as the linguistic envelopment in Fagin's consciousness is total. By the time loathsome is reached its perjorative use is suspended. It is far too explicit and overstated to carry the burden of meaning or implication. Dickens has effected his own Kafkaesque Metamorphosis here. Evil has become a theatrical device, rather than felt idea. The character of Fagin manipulates and controls the fictive surroundings he inhabits; he deflects his reductive limiting social 'self' (as 'Jew', 'reptile', 'loathsome' creature) in favour of the 'darkness through which he moved.' Fagin is absent to the author, present only to himself and the reader. Prose is self-reflexive, and self-mastering, highlighted in the infinitely grotesque stasis of the repetition of present participles. Dickens's adversley criticised 'plottedness' within his novels can therefore be read as signifying the only response possible to the over-flowing energies his characters express. Plot is a means of containment and no more. Soliloquy in Dickens becomes a concentrated exploration of such personal condensation or distillation, a narratively fragmenting approach to the obvious text labelled 'plot'. Soliloquy is also an artistically open state, being externally as well as internally realisable as in the description of Fagin at large. Dickens's soliloquies or glimpses, in Mansfieldian terminology are short-stories, short-fictions. Mansfield's chosen medium offers a still more stringent approach to dealing with the outcome of her creative method. Each Dickensian-style

short story represents a scattered fragment of a huge, shattered Dickens's novel. This might have been the only response, short of poetry that the twentieth century fiction could make to Dickens's immensely liberating artistry.

Mr Potts lived in a little bungalow on Chesney Flat. The bulge of the water tank to one side gave it a mournful air, like a little bungalow with toothache... Down the path went Potts every morning at half-past-eight... up that path walked Potts every evening while the great kettle of a bus droned on...³³

Ostensibly common-place, realistic description oozes Dickensian delight in the incredible detail. The bungalow with pronounced toothache recalls immediately the Wickfield home in David Copperfield where Heep's infected influence has affected the very structure of the house. 'I fancied the whole house was leaning forward trying to see who was passing on the narrow pavement below' (David Copperfield). The ordinary has become extraordinary and surreal. One object is coincided with another in impossibly realised metaphorical transference. The resulting perception may be labelled 'grotesque' only because social linguistic etiquette refuses to acknowledge the strange correspondences between one imaginative world or another, between one object and its seemingly unrelated other. This narrative friction can naturally cause comedy, or certainly comic effects may be encouraged.

'Death' in Mr and Mrs Williams has been transmuted into a kindly affable friend. The fearful separations between living and dying are brilliantly brushed away by

the comic rewriting of the supposedly absolute text: Aunt Aggie's death has become transformed into a superbly 'happy release' by the overwhelming self-interest and self-centred consciousness of the greedy relatives that surround her. Nothing survives being written about!

As a matter of fact it was Mrs Williams' Aunt Aggie's happy release which had made theirscheme possible. Happy release it was! After fifteen years in a wheelchair passing in and out of the little house at Ealing she had, to use the nurse's expression, 'just glided away at the last! Glided away... it sounded as though Aunt Aggie had taken the wheelchair with her...³⁴

The wheel-chair has more substance in this extract than its departed inhabitant, naturally implying that Aunt Aggie's relatives heeded the machine more than the woman. At best and most positive Aunt Aggie is the inspiration of object of a linguistic performance, at worst she is simply substituted by the language that covers her and is obliterated from the text and its 'life' references. Aunt Aggie's metonymical substitute accentuates her alienation and separation from others. Mansfield in Mr and Mrs Williams is utilising one of the great comic laws, identified by the philosopher Henri Bergson in one of the seminal essays on comedy, 'Laughter.'

Our starting point is again 'something mechanical entrusted upon the living.' Where did the comic come from in this case? it came from the fact that the living body became rigid, like a machine... the body became to the soul what, as we have just seen, the garment was to the body itself inert matter dumped down upon living energy.³⁵

When a human being is viewed or interpreted as being something mechanical or machine-like, the result is

34 Mr and Mrs Williams p.500

35 Comedy: Laughter by Henri Bergson and An Essay on Comedy by George Meredith, introduced by Wylie Sypher (Doubleday, New York 1956) p.471-477

comedy. Aunt Aggie is indissolubly linked to her chair; in fact she is her wheel-chair, no more, no less, just as Traddles is his hairstyle in David Copperfield. Laughter is the result of the reader acknowledging the distinct gap' between the subject and its transformation into object; 'we laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing' (Laughter p.476). The world has to be seen from a distance to serve the purposes and impetus of the comic. It has to be glimpsed by an alien consciousness, an indifferent stand-point.

Indifference is its natural environment, for laughter has no greater foe than emotion.³⁶

Mansfield too acknowledged this special necessity, as I have mentioned briefly in the preface and introduction and will investigate further in Chapter Three.

But the sense of humour I have found true of every single occasion of my life. Now perhaps you understand what 'indifferent' means. It is not to mind and not to show your mind.³⁷

A mind revealed constrains and inhibits the comic response. A mind concealed engenders laughter, absurdity and humour for the subjective world can be deprived of its precedence and be converted into objects seemingly unrelated and fantastic to each other. One way to transmute the subject into object is to invert the character or landscape. Internal psychology is thereby ostentiously externally displayed, exposing the frequent inanimacy of the human world, highlighting through comic accessibility that which is not necessarily inherently attractive or

36 Bergson p.472

37 Journal p.336

ever looked for. 'Long established insecurities and closely guarded pride are revealed, expressing human renditions of the 'self' uncomfortably, even grotesquely. The theatre of the Absurd reflected life's innate banality and grotesque premises through the dramatic presentation of reality's mechanical, empty construction and devices. In Camus's Myth of Sisyphus, the author reflected upon the fact that 'men too secrete the inhuman,'³⁸ Estragon in Waiting for Godot made a similar assertion when he stated 'everything oozes.' Man is a thing and a thing may become a man. Bergson's diagnosis of the criteria for the comic is therefore fulfilled. Camus continued in the Myth of Sisyphus in the following way;

A man is talking on the telephone behind a glass partition; you cannot hear him but you see his incomprehensible dumb-show: you wonder why he is alive. The discomfort in the face of man's own inhumanity, this incalculable tumble before the image of what we are, this 'nausea', as a writer of today calls it, is also the absurd.³⁹

Camus's telephone box is a concentrated metaphor for life and its 'absurd' reflection as fiction. Deprived of speech man becomes an incomprehensible object, a grotesque spectacle seemingly without reason, motivation or intelligence. Inhumanity is the manifestation of absence. What this 'absence' actually consists of, Mansfield and Dickens tried to calculate in terms of the narration and characterisation in their fiction. They too, like Camus's narrator are preoccupied with wondering why people are alive, dealing with characters who will

38 Albert Camus The Myth of Sisyphus Ninth Edition (Penguin, London 1984)

39 Sisyphus p.21

never see themselves as we see them, who will never negate their enveloping subjectivity for detached objectivity and perspective. Wonder in Camus's world has become a method of overwhelming perception, a method of seeing that tries emphatically to resist closure and 'self-defeat.' Wonder is the primary instinctive state of Mansfield and Dickens as writers and urchin writers⁴⁰ at that. Wonder resists the nothingness and physical oblivion that entices and encloses the spiritual and non-spiritual man

Nothing happens, Nobody comes, Nobody goes,
it is terrible! (Jean Anouilh)⁴¹

Personal oblivion is correspondingly reflected in the language employed by man to express himself. Language is forced into a vacuum where it points unattached to subject or object, beyond alliance to anything 'other' than itself. The text has become its meaning absolutely. The all-encompassing sensitivity or 'coruscation' of Dickens and Mansfield serves to accentuate this nothingness, revealing their predilection for the absurd and modernity in terms of their art of fiction, for their ventriloquism is an antidote to the creeping certainty that 'language has become a kind of ballast filling empty spaces.'⁴²

Esslin's empty spaces are human beings or the gaps between human subjectivity and objectivity. Language is the mere identifying factor. Dickens's Bumble in

40 Dorothy Van Ghent 'The Dickens World: A View from Todgers' in Sewanee Review, LVIII (1950) p.419-438

41 Jean Anouilh on Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot in First Performance at the Bablone 1952.

42 Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd 3rd edition (Pelican London 1972) p.14

in Oliver Twist never reveals his personal obliviousness, which would be his 'inner-self' precisely because he is an absence, a machine himself, masquerading through linguistic assurance as a human being.

'You're going by coach, sir? I thought it was always usual to send them paupers on carts.'
 'That's when they're ill, Mrs Mann,'
 said the beadle. 'We put the sick paupers into open carts in the rainy weather, to prevent their taking cold...43

Oblivion is thus revealed as the absence of explanatory consciousness. Dickens's hallucinatory sensitivity can find nothing but Bumble to focus upon. Beckett would have made him into a monologue, a sustained narrative voice inexplicable except in his own personal, absurdity, of which he would be unconscious.

Mansfield's own sense of oblivion originates with her own artistic sensibility, the more she seeks to explain herself, the less she manages to recover. Negation rather than elucidation is the outcome of linguistic investigation.

What I felt was, he said, that I wasn't in the whole of myself at all. I'd got locked in somehow, in some little ... top room in my head and strangers had got in...44

Self becomes the object and other without acknowledgment, as a type of dislocating experience. The first person 'I' has been lost, consigned to oblivion, marginalised by the dissevering syntactical structure as a form of pathological, estranging experience. Within has become as unfamiliar and disconnected as without.

43 Oliver Twist p.171

44 Journal p.169

I had a moment of absolute terror in the night.
 I suddenly thought of a liveing-min - a whole
 mind - with absolutely nothing left out...⁴⁵

Mansfield once again feels threatened even terrified by the notion of confronting a 'whole' self, an entire mind. Being 'not-myself' as Keats suggested seems more creatively positive and possible than actually being myself' alone. Woolf's 'ordinary mind on an ordinary day'⁴⁶ seems far more contained and cultivated than Mansfield's dark, savage place of the residual, essential self, her own Heart of Darkness.

Perhaps the only way Mansfield could confront her mind was by the exploration of mind and the nature of consciousness in her fiction; writing encourages after all a certain degree of detachment and objectivity which contains through choice of medium and form. In The Daughters of the Late Colonel and A Married Man's Story in particular, the reader obtains extended glimpses of being in the 'whole of myself' through the brilliant narratives of characters who reveal the Mansfieldian 'sensitive mind' and the linguistic nihilism or ballast envisaged by the Absurd writers, paradoxically through framed, controlled investigations of personal oblivion.

Personal oblivion in The Daughters of the Late Colonel is characterised as a loss of memory, loss of spatial and personal certainty, even of any kind of individual topography at all. The mental incoherence of the opening

45 Letters of Katherine Mansfield Vol.II p.88

46 Modern Fiction p.189

of the Daughters of the Late Colonel, '... thinking things out ... trying to remember where' expresses in a subtle tone, the disorientation experienced by Estragon and Vladimir in Beckett's Waiting for Godot. The story 'ends' in the same inconclusive way, highlighting the absence of any 'conclusion' in the sisters' lives (except death) and of the absurd repetitiveness of their existence. Hopelessness is not the absence of hope, it is the absence of change or point of view. Comedy in Mansfield's story tends to emphasise the despair and tragedy of the central characters because,

The comic offers no way out. I say conducive to despair, but in reality it is beyond despair or hope. But this is precisely the liberating effect of laughter...⁴⁷

The world of 'trying to remember where' (Daughters of the Late Colonel p.262) and 'trying to begin to concentrate (p.278) functions well within Ionesco's boundaries of human despair. The sisters cannot even find a place from where to begin to examine and articulate their experience, let alone find any way of escape from it. The sisters are despairing yet they do not apparently 'know' that they are despairing, and it is this extraordinary absence of self-knowledge that paradoxically inspires pathos and respect for the sisters. The reader is forced into active reading and writing instead, cohering the fragmented, disconnected associations concerning the pair, until the beginning and the ending are

47 Ionesco 'Chapter 3: Ionesco Theatre and Antitheatre' p.187

perceptible and known, and recognisable. The reader is thus forced into a vicarious despairing on behalf of the sisters whose ignorance is salvation or postponement from such unhappiness. Survival is a complex collage of choices on the part of the reader, writer and character.

Mansfield's belief that the Daughters of the Late Colonel was 'the only story that satisfies me to any extent' in a letter to Gerhardie, was qualified further in another letter to William Gerhardie, the young author of Futility.

They thought it was 'cruel'; they thought I was sneering at Jug and Constantia ... It's almost terrifying to be so misunderstood. There was a moment when I first had the 'idea' when I saw the two sisters as amusing, but the moment I looked deeper (let me be quite frank) I bowed down to the beauty that was hidden in their lives and to discover that was all my desire ... All was meant, of course, to lead up to that paragraph when my two flawless ones turned with that kind gesture, to the son. 'Perhaps now ...' And after that, it seemed to me, they died as surely as Father was dead...' 48

Comedy occupies a precarious, tenuous public position, and comic writers are doubly insecure, faced with the tentativeness and frequent despair encapsulated in their art, and beyond it, in its reception in the public sphere. Comedy is a means to spiritual discovery for many comic writers as this passage demonstrates, and the Romantic and modern fascination with the 'wasted-life' finds expression in this glancing synopsis of the comic intention. Significantly Mansfield admits that her characters were originally imagined in terms of serving an 'idea'.

But like Woolf and her tunnelling process, Mansfield discovered the unacknowledged life beyond surface consciousness and context. Interestingly Mansfield writes 'saw' instead of 'thought' perhaps unconsciously revealing her artistic method of creation. Furthermore Mansfield giving the two sisters a story which reveals their potential beauty as well as the waste that is central to their lives. As in Dickens the unlikely and ignored are revealed according to their own lights and experiences - however futile.

'This Marchioness,' said Mr Swiveller, folding his arms, 'is a very extraordinary person - surrounded by mysteries, ignorant of the taste of beer, unacquainted with her own name (which is less remarkable), and taking a limited view of society (through the keyholes of doors...'⁴⁹

Characters within the privacy and circumstances of their own myth - 'surrounded by mysteries.' Metamorphosis occurs as an act of writerly faith rather than design. And it is not only the apparently discerning who receive such transmutating experience. Sally Brass in *The Old Curiosity Shop* also undergoes a softening: Swiveller, through the comic prismatic perception, almost saves Sally from Dickens's own ending.

It was upon this lady ... that Mr Swiveller burst in full freshness as something new and hitherto undreamed of ... He imparted to her the mystery of going the odd man or plain Newmarket for fruit, ginger-beer ... or even a modest quencher, of which Miss Brass did not scruple to undertake...⁵⁰

All writers have elements of Dick Swiveller within. Every optimist recognises in the Swiveller the central response

49 The Old Curiosity Shop p.532

50 The Old Curiosity Shop p.349

to life. Sally Brass is inherently awful, relentlessly self-labelling in a concrete identifiable manner. Yet Swiveller refuses to acknowledge such a fixed identity at all. He is the least 'absolute' character in Dickens. He incorporates Sally Brass within his own myth. Dickens and Swiveller are playing at play, subverting the plottedness and stasis of the novel for a sub-novel, a comic anti-fiction of fluid identities and possibilities.

I just want to become some-one else, and at certain points I have to create the impression that they are justified, which is the most difficult thing to do. Most people don't think that way about other people, they just think they're wrong; but as a writer one has to think they are right, even if they are obviously wrong.⁵¹

Flexibility of response is the touchstone of imaginative art, particularly an art as subversive as the comic which seeks to undermine the static fixedness of social and moral reality. Such an art therefore circumvents the enclosing, reductive value - judgement in favour of ambiguity or ostentatious misreading. Duplicity becomes the essence of comic writing, as the observed and observer repeatedly jostle for supremacy and the dominant discourse. Disguise may become one of the methods of attaining such comic ascendancy; mime and possession are obvious avenues to this achievement. Perhaps the ultimate method of disguise is self-disguise, and being a woman Mansfield may have had more practice at such behaviour than her male counterparts. 'The 'mask' Mansfield wore may have been rather less an individual necessity, than

51 'V S Pritchett in Conversation with John Haffenden' in Novelists in Interview (Methuen, London 1985) p.217

an exigency of gender and enforced stereotypical behaviour.

A Woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking and weeping. From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually.^{51b}

If I juxtapose this insight with a Mansfield extract from the *Journal*, Berger enlightens the reader's interpretation of a rather strange Mansfield observation.

I am in the sitting room downstairs. The wind howls outside, but here it is so warm and pleasant. It looks like a real room where real people have lived.⁵²

As in the previously cited extract in the *Journal* where 'I' became 'he' (p169) Mansfield regards 'herself' from the outside, as a spectacle. Metamorphosis has rendered the first person narrator into a kind of public theatre or possession. Such a distance could be termed absurd. Berger would regard this detachment as being markedly female, Bergson would avow that such indifference was a requisite of the comic impulse. The late *Journal* entry concerning not minding (p.336) has once again proved a resonant and telling critique of Mansfield's fictional and critical aims.

If indifference encourages the comic by its absence then it is worth assimilating just what form such absent expression would take. Expression that is deprived of the intrusive signified encourages the open-text, the highlighted language of unresolved, inconclusive experience.

51b Berger *Ways of Seeing* p.46

52 *Journal* p.70

Instead of a text alerting the reader to meaning, the comic, indifferent text may alert the reader to itself only, often ostentatiously rejecting closure in favour of all pervasive symbolism. Symbolism in Mansfield's terminology may be construed as not minding and not showing one's mind.

The urchin narrator in Mansfield as in Dickens may be the ideal means of constructing such a highly charged, symbolic world... 'I don't only listen, I take him in immensely' (p.175 Journal). The observer eats the observed in a liberating creative convulsion. As Dickens reveals in Bleak House with his character Jo, the urchin perception can be an oblique method of assimilating a redundant, weary reality. Romanticism meets modernism in this collision.

It must be a strange state to be Like Jo! To shuffle through the street, unfamiliar with the shapes, and in utter darkness as to the meaning of thos mysterious symbols...53

Deprived of enclosing meaning, and linguistic translation, language has become self-referential, its own context, metalanguage in fact. Jo's wandering unresolved experiences, resemble the experiences undertaken by others in dream, where energies are repeated, refracted and discharged into endless oblique symbol. The Daughters of the Late Colonel with its constantly undermining narrative, and absence of interpretation seems particularly close to Dickens's 'strange state' diagnosed in Bleak House. The hallucinatory experiences of Mansfield and Dickens men-

tioned earlier in this chapter appear quite close to the dream-like experiences within their own fictions, being a distinctly mysterious 'strange' state and one which refuses explanation in rational terms. Steve Newman in Dickens at Play discusses the 'somnambulist' quality in Dickens. Bowen in her introduction to her edition of Mansfield's stories mentions the 'dream-fastness' of the author and her 'hallucinatory floatingness.'⁵⁴ Dream-narratives if highly charged and dangerously 'free' are also post-narratives, for their effectiveness and symbolic powers rest on their reliance on previous narrative experiences. It is hardly surprising then that the resulting 'waxy mass of words'⁵⁵ may be highly poetic prose. Mansfield's search for a 'new word' for 'le mot juste'⁵⁶ indicates her close affinity with poetry in her elected medium. The 'special prose' (Journal p.94) of Mansfield represents a poetic predilection for form over content in Mansfield's fiction.

.... In 'Miss Brill' I chose not only the length of every sentence, but even the sound of every sentence. I choose the rise and fall of every paragraph to fit her, and to fit her on that day at that very moment...⁵⁷

Language in Mansfield as in the Ventriloquist Dickens seems a form of imaginative incantation, a public extension of the self, even the means of self-construction, self-definition, through linguistic appropriation and autonomy.

54 Bowen p.20

55 Donald Fanger, 'Dickens and Gogol: Energies of the Word' in Gogol from the Twentieth Century, Edited/transl. by R A Maguire p.135 (Princeton Univ. New Jersey 1974)

56 Anne Estelle Rice Memories of KM p.81

57 Letters II p.89 (To Richard Murry 17 January 1921)

... How much do you want?
 ... How much fifty pounds?
 ... Oh! more than that.
 More than that, eh? retorted Mr Jaggers lying in wait...
 ...Three times five; will that do?
 Four times five;...58

Language is magical and ritualistic in this material exchange. Nothing is particular except for the language itself; content is subsumed by form. Dickens is investigating linguistic structures of power in this passage, through the relationship between the addresser and addressee. Where the power structure is not apparent or even in conscious existence, as in Mansfield's The Daughters of the Late Colonel, the magical even telepathic nature of the prose becomes the very staff of the fiction. If Dickens's passage has at least some reference to the social world and reality through its monetary concern (which is then suspended) Mansfield's story deliberately avoids any such referentiality, forcing the reader into the hazy, disconnected experiences that the heroines undertake within the fiction.

The Daughters of the Late Colonel reads as an unedited fiction. Details seem haphazard and random, even repetitious, yet the reader eventually realises that it is this incidentality that makes the final impression and image so emotionally and intellectually satisfying. It is as unedited as life itself.

The Daughters of the Late Colonel opens with an ostensibly active description of two industrious animated individuals. The ambiguity that lies behind such joyful activity is delayed in its manifestation, for the reader

only realises later, that the activity that enlivens the sisters' existence beyond recognition is the process of mourning for 'Old Pinner.'

The week after was one of the busiest weeks of their lives. Even when they went to bed it was only their bodies that lay down and rested; their minds went on, thinking things out, talking things over, wondering, deciding, trying to remember where...59

Upon closer examination, the apparently directed activity of the sisters seems diffusive and escapist. The over-employment of present participles emphasises the fact that the activity is wholly mentally based. The 'movement' of the sisters resembles a suspended hallucination or day-dream. The external world is not represented or even apprehended. Repetition and probable inactivity is suggested by the unfinished second sentence. The sisters are rehearsing involvement with reality; they are not actually embroiled within it. Con and Jug are on the brink of living.

Minds are significantly disassociated from the physical body in this opening. The 'self' is experiencing a Dickensian fragmentation and metonymical expression. The sisters cannot be their 'whole' selves because they have no knowledge of themselves outside of each other; their self-referentiality is therefore limited in the extreme. The powerlessness of Mansfield's heroines is absented from the text by default. (The sisters would never survive a narrative such as that constructed around Jagers and Pip in Great Expectations, they can barely

survive the intrusion of their servant Kate after all.)

Con and Jug are presented by Mansfield from without and within in the story, through a layering narrative that 'sees' rather than describes the spiritual conditions of her characters.

Constantia lay like a statue, her hands by her sides, her feet overlapping each other, the sheet up to her chin...60

Constantia reveals her unconscious despair through her closeness to death and absence in this passage. Mansfield has not made Constantia an object, Constantia is an object unknowingly to herself, for she lacks any external correspondence other than the inanimate, static world of her few rooms and possessions. Years spent with the tyrannical old Pinner have made Constantia into yet another item or possession to be watched, and observed. Constantia as a statue is a gesture of her loneliness and futility, what Artaud once called a 'signal through the flames.' Con's wasted existence is made as solid and fixed as the Marshalea Prison in Little Dorrit. Yet in a positive sense, such symbolic representation may also exorcise the futility and encroaching despair. Con as a statue is saved from crippling self-consciousness. She remains unacquainted with her despair, she can enjoy the catharsis and purification of comedy without herself, as can the witnesses to such experience.

Black! Two black-dressing-gowns and two pairs of black woolly slippers creeping off to a bathroom like black cats...61

60 Daughters of the Late Colonel p.262

61 Ibid p.263

Both paused to watch a black man in white linen drawers running through the pale fields for dear life, with a large brown-paper parcel in his hands. Josephine's black-man was tiny; he swanned along glistening like an ant. But there was something bland and tireless about Constantia's tall, thin fellow, which made him, she decided, a very unpleasant fellow indeed...⁶²

Hallucination has become incorporated as metaphorical transformation within the text itself; Con and Jug are their own writers and self-explorers. The dressing-gowns and black cats are the metamorphic reflections of the sisters themselves, independant, wilful alternatives to the emotionally crippled, aged pair. Wish-fulfilment provides the impetus for metaphorical - even metamymical transference. The conflict between Con's vision and that of Jug reveals their unarticulated desire for independence and separation from each other, with the realisation that such independence would be impossible to sustain or imaginatively bear. The 'beauty' discovered by Mansfield as she told Gerhardie, is perhaps founded upon the wonderfully collusive consciousness between Con and Jug. Telepathy has become a natural means of communication between the sisters, they are far more interesting fictionally than their social, externally discribed lives would suggest. Subliminally perhaps Mansfield herself has also become a matter of her own fiction, her own narratives, through the fascinating, pervasive symbolism of the sisters' conscious and unconscious narration. If the Black Cats are refractions of Con and Jug, they are also diffused visitations of Mansfield too.

It struck me that she is of the cat kind; alien; composed, always solitary and observant. And then we talked about solitude and I found her expressing my feelings as I never have them expressed...63

The sisters' isolation and loneliness finds cathartic resolution in feline expression - Mansfield had already known such transformations.

The collusive consciousness communicated in the second extract is deliberately complicated by the differentiation between the type of man the sisters chose to image. The reader comprehends the indirect disclosure and element of personal projection experienced by the sisters in relation to their visualisations. Con's distaste for her 'blind and tireless' male seems sexual rather than just personal, recalling the awful entrance of Herr Brechenmacher in Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding where the wife shields her eyes from her husband in an instinctive effort to shield herself from his repugnant sexual machinations. (p.711) Con's distaste at this point like Mansfield with L.M.'s 'blind baby-breasts' represents a missed epiphany, and predicts the unresolved mental and sexual disquiet lingering on at the story's close.

Con and Jug's shared hallucinatory or dream experience revels in their intimacy and mutual affection and suspends any attempts to rationally reduce their fictional autonomy 'Realistically' Con and Jug are pathetic creatures, 'fictionally' in terms of their dream-narratives they are irresistably autonomous and exciting.

In his preface to the Dream Play the playwright Strindberg commented upon the importance of dream in narratives.

Everything can happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist; ... The characters split, double, multiply, evaporate, ... But one consciousness rules over them all, that of the dreamer...⁶⁴

Parallel Strinberg's strikingly modern commentary with the famous Pound discourse on the image and we see a useful correspondence between their commentaries on Mansfield's short-story,

It is the presentation of such a complex (the image) instantaneously which gives that sudden sense of liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits...⁶⁵

a fictional representation of the Strinberg-Pound argument. As in Bleak House with Jo, Mansfield in her story, through the unsocialised, dreaming sisters, has returned the symbol and liberating image to the world and word. Time is manipulated and suspended, spiritual reality becomes a series of metaphorical transformations of experience (of Pinner's room signifying his emotional murder of his daughters and his private sterility) and comedy redeems that which appears initially inherently irredeemable. 'Everything can happen, everything is possible and probable' as Strinberg said.

Con and Jug are romantic dreamers, wearing their narratives between the two undisclosed, suppressed narrative closures of sex and death. The frequently static method of narrative offers suspended glimpses of

64 August Strindberg Preface to Dreamplay in Strinberg Plays Two transl. Michael Meyer (Methuen London 1982) p.175

65 Ezra Pound, 'Aretrospect' in Twentieth Century Literary Criticism edited by David Lodge (Longonman London 1985) p.59

these hidden polarities. Con as a statue is experiencing both possibilities of absence simultaneously. She is the present physical and future projected presentation and image of herself. The finite and infinite worlds collude. Con as a statue is a concentrated symbol of her possibilities, even a meditation upon such possibilities and closures. She is communing with herself in mid-situation, through the self-absorption that is dream. Con in mid-situation could even be seen as the symbolic representation of her own store; Daughters of the Late Colonel is a text about its own creation, an idea also explored in Je ne parle pas français and A Married Man's Story in Chapter Three of the thesis.

Calvino in If on a Winter's Night a Traveller commented that 'everything they say is the continuation of things already said' and this can be quite easily applied to Mansfield's texts. Indeed in a form as concentrated and 'mid-situation' as the short-fiction, it is the best means of liberating the text from its own constricting parameters.

In Dickens too, the characters seem concentrated histories, unspoken fictions, even characters in search of an appropriate text (which could have been a Mansfield short-story!). Incidental, glancing and apparently 'unedited' detail reveals its true value and resonance here;

She (Miss Murdstone) brought with her two uncompromising hard black boxes, with her initials on the lids in hard brass nails...

She took her money out of a hard steel purse...
I had never at that time seen such a metallic
lady altogether....⁶⁶

The reflection of details here mimic the obsessive nature of the character herself. The narrator is fascinated rather than judgemental. The object of his horrified fascination is unconscious of her own meaning. Her 'mid-situation' is therefore still the more deadly and pernicious. Dickens is, as Gissing once pointed out, engaging that which is not inherently enjoyable. Mimicry does not encourage narrative 'gaps' for moral judgements, it supports intimacy and expansive, symbolic knowledge instead. Detail has been granted autonomy.

Do you, too feel an infinite delight and value
in detail, not for the sake of detail, but for
the life in the life of it...

Mansfield's 'life' in detail signifies imaginative possibilities and probabilities to use Strinberg's terms.

Dickens was also master of this 'passing glance' this ready ability to assimilate the essential quality of a subject or object through its details presentation.

Carson McCullers wrote;

Everyday, I read the New York Daily News, and very soberly. It is interesting to know the name of the lover's lane where the stabbing took place... Always details provoke more ideas than any generality could furnish. When Christ was pierced in his left side, it is more moving and evocative than if he were just pierced...⁶⁷

The underlining is McCullers's own. The fusion of the idea with the fact of the idea is expansively revealing. Con as a statue fulfils McCullers' criteria for

66 David Copperfield p.97

67 Carson McCullers 'The Flowering Dream' in The Mortgaged Heart, Third edition (Penguin, London, 1985) p.282

evocativeness and emotional response. Mansfield has concisely meditated upon her subject and constructed her meditation with the salient essentials. When the details described undermin their textual parameters the outcome may subvert the autonomy of the author. Dickens with Quilp at the finale to The Old Curiosity Shop unties his own text.

The hair, stirred by the damp breeze, played
a kind of mockery of death - such a mockery
as the dead man himself would have revelled
in when alive- 68

Dickens pretends to absolve himself from the 'life' in his detail (which is ironically death's absence). Quilp's comic inaccessibility to Dickens subverts his plotted demise or closure. He returns his personal secrecy, soothing Dickens with 'something less terrible than the truth' (G K Chesterton). Quilp parodies his own fictionality here, subverting the text that threatens to swallow him.

The short-story, by its very form may appear to control these 'rival writers' with far greater discipline. Each fiction after all can only be a small glimpse or concentration of the 'demonic' detail of a Dickens's novel Perhaps that is why Mansfield failed to finish A Married Man's Story for the detail in that fiction seems as demonic and unsettling as Dickens. (Again this is investigated in Chapter Three)

However The Daughters of the Late Colonel also contains at least one instance, where authorial, even narrative control and autonomy undergoes a pronounced

threat. In the eighth section of the story, the sisters are recalling their nephew Cyril's visit to his grandfather, Old Pinner. As usual in the story, a new idea forms itself in some tangential thought or memory, expressed upon the hazy surface consciousness of a sister's mind. In this case, the sister is Josephine.

'But you'll have a meringue, won't you, Cyril?' said Aunt Josephine. 'These meringues were brought specially for you. Your dear father was so fond of them. We were sure you are too.'

'I am, Aunt Josephine,' cried Cyril ardently...

'... is your dear father still so fond of meringues?' asked Auntie Con gently.

She winced faintly as she broke through the shell of hers.

'Well, I don't quite know Auntie Con,' said Cyril breezily. At that they both looked up.

'Don't know?' almost snapped Josephine. 'Don't you know a thing like that about your own father Cyril?' 69

The flouting 'dream-fastedness' of the meringue stands for social indentification and manners. It sustains the 'fantastic' narrative within the supposedly familiar world of the drawing room. The 'mind' is shown in its opaque, subversively 'logical' texture. For once Cyril has given the sisters access to the 'meringue' argument his position within the narrative is undermined and dis-eased. His discomfort reflects his mental incomprehension and lack of reference. Cyril's absent father, like Hamlet's reinforces the strange, even bizarre concerns of the protagonists. Within this world, the sisters are autonomous and linguistically supreme. Cyril, isolated from the masculine hierarchical external world (and he is notably a diluted representation of masculinity) attempts a variety of sociable, unifying responses. He eats half a meringue, affects a worldly posture, and incites his

seemingly timid aunts to a near vicious riot. The sisters read the world in the same way as they write it.

Unsurprisingly their text is correspondingly comic and bizarre. Indeed their special text has its own metaphor within the narrative. 'She winced slightly as she broke through the shell of hers.' One type of consciousness is being exchanged for another. Mansfield's characters are writing the text down the middle - between the unconscious and conscious world, between the acquiescent social world and its anarchic, undermining antithesis.

The ensuing scene involving Grandfather Pinner is the direct sequel to this mental-breakthrough. Farce has become a surrealist's dream.

'... Don't shout!' he cried. 'What's the matter with the boy? Meringues! What about 'em?' 'Oh, Aunt Josephine, must we go on?' groaned Cyril desperately. 'It's quite alright, dear boy,' said Aunt Josephine ... 'He'll understand in a minute... He's getting deaf you know. Then she leaned forward and really bawled at Grandfather Pinner, 'Cyril only wanted to tell you, father dear, that his father is still very fond of meringues. ...'What an esstrorrdinary thing!... What an esstrorrdinary thing to come all this way here to tell me!' And Cyril felt it was.⁷⁰

Cyril and the Colonel are precisely placed in perplexed sympathy with each other. Mansfield has abnegated her authorial authority. Ironically 'deafness' is comically blamed for the Colonel's understandable lack of comprehension. Deafness has become synonymous with the absence of explanatory consciousness and argument. Memory has revealed the manipulative power of the sister's

authorship here. Their unity is set against the fragmented disunity of the other text (that of Pinner, Cyril even of the reader). Irony is diffused by the idiosyncratic imaginative 'faith' of Con and Jug. The sisters are co-dreamers in their own self-governing world, their own self-defining text.

Such autonomy however receives its own metamorphosis with the intervention of Kate, the servant in the fiction. The empowered Kate ('the enchanted princess' p.265) turns the sisters into the pair of old-tabbies, a change that subverts the comic in favour of pathos, after the previous brief ascendancy of the sisters. Kate incarnates herself within the text, she is a vital writer, a challenge and subversive force in the story. This is of course emphasised by her lack of ostensible social or hierarchical position.

They were interrupted by Kate bursting through the door in her usual fashion, as though she had discovered some secret panel in the wall. 'Fried or boiled?' asked the bold voice. 'Fried or boiled?' Josephine and Constantia were quite bewildered for the moment. They could hardly take it in 'Fried or boiled what, Kate? asked Josephine trying to begin to concentrate.⁷¹

Kate's powerful presence is conveyed by her linguistic, imaginative translation at the hands of the sisters. They dislocate her via metonymy into a 'voice' fearing her worldliness, social function, and witch-like powers. Comically this transference by its exaggeration exorcises her power. This newly created 'Kate' is not her own persona but belongs to Con and Jug. Impressions, however sublimated are self-generating energy forms.

71 Daughter of the Late Colonel p.278

And then, before we meet anyone; while they are still far, too far off to be seen, we begin to build our image... How true is it? It's queer how well one gets to know this stranger, how often you've watched him before the other comes to take his place... I can even imagine someone keeping their first impression in spite of the other 72

The 'stranger' self becomes supreme over the apparently known, knowable self. The imagination refuses to negotiate or compromise its authority over perceptions. The common-place releases its fantastic potential under such artistic treatment. Such a method of perception is also a self-protective one, in the sense that the spectator is denying the autonomy of the spectacle, its own self-consciousness. Con and Jug are Dickensian Swiveller, disembodying and rewriting Kate as they gaze upon her. She is only encompassed in terms which the sisters can deal with. Her exaggerated depiction is their poetic exit,. 'Kate' has been reduced' to a series of isolated, single events, preventing any confrontation on the sisters' part with their social impotency. Fish in this episode is a fluid food in the same way as the meringue. 'Trying to begin to concentrate' encapsulates the state of consciousness the sisters enjoy throughout the story. It is also perhaps a surreptitious summary of Mansfield's own creative style, reinforcing my premise that Mansfield writes many of her stories between types of feeling, thought and consciousness. In 'trying to begin to concentrate' the sisters are deliberately withdrawing from rational, pedantic life. Existing on the periphery of consciousness, their minds are very much at bay from the mundane, which would destroy them. This

precipice writing of the sisters is therefore a matter of defence and self-consolation. Mansfield in her Journal sometimes felt such writing less positive or satisfying.

All this! All that I write - all that I am -
is on the border of the sea. It's a kind of
playing. I want to put all my force behind it,
but somehow I cannot!⁷³

Perhaps putting all her 'force' behind a story was A Married Man's Story. At any rate the business of creating a fiction within the suspended consciousness of 'trying to begin to concentrate,' the positive version of 'unthinkably alike,' may have been less terrifying and uncontained. The Daughters of the Late Colonel is the literary exposition of this border-state and creative philosophy. The sisters, as delegated authors of their own biography, created a story that is the direct mime of their mental process. They are writing themselves into being from the polarities of absence mentioned earlier in this chapter. Theirs is a delayed authorship naturally, the reaction to the suppression endured for years under their father Old Pinner. The 'mime' that is The Daughters of the Late Colonel is potentially self-destructive, the story could easily have become vaporous and uncertain. However the understated, subtly imaginative communion between the sisters, their 'beauty' as I suggested briefly, also represents their creative, poetic strength and provides a marvellously comic release.

73 Journal p.258

'Isn't it curious, Jug,' said she,
that just on this one subject I've never
been able to make up my mind.'⁷⁴

Con chooses to remain behind or beyond her near-epiphany and its obvious pathos, in the state of 'trying to begin to concentrate,' resembles that of Beckett's characters in Waiting for Godot. Not making up one's mind is socially and textually defiant as it opposes closure and directed expression. Con can go anywhere from here. 'Stasis' may be more a matter of concern for the reader than the writer here. In an excellent chapter on Mansfield and Woolf in The English Short Story 1880-1945,⁷⁵ Joanne Trautman Banks suggested that aside from the late story entitled The Canary, Mansfield's stories 'avoid the direct expression of grief.' Absence once again. Characters in Mansfield are never quite in possession of their loss which may be tragically themselves, their missed-lives. Thus Mansfield's sisters remain perpetually 'trying to begin to concentrate' and Kezia's fears for her grandmother's death in At the Bay (p.227) are displaced by play. The boss in The Fly will fail to remember 'for the life of him' (p.418) why he had felt such despair.

Transmuted into a floating feeling of diffuse sadness, wretchedness or simply unreality, grief in the Mansfield stories falls residually like ash.⁷⁶

Mansfield may show grief but she refuses to articulate it linguistically, respecting its privacy and

74 Daughters of the Late Colonel p.280

75 Joanne Trautmann Banks 'Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf in The English Short-Story 1880-1945, edited by Jos. M Flora (Twayne, Boston 1985)

76 Trautman Banks p.76

referentiality. Perhaps in The Daughters of the Late Colonel, grief is ultimately revealed by the comically naive approach to life enjoyed by the sisters. The parameters of the short-fiction in this story protect the autonomy and fantastic vision of Con and Jug. Mansfield is Raymond Carver with a Bergsonian wickedness of vision.

'But what else could we have done?' asked Constantia wonderingly. We couldn't have kept him Jug - we couldn't have kept him unburied. At any rate, not in a flat that size. Josephine blew her nose; the cab was dreadfully stuffy.⁷⁷

Despite their fears of Pinner, the sisters waste no time in turning him into a thing, an object and therefore a servant of their comedy. This transformation perhaps signifies the beginnings of some independence or maturity on the part of the sisters. The key word in the passage is wonderingly. Con and Jug are as much authorial urchins as Mansfield or Dickens. This antisocial, blasphemous condition described as being the state of being 'unburned' becomes a physically probable possibility, qualified only by the problems of room size and spatial dimension. Nothing that Con reflects upon can survive her gaze. (Like Jane Austen). As Wilde once said, 'nothing survives being thought of' even Grandfather Pinner.

Josephine, indifferently (for she is a comic author) blows her nose revealing and reinforcing her reaction to Old Pinner within the flat. The comic potential if fully realised - anticipated even, before the reader has fully

77 The Daughters of the Late Colonel p.269

accepted the imaginative notion regarding Pinner's physical superfluosness. Terror has become suddenly delicious. When Mansfield over-achieves her comic intent or that of her characters, she undercuts the comic effectiveness.

... I look at the mountains, I try to pray
and I think of something clever ... And anything
that I write in this mood will be no good; it will
be full of sediment...78

... how could she explain to Constantia that
father was in the chest of drawers? He was in
the top drawer with his handkerchiefs and
neckties.79

Comic artistry undermines the rather more significant (in this case) pathological obsession in the passage from the Daughters of the Late Colonel. Mansfield has opted for the 'clever' rather than the instructive response. Melodrama has become the reductive substitute for absurdity. 'Father will never forgive us for this - never' (p.269) Melodramatic rhetoric insinuates itself and Mansfield into the consciousness of the sisters. Mansfield in this instant is lacking the full creative confidence in the world rendered by 'trying to begin to concentrate.' The concentration is all too apparent, too overstated here. Dickens also was capable of such over-writing.

'Oh, lady, lady!' she said, clasping her hands
passionately before her face, 'if there was more like
you, there would be fewer like me - there would -
there would!' 80

Dickens's intrusion here is highlighted by the lack of repetition of characterisation. Instead Nancy suddenly speaks with a new, unforeseen voice, and the reader

78 Journal p.269

79 Daughters of the Late Colonel p.271

80 Oliver Twist p.361

immediately questions her veracity even her existence at this moment.

Authorial catharsis, if it exists within a text should be experienced carefully within the creative, repeating exigencies of the text. In a story as archly ingenious as The Daughters of the Late Colonel the opportunities are rich indeed.

'About the funeral,' he said softly...
 'I should like it to be quite simple' said Josephine firmly, and not too expensive...
 A good one that will last, thought dreamy Constantia, as if Josephine were buying a nightgown. But of course, Josephine didn't say that...⁸¹

Vocabulary enacts imaginative diffusiveness and self-liberation. Death has become an open, anarchically comic signifier. External discourse unfixes itself upon the unarticulated, subconscious discourse of the sisters. They are free, they can do what they will with dead 'Old Pinner' and eventually they just might know it. 'Trying to begin to concentrate' is delayed self-knowledge not absent self-hood. And the delay generates the comic response. 'Unintentionality' governs the sisters' text; outwardly they are objects of pity, inwardly they are mistresses of their own discourse, releasing liberating, unedited responses within. Public suppression is undermined by the mental liberation of Con and Jug, who are presented through their alternative texts as supremely confident, comic, writers. 'But, of course, Josephine didn't say that.' Naturally no-one can ever withdraw

speech, or implied speech. Thoughts are comic missiles in The Daughters of the Late Colonel.

If the story can be read as mental autopsy, a narrative dissection of solitary minds at play, where thoughts have become acts without undue external referentiality, then Mansfield's reference to the possibly 'cruel' element of her story (in the Gerhardie letter) may even be interpreted as a reaction to the possible 'madness' that is central to the text. The criticised febrility of Mansfield could thus be seen as a manifestation of the irrational in her fiction. Naturally, Mansfield's non-fiction contains some possibly 'insane' scenes too. In any case, Con and Jug are extreme characters in that they are markedly estranged from the external worlds and methods of consciousness that make up such worlds. Mansfield in her illness and isolation may also be seen in such a way.

I suffer so frightfully from insomnia here
and from night terrors. That is why I asked for
another Dickens; if I read him in bed he
diverts my mind.⁸²

Significantly it is Dickens who diverts Mansfield's mind from night terrors. Reader and writer are interchangeable, unfixed, shared experience is cathartic, salutary.

When at last I dozed in sheer exhaustion of
mind and body, it became a vast shadowy verb
which I had to conjugate. Imperative mood,
present tense: do not then go home, let
him not go home.⁷³

82 Letters and Journals p.98

83 Great Expectations p.381

The oddity of the banal, everyday world reinforces the estrangement felt by the narrator. Mansfield's 'night terrors' or 'great black bird' (p.98 Letters and Journals) perhaps find a fictional correspondence with the Daughters' fiction. Mansfield like Dickens was perfectly capable of perceiving the world through the eyes of a lunatic.

Their cold lips quivered at the greenish brims. Josephine curled her small red hands round the cup; Constantia sat up and blew on the wavy steam, making it flutter from one side to the other...⁸⁴

Con and Jug as visibly decaying before the reader. Metonymy reinforces such a sense for the 'lips' are in a world of their own. I am in bed; I feel very sick. queer altogether - decomposing a bit (Journal p.149). Words like lips in Mansfield (and Beckett of course) are uttered in infathomable darkness or estrangement, without precedent or antecedent creative life, like physical life is prone to profound disturbance, irrational meaning or interpretation. Shakespeare summarised the terrors of sanity and insanity in Twelfth Night

(Malvolio) I am not mad, Sir Topas. I say to you this house is dark. "...Madman, thou I say there is no darkness but ignorance in which thou are more puzzled than the Egyptians in their fog."⁸⁵

Proving that one is incovertly sane is hideously difficult. 'Ignorance' in its direct link to 'madness' is a challenging comparison, quite pertinent to the Daughters of the Late Colonel, where ignorance is metonymically expressed by the fog of the sisters self-protective

⁸⁴ Daughters of the Late Colonel p.273

⁸⁵ William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night Act IV Sc. II L40-44

unknowing or 'trying to begin to concentrate.' Hardly surprising then that Mansfield should find the mad 'ignorance' of Dickens reassuring and conciliatory. Malvolio's position is in any case one of demented sanity. Shakespeare like Keats and Chekhov and others was another literary, spiritual friend to Mansfield and her fiction. a means of definition and absolution.

And then Hamlet is lonely.
The solitary person always acts.
But I could write a thousand pages about Hamlet.⁸⁶

The second sentence is a personal and fictional conclusion or 'arrival.' Mansfield's acting like those of her characters is a means of proving her own emotional ballast and direction. Brigid Brophy in her harshly brilliant article on Mansfield, summarises the latter in this fashion.

Katherine Mansfield was in the habit of running up spare personalities for herself... she was too brutal for life ... The obvious - indeed dazzling talent is for multiple impersonation... ... (she) had indeed, a cannibalistic imagination. Her aperçus are of the world glimpsed by an assassin...⁸⁷

Brophy believes Mansfield's fictions, both the public and written ones, were psychological channels for her aggression and improvising personalities. The publication of the Journal and Letters reveal just how much Mansfield was actually on 'show' with or without the series of masks and personalities. This will be investigated with particular reference to Je ne parle pas français and A Married Man's Story.

86 Journal p.275

87 Brigid Brophy p.89-93

Brophy's fascinating axiom that Mansfield's perception of the world resembled that of an 'assassin' to strikingly astute. Mansfield's diagnosis of the worlds of behaviour and relationships are revelatory, incisive glimpses, worlds caught unknowingly to themselves. Mansfield's vision is simultaneously interior and exterior to herself and her 'characters.'

...(cf Shatov's Child) I curse him
before he is born, this child! This vindictive-
ness is profoundly true.⁸⁸

Shatov's wife is woman and not-a-woman. And the conflict is captured perfectly by Mansfield. Such conflict could be expressed comically too.

And who can believe that Ophelia really loved
him and wasn't thankful to think how peaceful
breakfast would be without his preachings?...⁸⁹

The assassin's perception obliterates the accepted cliched responses to established rhetoric and reading. Mansfield is writing once again down the middle, between worlds of knowing, perception and types of thought and consciousness. The Daughters of the Late Colonel with its metonymic fog and surface incoherence, 'excuses' Brophy's assassin perception through the comic impulse, the 'mad' misdirection of meaning and implication. The sisters' perceptions are untrustworthy, even insensible, a special kind of 'imaginative play' rather than specific comic assault. Yet when comic assault is required within the text, Con and Jug are capable of such achievement.

88 Journal p.111

89 Journal p.275

And then she had that maddening habit of asking for just an inch more bread to finish what she had on her plate, and then, at the last mouthful, absent mindedly... taking another helping. Josephine got very red when this happened, and she fastened her small, bead-like eyes on the table-cloth as if she saw a minute strange insect creeping through the web of it. But Constantia's long, pale face lengthened and set, and she gazed away - away - far over the desert, to where that line of camels unwound like a thread of wool.⁹⁰

The consciousness of the sisters seems unusually tough here. Great mental efforts are required to displace the assassinating perspectives of the sisters. The choice of escapist 'play' for the conscious attentions of the sisters' minds are of course quite absurd. The comic play replaces the reductive thought. Con and Jug as comic writers have to transcend the temptations of their prejudiced perceptions. Brophy's reference to Mansfield's cannibalistic imagination is ironically useful here. Nurse Andrews experiences automatism at the hands of the sisters, both who deal with anger in metaphorical even metamorphic ways. Con and Jug both see animals, but Jug's are only metaphorically present, Con's vision is a metamorphic materialisation. Con is the natural poet-dreamer of the two. Con's 'strength' is her myth-making her creative acceptance of the impossibly impossible. As Dickens says in Oliver Twist, that 'audacious Oliver has demogalized them all' (p.173). Thought is free and liberating.

... they had to have regular sit-down meals at the proper times, whereas if they'd been alone they could just have asked Kate if she wouldn't have minded bringing them a tray wherever they were...⁹¹

Civilised, constraining social etiquette has become a vehicle for comic subversion, creative wizardry. The act of bringing a tray has been made into a highly poetic, symbolic act. Ritual has been converted into fairy-tale, with Kate the 'princess' and the tray the proverbial magic carpet. Once again the reader's expectations of the limited social and mental horizons of the sisters are emphatically undermined. Kate going through the mental process of 'wouldn't have minded' seems curiously related to the sisters archly 'trying to begin to concentrate.' Kate has been absorbed into their mental discourse as other than 'herself.'

Death has brought poetic license, imaginative liberation to Con and Jug, and a homeopathic catharsis and cure to the author herself. Despair and pathos are only small parts of the intricate mental landscape of The Daughters of the Late Colonel, a landscape equipped with not one Alice but two, not one author but three.

The Doves' Nest

In 1922 Katherine Mansfield abandoned a 'serial' story on which she had been working, after failing to meet the July 1st deadline imposed by Clement Shorter. Much of the story was destroyed and the remains form the fragment known as The Doves' Nest⁹²

91 Daughters of the Late Colonel p.265

92 Alpers p.361

Incomplete as it is, this story ranks with The Daughters of the Late Colonel as a high-point of Mansfield's comic genius. As with the other superlative unfinished story A Married Man's Story, The Doves' Nest marks an interesting departure from her previous styles, and suggests that once again she was prepared to experiment. Mansfield as I indicated in my first chapter on her relationship with Woolf, was an innovative writer of fiction.

If The Daughters of the Late Colonel could be said to be narrated by a 'dual-Alice' in Con and Jug, then in the Doves' Nest, Mansfield has chosen to use one Alice narrator with which to perceive a comic world. Milly is as close to a late inhabitant of Carroll's Alice in Wonderland as ever the enigmatic Mansfield came to creating in her fictions. The young girl heroines of Mansfield stories have become condensed and unfired in Milly, for she is a narrator who consistently resists the autonomy of others, the autonomy of alternative texts. 'Kezia' and 'Laura' fuel Milly with a discerning ingenuousness of vision and with an acute, assassinating intelligence that understands rather more than is comfortable for many. The Doves' Nest represents a mature, consolidating fiction full of artistic confidence and subtly undermining comic unknowingly.

Milly's perception is accumulative. Her innocent impressionability collects steadily details of characters and surroundings, without apparent intellectual understanding or closure. Yet gradually throughout the

narrative the reader senses the comic momentum beneath the ingenious, absorbing consciousness of Milly. Milly's experiences are limited and few, so she refuses to credit her instincts and intuitions with rational knowledge or reading. Confined as these 'readings' are to the discredited, unconscious knowledge of Milly, they become surreptitiously comic by the delay in their release and resolution. The gap between the world and Milly's discredited reading of it is once again where Mansfield chooses to write her fiction, a world of indifference and creative 'black water.'

I found that the discovery of literature is also a solitary act, that literature is a lonely place. There nothing can touch us because, Like Alice Through the Looking Glass, we ourselves create the country through which we walk, giving it a geography in our mind... fantastic literature deals with what best can be defined as the impossible seeping into the possible, what Wallace Stevens calls 'black water breaking into reality.'⁹³

Stevens' black water seems a possible fantastic version of Mansfield's 'not minding', or 'trying to begin to concentrate' expressed through creative and comic indifference. 'Black water' is Milly's discredited comic knowledge, confined to the intuitive periphery of the mental landscape as the absurd refraction of the mirrored reality. Milly's comic perception echoes that of her creator who was as capable of stripping her reality of meaning and then rebuilding it, in her Alice-terms.

93 Alberto Manguel, Black Water: The Anthology of Fantastic Literature (Picador, London, 1983) p.XVI-p.XVII

... I feel sentimental about England now - English food, decent English wast! How much better than these thrifty French whose flower gardens are nothing but potential salad bowls. There's not a leaf in France that you can't 'faire une infusion avec'...
 ... and never one comfortable chair. If you want to talk the only possible thing is to go to bed.
 ... I quite understand the reason for what is called French moral. Laxity. You're simply forced into bed - not matter with whom... How much better to be snug and give yourself up to it.⁹⁴

'Alice' has come of age. Chairs and flower gardens are the inspirational touchstones for a wonderful piece of sustained ironic absurdity. The Mansfield narrative also suggests a firmly manipulative 'persona.' The mask, as ever is still in place. The emphasised climax of 'give yourself up to it' is deliciously ambiguous. Which self? One wonders. There are so many to choose from.

If comedy is in Emerson's terms, a 'well-intended halfness; a non-performance fo what is pretended to be performed'⁹⁵ then Mansfield's tendency to write her fictions down the narrative 'middle' knowing how not to know paradoxically, then this passage is an apt illustration of Emerson's premise and Mansfield's technique.

The ostentatious rhetoric of Mansfield's Journal narrator deliberately misreads the situations described, to the point of absurdity and an all-encompassing sensitivity, that generates the comic. Woolf's famous 'myriad impressions' have strange use here and even in Dickens with Flora Finching in Little Dorrit.

94 Journal p.108-9

95 'Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Comic 1843,' in Theories of Comedy edited by Paul Lauter (Doubleday, New York 1964)

Meanwhile Flora was mimicking in rapid snatches that there was a time and that the past was a yawning gulf however... He tried at parting to give his hand in frankness to the existing Flora - not the vanished Flora or the mermaid - but Flora wouldn't have it, couldn't have it...⁹⁶

Myths in Dickens and Mansfield are self-made, generators of fictions upon fictions. And the source of all the fiction is the 'self' the 'I' writing for living and living for the written expression of the self.

There would seem to be nothing fantastical, Flora-like or even Alice-like at the opening to the Doves' Nest. It is a world recognisable immediately to readers of Jane Austen and Henry James: the middle-class at perpetual rest. Transatlantic irony has become both the symptom and the cure for the dissatisfaction and boredom afflicting all the inhabitants of the Villa Martin. The women are waiting for something, or better still, someone to break the monotony of their comfortably closed and daily deadening lives. The Villa Martin and its borrowed furnishings appear more animate and feeling than the human beings sojourning languidly within its walls. A world of stiltifying possibility and known knowledge is superbly achieved by the utilisation of markedly stale, well-tried vocabulary.

After lunch Milly and her mother were sitting as usual on the balcony beyond the salon admiring for the five-hundredth time the stock, the roses, the small, bright grass beneath the palms and the oranges against a wavy line of blue, when a card was brought them by Marie. Visitors at the Villa Martin were very rare. ⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit (Signet, New York 1980) p.154
⁹⁷ The Doves' Nest p.437

Mansfield suggests monotony by detailed repetition; repetition with some small hope of a change. There is a specific search, through controlled pleasant detail for a source of animation. The 'view' is the constant backdrop to the inhabitants' oft-repeated theatre or play, a 'play' that is unfortunately the total performance of the life lead by Milly, her mother and their Villa companions. The detailed description intimates the extent to which the two women have collided in trying to enjoy that which is no longer enjoyable or even supportable. Mansfield's description is the mimesis of their attempt at imaginative and personal salvation, it is almost a linguistic still-life. Elaboration has become static through revisitation.

The world is a Mansfield pastime on the restrictive milieu of rich single women without tiring or existing occupations. Endless leisure is no real leisure at all. (And Mansfield with her tuberculosis and enforced Villa existence obviously knew this well.) Pathos is an option for the narrative direction of the story. However, Mansfield bravely pushes her characters in the direction of comedy, and of course in the direction of Prodger. Jane Austen may have been forced to send Milly out into the garden to identify and pick some flowers instead.

Detailed description is comically undermined by the advent of Prodger who is neither flower or vegetable, but is instead a new world and experience, in short a man. The entrance of Prodger into the Villa invigorates the vocabulary of The Doves' Nest. As in *The Daughters of the Late Colonel*, the story seems an extended conversation,

where new vocabulary is essential if the value of such conversation is to be preserved. The stale vocabulary of the opening already cited, represents thousands of similar utterances and conversations. Each detail is a historic fact, 'Prodger' is a virgin world, which incites a near riot in the chaste Villa, or as near as not the lonely 'femmes seules' can encourage, which ironically seems considerable. American nationality enhances the prospects of such linguistic vigour

'Mr Walter Prodger' they read. And then an American address, so very much abbreviated that neither of them understood it... 'Prodger dear?' she asked mildly, as though helping Milly to a slice of never before tasted pudding... 98

Abbreviation appears a daring, imaginatively courageous act in a world that has so far been defined and spelt out exactly and longwindedly for diversion's sake. The characters even introduce a new word of their own to the socially polite villa; 'pudding.' Constraining etiquette has surreptitiously been afflicted by the Flora Finching virus. Prodger enters the narrative almost metonymically, emphasising his oddity, his strangeness. 'Prodger' represents a linguistically broken world. His name has no correspondence. Prodger is an absence to be acted upon; a walking temptation to linguistically and comically defile. Mansfield is emulating Dickens in this instance. She is taking a situation and adding an idea. The situation is that a male comes unaccompanied and unexpectedly to the female ghetto that is the Villa Martin.

The idea is that he is as much a Prodger as being Prodger. What Prodger is, the story gradually discloses, notably through the character Milly, who makes him both repetitive and new at will. This conflict engenders the comic direction of the narrative.

In the beginning Prodger is a name, it is all that is visible of himself to the world. Prodger progressively becomes in the narrative, a close-reading or critique of the man behind the name. Dickens could not have formulated a dizzier or more vertiginuous label, or 'tag.'

However Marie's version of Prodger is an interesting side-line translation. She injects him with a sexuality and maleness that neither Milly nor her mother can copy. 'C'est un tres beau Monsieur' says Marie conclusively (p.438) with Mansfield's already expressed view on French 'moral laxity' (Journal p.108-9) the sexual suggestiveness is clear. By contrast Milly's reputed, second hand version of Marie's Prodger leaves plenty of scope for debate. But then Milly's version is a virgin's story. 'Prodger' reads thus in translation.

'What does she say, dear?'

'She says he looks very nice Mother' 99

The pivotal, ambiguous word is of the course the emphasised 'nice.' The stale, repetitive vocabulary of the Villa has already assumed new colour, new vigour. 'Nice' is a tellingly prismatic word. Milly abstains from thought and self-consciousness and says nice and remains a virgin. Nice in Mansfield's fiction should

always be treated with great care, for nice in The Daughters of the Late Colonel allows Nurse Andrews to stay for a week. 'Nice' in The Doves' Nest is as inexact and free-wheeling as Milly's 'flower-blue gaze.' The attentive reader is immediately alerted to the impossible; and to Prodger in particular. Mansfield is revitalising her own writing through the methods of writing and reading explored through the narration in The Doves' Nest.

Prodger is a Dickensian visiting American, ludicrously described through superbly indifferent prose. The absurd is after all the fusion of the everyday situation with its abnormal exposition or vice-versa.

'... Pleased to meet you, Miss Fawcett.'
 And the stranger shot a fresh chill hand at Milly,
 who grasped it just in time before it was gone again.
 'Won't you sit down?' said Mother and she waved
 faintly at all the gilt chairs.
 'Thank you, I will,' said the stranger. Down he
 sat, still, solemn, crossing his legs and, most
 surprisingly his arms as well. His face looked
 at them over his arms as over a gate.¹⁰⁰

Sitting down is a ritualistic pastime at the Villa. Repetition had loaded it with significance. Indicative of the comfortable social position enjoyed by the mother and daughter at the Villa, Mother's polite gesture at 'all' the gilt chairs seems almost extravagantly generous, and Prodger's descent to the seated position, fulfils the promise of his unusual presence and name. Prodger sits on a chair as no-one has ever sat down before at the Villa. His actions as well as his name are new and curious, he is an object of mystification as well as a man. The almost

hysterical comedy of this scene originates in Milly, whose fascination with this visiting male spectacle, proceeds to saturate the text. Milly and her manner are on the brink of laughter without knowing why; trying to begin to concentrate again. They are aware only that they are unaware. Prodger as a man, in a world of sexually inactive females is as much an object as the chair on which he sits. Comedy is as mysterious to the participants as to its audience. Prodger is viewed by Milly as a man in pieces. Her lack of 'experience' of men, encourages a kind of explorative metonymic observation. Her lack of conventional response allows her paradoxically to see Prodger more fully. She sees him as he morally is. For Prodger as a face over the gate, is as attractive as Uriah Heep outside the Wickfield home in David Copperfield. Mansfield's assassin inclusiveness simply places Prodger absurdly over a gate, James would have written three minutely detailed pages of observation. Instinctive 'glimpses' or similes in Mansfield are delayed assimilations of character to be deduced at a later stage. Prodger's complacent sense of safety and moral secrecy in the fiction is assailed by the comic, undercutting the writer that is Milly. Heep made just the same mistake with David in Dickens's David Copperfield

I caught a glimpse as I went in of Uriah Heep breathing into the pony's nostrils and immediately covering them with his hand, as if he were putting some spell upon him.¹⁰¹

101 David Copperfield p.275

'Uriah Heep' as a name encourages the same 'type of magical, fantastical metamorphic mutations as 'Prodger.' Character and personality is revealed by symbolic indirection, by intuited discredited perception. The inadvertant nature of such perceptions renders such per ceptives all the more expressive, all the more potentially comic. Milly's authorship, naive and incredulous there- fore encourages the moral revelation through the absurd transformation. Milly's absence from closed meanings and readings allows for an expansive narration, like Alice's Queen of Hearts, she is gaining practice at believing 'six impossible things before breakfast.' Milly thus refuses, narratively, to resist the possibility that a 'Prodger' may be completely other than his external representation may appear to be. The comic tension between the 'knowable' American visiting Prodger and the 'stranger' reveals the lack of self-knowledge present in Prodger and the acute sensitivity of Milly. Milly's reading of Prodger seems almost clairvoyant. Her imaginative energy is finding release through exciting if somewhat sinister possibilities. Endings in Mansfield are abolished as being irrelevant and unnecessary. 'Any kind of artifi- cial completion is absolutely false' wrote Mansfield in her Journal (p.79). In Dickens' novels endings are absented by their conspicuously plottes presences. The fully-achieved ending in Dickens in paradoxically only another beginning, a false closure.

'It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards,' the Queen remarked.¹⁰²

102 Lewis Carroll, The Annotated Alice edited by Martin Gardner 13th edition (Penguin, London 1982) p.248

Milly's perceptive method is succinctly expressed here, so is the narrative method of the Daughters of the Late Colonel with its manipulation of time, spatial reality and voluntary and involuntary memory. Milly recognises Prodger therefore in terms of what he will do as much as what he apparently is and was. Prodger is a human theatrical preview to Milly. She meditates upon his personal complexity accordingly. Prodger's comedy is generated from his extravagantly realised mediocrity, that is never interiorised. Prodger is a spectacle to Milly, indeed to all the women at the Villa. The folding of his arms leaves the females entranced; Mother has to gesture 'faintly' at the furniture so overcome is she by Prodger's potency. The 'gilt' chair, enhanced by his effete presence transmutes into a throne. The gap between Prodger's actual masculine presence and the insinuated male aura of his presence naturally instils comedy.

The interview with Prodger reveals him subsequently the fool. The reader, like Milly, observes the parallel and link between Miss Anderson, the gauche Catholic companion and Walter Prodger. Both characters are the comic Carrollian memories of each other. The one anticipates and consolidates the other. (an obvious example being the repetition of the cold hand with respect to both.) Prodger's acceptance of mother's idiosyncratic absurd logic, draws him unknowingly into his own comic epiphany.

"My companion Miss Anderson is with us. But unfortunately she is a Roman Catholic and so is out most of the time.' Mr Prodger bowed as one who agreed that Roman Catholics were very seldom in..._103

Mother's idiosyncratic casual argument is delightfully Wildean. Prodger unaware that he has been detected and read by Milly, secretes the charlatan. However as in Pride and Prejudice with the affable Mr Collins, the author has placed her 'fool' in a world that will ironically save him from himself. He will not be confronted by his own deceit. Under Milly's flower-blue gaze, Prodger is converted into a text that he will unfortunately, but comically never read. The desire he has to be agreeable and charming reveal not only the hypocrisy, but more importantly the extent to which Milly and Mansfield will discover his the fool.

... Mr Prodger looked towards Milly.
 "Do you see those yachts Miss Fawcett?"
 Milly saw them.
 "Do you happen to know what they're doing?"
 asked Mr Prodger. What they were doing? What a funny question! Milly stared and bit her lip.
 "They're racing!" said Mr Prodger, and this time he did actually smile at her.
 "Oh yes, of course," stammered Milly. "Of course they are." she knew that.104

Social discourse is a covert agreement, a balance of power. In this instance the power is all Milly's for Prodger's comical ignorance of Milly's intelligent perception; leaves him totally exposed to her laughter, barely contained by her text. Prodger's banal conversation drives Milly into her gauche physical response 'She bit

103 The Doves' Nest p.441

104 The Doves' Nest p.442

her lip' which encourages Prodger in his conventional addresses. Prodger's studied, even theatrical conversation accentuates this fraudulence. Mansfield, acting as some unseen prompter in this instance, prevents Milly from exploding with laughter, and preserves the comedy by momentarily making the apparently naive Milly an object as much as Prodger. However, Mansfield does allow Milly some acknowledgement of her acute intelligent perception. 'She knew that' of course. Milly's awkward stammer and gauche manner are brilliantly swept aside by the positive self-confidence of this sentence. Authorial presence is undermined again.

I have briefly mentioned Prodgers resemblance to the other 'foreigner' at the Villa, Miss Anderson. Prodger is a foreigner in Nationality, Miss Anderson by religion. Both intrude upon the susceptible consciousness of Milly and are comically realised. Unlike Marie however, neither inhabit any narrative underworld, lacking any powerful focalising presence except through Milly's narration. Although Miss Anderson is specifically allied to Prodger within the narrative, she is far more likeable than he. She is never treated as Woolf treats Miss Kilman in Mrs Dalloway. Milly has no need to physically disbelieve in Anderson as she does, when she rubs her eyes at the exit of Prodger in the story. (p.443) Miss Anderson with her propensity for 'accidents' and domestic disasters, resembles a Mansfieldian 'Joyce Grenfell' character. Potentially she is as threatening as Prodger but Mansfield and Milly exercise her latent repulsiveness through sustained, absurd comedy.

Milly was alone when Miss Anderson entered the dining room. This was unfortunate... She had the feeling that Miss Anderson might say 'something about God, or something fearfully intimate... Supposing she were to say 'Milly, do you believe in Our Lord?' Heavens! It simply didn't bear thinking about. 'Good morning, my dear,' said Miss Anderson, and her fingers, cold, pale, like church candles, touched Milly's cheeks.¹⁰⁵

Milly's sense of claustrophobia is mimicked by the absurdly gauche juxtaposition of 'Lord' with 'heavens,' The physical repulsion is also paralleled, this time in Mansfield's Journal referring to the faithful 'wife' Ida Baker,

When I leave her hands I feel hung with wreaths...
106

There is something profound and terrible in this eternal desire to establish contact...¹⁰⁷

and investigated still further in terms of male/female relationships in A Married Man's Story. Milly's awakening sensuality and sexuality makes her acutely aware of physical contact, hence the emphasis on Anderson's fingers. Miss Anderson's theatrical gravity and Catholicism are intolerable to Milly who can only register absurdity and comic 'seriousness.' Mansfield will not permit anyone to get away with anything - again revealing an Austen sensibility; so 'heavens' barely manages comedy and reveals Milly's residual immaturity and preciousness as well as her sense of enforced restraint.

When Prodger arrives for his second visit his correspondence to Miss Anderson is strikingly rendered.

105 The Doves' Nest p.446

106 Journal p.56

107 Journal p.215

and is unsurprisingly comically ambiguous.

Then Miss Anderson was introduced. Milly was ready this time for that fresh hand but she almost gasped; it was so very chill. It was like a hand stretched out to you from the water. Then together they all sat down...¹⁰⁸

Once again gaining one's seat takes on a special ritualistic conotation and significance. The ambiguity of whose hand Milly actually grasps is too marked to be undeliberate. Milly, like Mansfield is highly responsive to physical peculiarity, magnified within the rarified provinces of social intercourse. Milly's outward civility is as mask-like and impenetrable as Mansfield herself. An ordinary action has taken on a highly symbolic status. As Auden remarked in The Dyer's Hand polite tea-table conversation is probably the nearest human behaviour comes to resembling a symbolist's dream. This 'dream' seems realised to perfection in The Doves' Nest, where talking about the weather definitely means something else.

Symbolism in this story, acts as a form of comic corrective, it reveals the narrative manipulation of the ludicrous. The comic corrective bestowed upon the characters deserving of such self knowledge, reconciles them to themselves and each other within society.

The essential comic resolution, is therefore an individual release, which is also a social reconciliation.¹⁰⁹

108 The Doves' Nest p. 450

109 Northrop Frye 'The Argument of Comedy' in Theories of Comedy p.452

Fry continues, 'Comedy is designed not to condemn evil but to ridicule a lack of self-knowledge.'¹¹⁰

The Doves' Nest therefore integrates Prodger within its comic structure as a means of moral and humanistic education and reconciliation. Milly's conception of Prodger redeems him from his inherent banality and self-conscious complacency, and our dislike too. Miss Anderson under Milly's electric gaze, becomes a riveting and strangely disarming figure.

'I have always heard the American hotels are so very well-equipped,' said Miss Anderson. 'Telephones in all the rooms and even tape machines.' Milly could see Miss Anderson reading that tape machine. 'I should like to go to America awfully,' she cried as Marie brought in the lamb and set it before Mother.

'... But what makes you want to go to America?' Miss Anderson ducked forward, smiling at Milly, and her eyeglass fell into her plate, just escaping the gravy. Because she wants to go everywhere, was the real answer. But Milly's flower-blue gaze rested thoughtfully on Miss Anderson as she said, 'The ice-cream, I adore ice-cream.'¹¹¹

Milly is coming into her own acknowledged, credited consciousness. The Prodger invasion has actually encouraged Milly to express herself with confidence. She disposes of limiting social conversation with the injection of the fantastic, reverting to childhood experiences to reinvigorate the world. Already the reader has realised Milly's narrative superiority over Prodger and Miss Anderson. It is Milly's perspective that dominates, that is respected. Earlier, when Milly feared religious talks with Miss Anderson, this superiority was tentative, exploratory. Significantly Milly knows this too. She has become far more aware of social complexities. She thinks of the 'real' answer to Miss Anderson's question

110 Frye p.457

111 The Doves' Nest p.452-453

about America and rejects it. 'Ice-cream' may seem a child-like response, yet it astutely reveals that Milly recognises that without her social position, she would be patronised and imaginatively reduced by Anderson and Prodger. Milly regards her world through a multiple model 'self'. She subverts the world that the one gauche Milly sees, by the comic perspicacity of the Milly with the flower-blue gaze. On a moralistic level, Milly is testing the depths to which frauds like Prodger will sink to, in order to flatter and appear socially successful. However Mansfield is also emphasising her heroine's idealism in attempting to subvert the authority of the false and charlatan in the social world. Milly's intolerance is thus 'unsophisticated' socially, whilst being comically revelatory and dissecting.

The meal in Mansfield's The Doves' Nest is structurally similar to the famous 'bouef en daube' dinner-party in Woolf's 'To the Lighthouse' in that it represents an epiphany, or series of epiphanies for the characters, and is thus climatic for both fictions.

Milly's serenity and stillness is Mrs Ramsay as a girl. Milly as Alice is furthermore equipped with clarity and instructive comprehension. Milly recognises therefore that Miss Anderson's perceptible excitement stems from her notably single state. Miss Anderson desires a man, even a male-substitute like Walter Prodger. When Anderson desperately ducked forward, she is encapsulated and summarised in a single gesture. If she had merely leaned forward, she could have been single, happy

and content. Instead she 'ducked forward' and is gauche, lonely and engagingly comic. The eye-glass is a literal and creative reward for this comic potential. Anderson's 'affected' ways of seeing ends comically up in the soup. Her lack of self-knowledge is enacted visually, so she can be subsequently redeemed through comedy. Retrieving the conspiratorial eyeglass, signifies some degree of corrective experience.

Mother at the meal is the least present of the two observers. She is too engrossed in watching Milly in practice. Thus the reader can be told directly that Milly was 'more animated than she had done for weeks.' (p.453-4) Mansfield's narrative is manipulative in the extreme. Mother is conspicuously practising her own 'art' her; that of 'mothering' a role sometimes adopted and adapted by Milly as well. Milly is a 'mother' in the making, if not in actuality with the weight of her narrative influence indicating her access and right to epiphany. Mother watching Milly is provided with a Milly-Dickensian observation too;

Mother, though outwardly all sympathy, found this a little bewildering. She had a momentary vision of Mr Prodger ringing for hot-plates to be brought to him at all hours. Such strange things to want in any numbers...112

Mother's thoughtful, wandering bewilderment at Prodger's fussy 'unmanly' wishes, offsets any direct imitation against Prodger himself. The plates instead provide a delightfully absurd fantasy; Mother is a comic writer too, exaggerating and following the strange emphases

Prodger places upon objects and things in his conversation. Prodger's high seriousness has been metamorphised into surrealist comedy. Dinner with Dali.

The narrative intervention of Marie at the close of Section III is peculiar in the extreme. The reader has become accustomed to the now familiar world of the villa and its inhabitants. Mansfield's use of defamiliarisation, is therefore all the more effective here. When Marie converts Milly and Mother into 'the white and grey figure' (p.454 the reader feels correspondingly disorientated. This is the vision and perspective of the narrative underworld rather than the contained world of the drawing room and salon. The apparently powerful are suddenly transformed into powerless individuals. Marie is not sympathetic to Mother and Milly. They are frail, foolish and foreign, lacking the masculine acquaintances that would have made them powerful to Marie. Marie's intervention therefore at this point emphasises Prodger once again as a potential, potent suitor, and hints that our 'reading' of Milly and Mother and their reading of Prodger and their world may be other than might be suspected. It is as if The Daughters of the Late Colonel were to be narrated by Kate. Mansfield's fictions are never absolutes, they are always susceptible to other narrators, other narratives. In Marie's view, the world of Milly and Mother is empty and drained of any redemptive comedy. The two figures resemble thousands of other 'dames seules' and Mansfield of course wrote plenty of stories concerning such figures too; Miss Brill, Pictures Little Governess, The Life of Ma Parker, etc. As Marie

113 See Tolstoy, War and Peace, Vol.II, transl. Rosemary Edmonds (Penguin, London 1978) p.1155. Mansfield was well-acquainted with Tolstoy's work as the Journal illustrates.

suggests through the third person narration earlier in the story, 'what heart could she have in ministering to that most uninspiring of spectacles - three ladies living alone?' The dismissal does not preclude pathos. The French identity of Marie encourages the reader to acknowledge the sexual inactivity even sterility of the genteel women at the villa, as she is distinctly other to them in every sense but gender. She is their most personal stranger. She can reveal therefore their tragedy if she refuses to allow them redemptive comedy. Christopher Fry in the Lauter collection on comedy remarked,

If the characters were not qualified for tragedy there would be no comedy, and to some extent that I have to cross the one before I can light on the other...114

Marie and Mansfield thus reveal the alternative Milly and Mother. Stories are just enacted selected possibilities, not inescapable certainties and these possibilities are always on the brink of collapse.

Only Mr Prodger, after all? But whom had Milly expected to see? The feeling was there and gone again that she would not have been surprised to see somebody quite different....115

Prodger's weakness and hypocrisy threatens Milly's future fictions and her only escape from such imaginative closure is through the comic perspective. Comedy redeems disappointment as the style and tone demonstrate here, for the comic makes collapsed expectation even enjoyable at least in its artistic inclusiveness. Half-truths may be the most that one can deservedly (or undeservedly) attain. Milly's own comic world is threatened by her active imagination. Luckily, she recognises that in his

114 Christopher Fry in Theories of Comedy p.13

115 The Doves' Nest p.450

own manner Prodger has endeavoured to accommodate her expectation. He is 'smarter... brushed, combed, shining' (p.450) Prodger is still luckily a fascinating object to be observed and enjoyed as a catalyst for the comic and perhaps Milly's awakening, mystified sexuality.

Section IV of The Doves' Nest is Mansfield's depiction of enchantment. Everyone, everything is suddenly acquiescent and still, even the sea has become a 'breath' a mere 'sigh' (p.454) the sun has even impossibly reached its superlative heat in Prodger's words, an absurd observation in any other world but that of the Dove's Nest at this point. This environment liberates his observation uncontested. Milly leads Prodger, already showing signs of Wildean 'triviality,' still further down the path to comic epiphany.

'...Then you're not afraid of the sunshine?' said Mr Prodger, taking his coffee from Mother.
 'No, thank you. I won't take any cream. Just one lump of sugar.' And he sat down balancing the little chattering cup on his broad knee.
 'No, I adore it,' answered Milly, and she began to nibble the lump of sugar...116

Prodger is beginning to succumb to Milly and her blossoming womanhood. She has no fear of sunshine, she adores it in a celebratory way, as in Lawrence's short story 'Sun' where it represents the natural extgeral catalyst for physical and spiritual growth. Prodger like Lawrence's Maurice in that story, is capable of 'courage' when faced with female vitality and resolve as inspiration. Prodger thaws, Maurice will walk naked in the sun.

... In this way, he was a man too, he faced the world and was not entirely quenched in his male courage. He would love to walk in the sun even ridiculously. But he smelled of the world, and all its fetters and its mongrel cowering...¹¹⁷

Lawrence's summary of Maurice reflects sympathetically upon Prodger. The latter is a man lacking in any spontaneous vitality save his bewildering single smile, which is an automatic social response. He is a man without adjectives, a man therefore very much of a world of 'fetters and ... mongrel cowering.' Milly excites and disturbs him by her fresh outlook, as she substitutes her new language and perceptions for his stale, repetitive discourse. Prodger's cup significantly in this tea-room symbolism, becomes personified as female and 'chattering' and draws attention (for the first time in the story) to Prodger's incipient masculine identity by focusing proudly on his 'broad knee'. 'Nibbling' the sugar suggests distraction and meditation for Milly, but communicates also to the reader the instinctively flirtatious action adopted by Milly at her moment of triumph over Prodger. Sensuality, as in Dickens finds perfect correspondence in food. How one eats and what one eats are profoundly psychological concerns. Nibbling sugar is the acknowledgement of Milly's creative, imaginative, even physical triumph over Prodger, and Milly knows it.

The tentative glimpse of a reassessed, 'vital' Prodger at the close of *The Doves' Nest* is in conflict with the Marie-dominated perspective upon him earlier

117 D H Lawrence "Sun" in The Woman Who Rode Away 12th edition (Penguin, London 1978) p.44

in the story. The reader has to give the reading precedent, as the two seem to directly conflict each other. Milly's rejuvenation of Prodger is offset by Marie's corpse-like object who inspires her outrageous 'Tombeau d'un beau monsieur.' Milly's contained sexual implications for Prodger seem genteel, even virgin-like compared to Marie's near ecstasy over her captured 'beau.'

But today - the glory of her opportunity made Marie feel quite faint as she seized her flower scissors. Tombeau d'un beau monsieur. She was forbidden to cut the orchids that grew around the fountain basin. But what were orchids for if not for such an occasion? Her fingers trembled as the scissors snipped away ... The effect was superb. Marie almost seems to see her beau Monsieur, very small, very small, at the bottom of the bowl, in full evening dress with ribbon across his chest and his ears white as wax.¹¹⁸

Prodger is his flower arrangement just as in another scene he is his chair. (p.449) Transmutation is a form of metaphorical possession, specifically sexual domination. Literary ecstasy is the hallucinatory description of Prodger at the bottom of a flower bowl. Marie realises Prodger in the sexual potency that all the women at the villa consciously or unconsciously desire; Marie however is the only female sensually active enough to do so. If she could eat the 'small, very small' Prodger she would! All these possible Prodger's are condensed finally into Milly's 'broad knee' detail at the end of The doves' Nest Such a resonant detail serves to tell the entire story through symbolic, experienced catharsis.

Naturally Marie's 'tombeaux' indicates her retaliation at her (seemingly powerless) position in life. Milly and Mother seem undeserving of their social power and 'potency' so Marie anarchically converts the hapless females into corpses, who ironically proceed to admire Marie's work. Marie's view is as extravagant as that of Swiveller in *The Old Curiosity Shop* though of course a little more vicious. the latter would have met his imaginative match in Marie. Both are unlicensed writers (as opposed to Milly's apparent licence, but of course Marie does not know Milly's thoughts). Marie's vision can only be granted one investigation in The Dove's Nest, and thus is externalised, otherwise she would deprive the narrative of Milly's and Mother's narration. Milly's unconscious erotic hopefulness is an erotic certainty in Marie, and their acknowledged and unacknowledged sensuality permeates the entire fiction, through its imaginative metaphorical optimism. The optimism directs the narrative, reinforcing Northrop Frye's view that the hope expressed by the original Alice to Carroll that 'there will be nonsense in it' was fulfilled in Nicholas Nickleby.

The silliest character in *Nicholas Nickleby* is the herd's mother, a romancer who keeps dreaming of impossible happy endings for her children. But the story itself follows her specifications and not those of sensible people.¹¹⁹

The specification for 'what might be' in The Doves' Nest is thus granted the creative supremacy discussed by Frye concerning Nicholas Nickleby. Both Marie and Milly are allowed their private narratives, unlike Prodigal who is the passive receiver of such fictions. Male-female

119 Northrop Frye 'The Argument of Comedy' in Theories of Comedy
p.452

roles and expectations are brilliantly reversed in terms of stereotypes and power, and in such reversals, the brilliant comedy of The Doves' Nest is achieved in between high farce and near pathos.

'Not minding' or creative indifference in The Doves' Nest and The Daughters of the Late Colonel forms the basis of Mansfield's comic direction and structure. 'Minding' as we shall see in Mansfield's two 'dark' fictions, Je ne parle pas français and A Married Man's Story produced two very different types of narrative. Such fictional 'play' consists of mental exposure and self-revelation rather than the comic absence of the world of 'trying to begin to concentrate.'

Mansfield's dark stories are the detonated responses to the two brilliant comedies explored in this chapter. Such refractions will show the dangers, and devastating consequences of sending Dickens's Swiveller to meet and challenge Doestoevsky's Underground Man.

Chapter Three

The Mind Exposed

'So dark a mind within me dwells,
But if I be dear to someone else,
Then I should be to myself more dear,'
('Maud' Alfred Lord Tennyson)

Katherine Mansfield's Je ne parle pas francais

and

A Married Man's Story

Not a story about me through their eyes then.
 Find the beginning, the slight, silver key to
 unlock it, to dig it out. Here then, is a maze
 to begin, be in... The two of us, our criss-
 cross like whip in slow motion, the maze of action
 rising and falling, getting narrower in radius till
 it ended and we drifted down to Mexico in old heat.
 That there is nothing of depth, of significant
 accuracy of wealth in the image, I know. It is
 there for a beginning.¹

Disclosing a 'beginning' in fiction is a responsibility. For beginnings inflict structures, impose parameters upon writing that constrain both writer and reader, narrator and narrative. Eliot in his poetry, particularly 'Ash Wednesday' and 'The Love-Song of J Alfred Prufrock' repeatedly revisits the problem of creative 'starts,' imaginative origins. Beginning in Eliot is a touchstone, a motif, of creative impotence, even inadequacy. 'In my beginning is my end' he wrote in *Burnt Norton*, and in *Prufrock*, 'Then how should I begin/to spit out all the butt-ends of my days and my ways?' Eliot's poetry explores the relative inability of any narrative to shoulder the final responsibility for the definitive 'story,' the absolute version of a life. That which can be expressed through language is at best tangential to the original, inspirational imaginative 'nucleus' or thing. Expression could be terms a creative oblique misfire. Years later and with a similar employment and manipulation of the collage technique as a fictional form, Ondaatje suspends the connotations and constraining implications of his beginnings through the self-conscious revelation that

1. Michael Ondaatje The Collected Works of Billy the Kid
 (Picador, London 1989) p.20

such locations are arbitrary and by their very nature fluid in the extreme: 'That there is nothing of depth... I know.' Ondaatje interposes a meaning between image as text and reader in order to free the erected structured text from any responsibility but that to the reader. Ondaatje highlights the essential dichotomy in any narrative that purports to explore a landscape of personality of the 'self.' A beginning is a place literally to 'be in'. Naturally in a consciously confessional narrative this fictional, psychological topography may dominate both the narrative and narration, one becoming the necessary, perhaps displaced refraction of the other. For in Mansfield's two great 'confessional' narratives, 'Je ne parle pas Francais' and 'The Married Man's Story', the method of narration proves more meaningful, more revealing, than the actual narratives, which are undermined and rendered obscure by the machinations and circumlocution of the narrators. Stories are reconstructed, repeated or just retold. The susceptible narrators Duquette and the Married Man are always on the verge of telling their stories, of becoming men who write stories, yet it never actually happens. Duquette as the self-conscious artist, the 'Married Man' as the artist-in-secret, both finally fail in their attempt to articulate that which they want to reveal. Naturally, in its unfinished state, the 'Married Man's Story' needs careful discussion, but its fragmentation reads curiously suggestive of a mind that will never attain any absolute conclusion, any personal 'truth'. Digression is not idiosyncrasy but an unequivocal

necessity to equivocate. The reader assembles Duquette and the Married Man through their exploration of their 'submerged' lives, of their 'second' selves, (it is noteworthy that Mansfield specifically chose to highlight the unusual aspects of her narratives through such terminology, perhaps recognising the relative freshness of such psychological explanations,) Like Dostoevsky's Underground Man and Browning's characters in his dramatic monologues, personality is primarily revealed through the distillation of the voice. Characters re-edit their memories, their pasts, and subsequently prove as much the spectacle to the reader, as that which is described and observed.

The narration may be distinctly odd, even morally alarming but it is plausible and finally irresistible to the reader. The concentrated voice of the narrator filters through to the reader in 'the prime elements of alienation and defeat!'² Repetition consolidates the estranging patterns of thought within the narrator's mind and allows the reader to connect intuitively the morally and seemingly imaginatively incoherent. Browning and Dostoevsky empower their narratives through bizarre actions and every day language. Thus access to the narrative is straight forward - understanding rather more complex.

2. Brigid Brophy, 'Katherine Mansfield's Self Depiction' Michigan Quarterly Review 5 (1966) p.89-93

Being petitioners, they were a meek lot
 One, however, wasn't. He was an officer, and
 I had a special loathing for him. ...He had
 a special way of letting his saber rattle.
 Disgusting... Well, the real snag, the most
 repulsive aspect of my nastiness, was that,
 even when I was at my liverish worst, I was
 constantly aware that I was not really wicked
 or even embittered, that I was simply chasing
 pigeons...³

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
 Perfectly pure and good. I found/a thing to
 do, and all her hair in one long yellow string
 I wound/three times her little throat around,
 And strangled her. No pain felt she;
 I am quite sure she felt no pain...⁴

In both extracts the narrator's voice has objectified his personal world through his choice of image. Speech is revealed as form of psychological pigmentation. Not surprisingly one method of cohering the incoherent is through the employment of the comic. Dostoevsky's character's intolerance of the saber is comical, as it is extremely petty, not to say pathologically sensitive. The juxtaposition of 'saber rattle' and 'disgusting' intensifies the inappropriateness of the narrator's response. The narrator has in Bergsonian terms made his 'problem' mechanical and therefore to be laughed at, without realising that the reader in turn will do exactly the same with him. Observer becomes observed, spectator spectacle and so on. Mansfield of course reworked this idea by ostentatiously 'splitting' the personality and life of her narrators through the intervention of some

3 Fyoder Dostoevsky Notes from Underground translated by
 A R MacAndrew, Ninth Edition (Signet, London 1961) p.91

4 Browning - A Selection by W E Williams, Thirteenth Edition
 (Penguin, London 1981) p.124

'second self' or 'submerged life' or through the medium
of the mirror

Good heavens, if she had ever been her real self
with Nan Pym, Nannie would have jumped out of the
window with surprise...
She jumped up and half unconsciously, half consciously
she drifted over to the looking-glass.
There stood a slim girl in white...⁵

Beryl's ambiguous state of consciousness halts any
looming possibility of epiphany. What the 'real self' would
have been with Nan remains undisclosed; acknowledged only
in a discredited mindless way. The sudden translation of
'Nan Pym' into the intimate 'Nannie' carries the signifi-
cance that the consciousness of Beryl fails to encompass
or articulate. The reader perversely 'sees' more in
Beryl's mirror than she. Reader becomes voyeur and inter-
preter at the same time. Beryl paradoxically is both
observed and observer too, without differentiating between
the two states. For to differentiate would be to choose,
and to choose would be to mean, to become significant.
Beryl in her conflicting, unspoken desires prefers to
write her text straight down the middle of signifier and
signified, meaning and non-meaning, consciousness and
unconsciousness. Whether Beryl's sense of self is repeated
consolidated or deflected by the subject in the mirror
remains unknown, unassumed. Identification becomes
arbitrary and undefined.

Browning in 'Porphyria's Lover,' trivialises his
narrator's unusual response to Porphyria with the osten-
tationously incidental banality of 'I found a thing to do'

attain a creative epiphany with 'And strangled her.'

The tension created in Browning, Dostoevsky and Mansfield's confessional fictions, are primarily generated through the 'gap' between behaviour and self-knowledge. At what point of plot or more generally, at what level of behaviour does a person or character reveal his 'unnegotiable' self, if indeed there is such a self, which seems exceedingly doubtful.

If the autobiographical moment prepares for a meeting of 'writing' and 'selfhood,' a coming together of method and subject matter, this destiny - like the retrospective glance that presumably initiates autobiography - is always deferred. Autobiography reveals gaps, and not only gaps in time and space or between the individual and the social, but also a widening divergence between the manner and matter of its discourse. That is, autobiography reveals the impossibility of its own dream: what begins on the presumption of self knowledge ends in the creation of a fiction that covers the premises of its construction...⁶

The gap emphasised by Beryl's floating, free consciousness in Prelude before the looking-glass is thus the fictional representation of the autobiographical dream, and its impossibility. 'Knowing oneself' is just another method of fictional narrative or discourse, a momentary process of selection that implies a unity that is in fact systematically undermined or deferred. Beryl before her looking-glass is Mansfield before her fiction. Focaliser and author are interchangeable and mutually dependent.

In both Browning and Mansfield fiction operates as a vehicle of truth and self-delusion simultaneously. It is

⁶ Shari Benstock, 'Authorising the Autobiographical' in The Private Self, edited by Shari Benstock (Routledge, London 1988) p.11

left to the reader to perceive the totality of the experiences undertaken by the characters within the fictions, translating the nature and significance of the collusion between innocence and experience, endings and beginnings are more radically, life and death.

Before turning to the stories themselves I wish to examine briefly a further example of such a collusion, Garcia Marquez's opening to his short novel, Chronicle of a death Foretold. As the author hesitates to ascribe a dominant narrator or even narrative to his novel, so what is told and what is not told take on an equality and significance beyond the ostensible limitations of the 'tale' as form or genre.

Fundamentally, as with Mansfield, Browning and Dostoevsky, Marquez presents a world of powerless individuals, desperately endeavouring to establish some provisional controls over their desultory, accounted for, lives; circumlocution as dignity and defiance.

On the day they were going to kill him, Santiago Nazar got up at five-thirty in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on. He'd dreamed he was going through a grove of timber trees... "He was always dreaming about trees," Placida Livero, his mother told me twenty-seven years later, recalling the details of that unpleasant Monday...⁷

With the surety of a great stylist, Garcia Marquez succinctly creates the explanation of his story in the opening paragraph of the novel. However, as in Mansfield's

⁷ Gabriel Garcia Marquez Chronicle of a Death Foretold, (Picador, London 1983) p.1

two confessional fictions, one explanation or possible narrative strains against another; who possesses the dominant narrative? It is impossible to reach any resolution without due qualification. Words challenge words in a therapeutic battle to coerce 'truth' into fictional light. Mansfield herself was aware of the need for and the difficulty of such a creatively dynamic process.

I worked at it hard enough, God knows, and yet I didn't get the deepest truth out of the idea, even once. What is this feeling? I feel again that this kind of knowledge is too easy for me; it's even a kind of trickery...⁸

Marquez in his novel has achieved Mansfield's 'deepest truth,' exposition is integrated fully with the undisclosed subtext, the 'other' psychological balance and narrative that sustains the language of the fixed, expressed story-telling. Each explanation though integrated also remains autonomous and separable. Stories are meeting-places not grave-yards. Nasar's dream, his mother's comments and the incontrovertible facts that he died on that day after arising at five-thirty, parallel each other in significance and imaginative, essential, truth. As in Proust, Woolf and Joyce, 'time' is the prism through which all experience is filtered, enjoyed and known. Marquez has edited a kaleidoscopic narrative around this single, singular event; a Latin American Scheherezade.

Conflicting stories may suggest mental conflicts, mental disease. It may be difficult to 'read' the world or text without adherence to a single, linear method of fiction. Hardly surprisingly, Mansfield's Je ne parle pas francais' and 'A Married Man's Story' have been seen as depictions of mental, psychological and sexual disturbance. Mansfield's two versions of her 'cry against corruption'⁹ can be read as the aetiology of illness. For unlike the Marquez which has a unifying principle in the actual death of Nasar, whatever digressions ensue around it, Mansfield's stories rely solely on the voice of the narrator to centralise and control the direction and significance of the various fictional avenues explored: events are largely absent.

Every journey conceals another journey within its lines; the path not taken and the forgotten angle. These are the journeys I wish to record. Not the ones I made but the ones I might have made, perhaps did make in some other place or time.¹⁰

Winterson's artistic confrontation with time and its tenuous relevance to personal veracity and experience seems curiously similar to that of Duquette and the Married Man some sixty years earlier. The play between internal and external 'journeying' is where after all, these stories were written. The outcome are impressionistic dramas of procreative metaphor, personal obsession and poetic essentials. Je ne parle pas Francais and A Married Man's Story are Mansfield's prose translations

9 Letters and Journals p.98

10 Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, (Bloomsbury, London 1989) p.2

of Maud and Prufrock, her own quintessential Dramatic Monologues.

Any discussion of Manfield's story Je ne parle pas francais is invariably tested against the author's own comments upon it in a letter to Murry previously cited. It would be impertinent to ignore this tradition and it will provide an introduction to the story itself in any case.

'I've two 'kick'offs' in the writing game. One is joy - real joy - thing that made me write when we lived at Pauline, and that sort of writing I could only do in just that state of being in some perfectly blissful way at peace. Then something delicate and lonely seems to open before my eyes, like a flower without thought of a frost or a cold breath...

The other 'kick-off' is my old original one, and (had I not known love) it would have been my all. Not hate or destruction (both are beneath contempt as real motives) but an extremely deep sense of hopelessness of everything doomed to disaster, almost wilfully, stupidly, like the almond tree and 'pas de nagat par le noil,' There! as I took out a cigarette paper I got it exactly - a cry against corruption - that is absolutely the nail on the head. Not a protest - a cry, and I mean corruption in the widest sense of the word of course.'¹¹

C K Stead's reaction to this story and its criticism by the author and Murry is thoroughly objective and intelligent. He points out that Murry's neat polarisation of Mansfield's stories into negative and positive fictions is trite and mistaken. In fact this letter was written whilst only a third of Je ne parle pas francais was written and a week after this letter on February 3, she was describing it as a 'tribute to love.'¹² Stead mentions Mansfield's 'growing excitement in the

11 Letters and Journals p.97-98

technical aspects of the story'¹³ as revealed in the letters. Therefore Murry's opinion that Je ne parle pas francais represented a negative story, set against the 'positive' At The Bay and Prelude is somewhat tenuous, and limiting to the eventual reading of the story. The excisions that Mansfield's publishers forced upon her, were due to the fundamentally homosexual theme of the story, and perhaps encouraged the rather thwarted reactions of her critics and readers.

'No, I certainly won't agree to more excisions
 Shall I pick the eyes out of story for £40. I'm
 furious. No, I'll never agree ... The outline
 would be all blurred. It must have those sharp
 lines'¹⁴

Like Bliss which was included in the same collection as Je ne parle pas francais Mansfield is dealing with a theme that Wilde's incarceration in prison a few years earlier, revealed as dangerous and distinctly anti-establishment. Thus readers have perhaps chosen to make the most of Mansfield's 'blurred' lines, and have mistakenly focussed their attention on the false 'centre' of the story Mouse and Dick Harman.

... Je ne parle pas francais where, curiously,
 with a theme of some real pathos, Miss Mansfield's
 power of elimination suffers a certain confusion...¹⁵

And also in Wagenknecht's seminal article,

Sexual hunger and perversion, ... she hardly
 touched, save in Je ne parle pas francais, and
 here it is handled so subtly and delicately
 that, as Mr Murry himself remarks in a wholly
 different connection, hardy anybody has ever
 completely understood the story...¹⁶

13 C K Stead 'Katherine Mansfield and the Art of Fiction'
 in New Review Vol.437-48 (1977-78) p.27-36

14 Letters to J M Murry 6/7 April 1920

15 Edward Shanks "Bliss" London Mercury Vol.3 January 1921

16 Edward Wagenknecht, 'Katherine Mansfield' English Journal
 Vol.XV (1928) p.272-84

Reviewing the story in the *Athenaum*, J W N Sullivan described the story¹⁷ as 'unanalysable' though he did say that the story possessed 'genius.' Indeed Sullivan was the first critic to credit Mansfield with such creative talent. In my discussion of this story I will examine its defiance of analysis and its 'difficulty' which seems more than half its final power.

Mansfield wrote Je ne parle pas fracais whilst reading Dicken's Our Mutual Friend¹⁸ and others and around the time of Murry's critical book on Dostoevsky, which Alpers¹⁹ suggests probably encouraged Mansfield to read Notes from Underground. Hankin in her book, Katherine Mansfield and her her Confessional Stories points out that

Part one of Dostoevsky's story entitled 'The Mousehole,'... describes the man who having been humiliated acts like a mouse 'the downtrodden mouse plunges immediately into a cold, poisonous, and - most important - never-ending hatred,' Now, although there is practically no resemblance between Katherine Mansfield's woman named Marie and Dostoevsky's mouse-man, there is a similarity between the psychological condition of Duquette, whose sensitivity to humiliation makes him seek irrational vengeance on those weaker man himself, and the perverse malice of the Russian narrator...²⁰

Dickens's predilection for the use and manipulation of fictional personas and Dostoevsky's interest in almost neurastheric mental states can perhaps be viewed as influential in Mansfield's story. I find these two literary parallels more illuminating in my response to the fiction than the correspondence between the story and Mansfield's relationship with Francis Caro and Middleton Murry, which has been described at great length before.²¹

17 J W N Sullivan, 'The Story Writing Genius, Bliss and other Stories' Athenaum (April 2 1920) p.447

18 Letters and Journals p.97-98

19 Alpers p.270

20 Hankin Confessional Stories p.162

21 Alpers p.272, Confessional Stories p.162

The biographical reading of the story could also, of course apply to Mansfield's ambiguous relations with Ida Baker, the latter by whom Mansfield frequently felt almost physically devoured.²²

Clare Tomalin in her excellent introduction to the Everyman collection of stories describes a particular level of observation in Mansfield's work that through the persona and character of Duquette could be described as voyeuristic,²³

Her best stories are miracles of construction, spare, sharp and cool. There are no tricks in them, only an attentiveness to detail, a watchfulness so acute that it sometimes verges on the sinister; a watchfulness that is evident from the start, and never leaves her...²⁴

Tomalin and Hankin astutely recognise the disturbing concentration of Mansfield's detail in her fiction. Duquette appears to devine an unnerving (for the reader) pleasure in his observations. The world is converted into a series of objects to be toyed with and thrown away.

I believe that people are like portmanteaux - packed with certain things, started going, thrown about, tossed away, dumped down... Not but what these portmanteaux can be very fascinating. Oh, but very! I see myself standing in front of them, don't you know, like a customs official...²⁵

Duquette's highly idiosyncratic, self-conscious labelling of humanity, pursues its own explanation, own 'avenues.' People are manipulated within his theatrical

- 22 to Je ne parle pas francais 'You haven't dined yet?...
'No, not yet, Madam" p.91
- 23 Confessional Stories p.157 "A psychologically vital key to the understanding of Duquette is the fact that he is a voyeur who feeds on the emotions of others.'
- 24 Selected Stories of Katherine Mansfield Introduced by Claire Tomalin (Everyman, London 1983) p.1
- 25 Je ne parle pas francais p.60-61

version of life into 'parts' roles which subscribe to Duquette's desires. Mansfield, through the narrator Raoul Duquette, visibly presents the machinery of her Art; writing itself. As I have stated in my introduction to this section, the Confessional Stories seem very much concerned with the Act of fiction; Duquette is the intermediary writer who begins over and over again. Thus he alternately highlights and undermines his concerns and interests, teasing the reader into thought. And of his energies are homerotically directed, then this tantalising style of presentation may be the most apt in terms of character as well as discretion censorship. As in the case of Dostoevsky's Underground Man, the reader is given too much to condemn to allow a sterotypical reaction, so our judgement is suspended for the duration of Duquette's supposedly whimsical expectations. We are readers of discredited experiences by default.

"That's rather nice, don't you think, that bit about the Virgin? It comes from the pen so gently; it has such a dying fall." I thought so at the time and decided to make a note of it. One never knows when a little tag like that may come in useful to round off a paragraph. So, taking care to move as little as possible because the 'spell' was still unbroken (you know that?). I reached over to the next table for a writing-pad.'²⁶

Mansfield constructed a narrative maze here. Duquette circumvents his reader his addressee, through a suble manipulation of narrative time. Whether Duquette who narrates the present narrative "that's rather nice,

26 Je ne parle pas Francais p.63

don't you think...' is more dominant and self-consciously stylised as the focaliser, the Duquette who inhabits the narrative 'story' "I thought so at the time... I reached over to the next table ..." seems impossible to diagnose finally. Past and present personas are brilliantly paralleled and flaunted.

Like a Pirandellian character who negotiates his story through narrative disclosure and re-enactment, Duquette 'develops' his cynical even sadistic personality through repetition and the same type of re-enactment. In other words, Duquette manipulates his memories, historical and emotional in order to consolidate his own sense of self. Furthermore as he quite literally awakens to his personality through narrative repetition and reenactment, so the audience, the reader has to formulate his/her own point of view, or reading perspective. If this is difficult due to the thrillingly intimate level of disclosure (like Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* or Dicken's *Pip*) then the reader must work at the level of imagination by itself. (Instead of incorporating moral judgement as well). Reading has become a matter of instinct before intellect, intuition before judgement.

It was a rimy morning and very damp.
I had seen the damp lying on the outside
of my little window, as if some goblin
had been crying there all night...' 27

Unfortunately the morning was drizzly, and an
angel could not have concealed the fact that
Barnard was shedding sooty tears outside the
windows, like some weak-giant of a sweep...28

27 Charles Dickens Great Expectations 24th Edition (Penguin,
London 1982) p.48
28 Great Expectation p.241

Pip's goblin in the forge anticipates the sweep in London's legal centre. Such an image is emotionally complex in that the 'sweep' in the second extract is described by a narrator who seems to himself and to others distinctly antipathetic to the earlier circumstances and associations. Pip's hostility to Joe is thus undercut by his unconscious choice of image. He chooses to acknowledge the haven that is the forge as a sublimated residual simile; the reader recognises that which Pip in his hysteria cannot. But it is Pip's unconscious instinct for unity, tenderness and preservation that allows the reader access to such psychological truthfulness. Language in this instant has fixed the self in a far more positive manner than the character's personality would have allowed consciously within the same text. Linguistic expression has thus become a method of unconscious self-recovery or reclamation, refusing to be credited or significant except within its interior terms and symptoms.

So by 'fixing' an imaginative moment in Duquette's conscious experience, 'taking care to move as little as possible,' Mansfield describes the very act of creativity as well, 'the spell was still unbroken...' Je ne parle pas francais is a writer's story.

The decadent image or simile concerning the 'morsel of pink blotting paper ... like the tongue of a little dead kitten, which I've never felt,' I've discussed earlier in this thesis. However within the context of

of this present discussion, it is worth noting its deliberate tainting of the 'spell' and its affinity for the creative 'dead-end.' Duquette attempts to undercut his own narrative. He cannot of course retract such an unusual, shocking image as well he knows. His corruption though apparent seems to be celebrated rather than reprimanded. The image is as physical as touch; the 'little dead kitten' a particularly Mansfieldian qualification.

This woman of genius could never put pen to paper without at once creating a semblance of physical contact... she signs that letter 'you woman.' All men and women who have ever loved with abandon, will know what that subscription means...'29

Mansfield's retraction ironically frees the image, and by discrediting it realistically, even morally, she empowers its creative impression. We are made intimate at will; we are returned to a primary state of unthinking once more. Mansfield observes acutely all the unspoken, disavowed areas of experience and fantasy.

Kate Fullbrook in her analysis of Mansfield's work asserted that Mansfield used the convention of the 'confessional' narrative, against itself.

...denying the inevitability of the correspondence between self-revelation and identification of the reader with the self that is revealed. That she was able to do so had great implications for the reader...'30

Confession becomes a process of defamiliarisation for the reader rather than the character reenacting the

29 Richard Church, Speaking Aloud (William Heinemann Ltd, London 1968) p.221

30 Kate Fullbrook, Katherine Mansfield (Harvester, Brighton 1986)

confession. Such estrangement forces the reader into a writerly position, if the text is to be confronted or negotiated for meaning at all. Story telling is either a matter of trust or suspicion and denial. The more Duquette reveals, the less empathy or identification the reader may feel for him. Duquette flaunts his autonomy and separation from his own reading' and 'writing.' Receptions has become emphatically unsettling and complex, the over-talkative, garrulous Duquette has revealed the moral and emotional emptiness that inhabits linguistic communication and expression. Duquette's moral judgement has thus been traded for sexual sophistication, erotic ambiguity, emotional nihilism.

I suppose I was in a state of more or less physical excitement, and that was what appealed to them. For all Parisians are more than half - oh well, enough of that... Bury it under a laundry basket instead of a shower of roses and passons outre.³¹

Again we stumble across implication rather than explicit exposition. The text is returned to the reader in full with its difficulties.

Just as Ondaatje sought a 'silver key' to the maze of his tale, so Duquette leisurely appears to seek a prompt, an introduction to his account. Indeed, until he comes across the phrase 'je ne parle pas francais' he will not even introduce himself to the reader. Duquette as the narrator and as the protagonist in his tale are naturally independent and self-seeking.

31 Je ne parle pas francais p.67

... quite suddenly, at the bottom of the page, written in green ink, I fell onto that stupid, stale little phrase: *Je ne parle pas francais*.

There! it had come - the moment - the geste!³²

The phrase concentrates the theatrical protagonist upon the narrative structure of the rest of the story. It is an imaginative entrance into Duquette's past, the moments upon which his present are determined. Duquette's 'stale phrase' is Woolf's flower shop in Mrs Dalloway, a narrative signposting.

And then, opening her eyes, how fresh, like frilled linen clean from a laundry laid in wicker trays, the roses looked; ... as if it were the evening and girls in muslin frocks came out to pick sweet peas...³³

Clarissa Dalloway moves from one present perception, that of enjoying the sensuous experience of the flowers, into a suddenly intimate, distant memory, that of a Bourton summer with the symbolic self-recognition in the 'opening' of her 'eyes' and the play between the different layers of significance. The incidental 'as if it were...' represents a method of literary disguise. The memory is reclaimed not invented. The 'incidental' is apparent only in its deliberate construction. Clarissa's suppression prevents a direct plunge into the past experience. She has to argue and direct its accessibility to herself. In Je ne parle pas francais Duquette's reassessment of this episode superimposes a theatrical intensity upon what the reader suspects might in essence, have been a genuine emotion. As in the Woolf, Mansfield was no

32 Je ne parle pas francais p.64

33 Mrs Dalloway p.13-14

stranger to duplicity in fiction. Duquette's temporary oblivion is rapidly converted into a more familiar narcissistic mirror. Duquette is not simply revisiting his past, he is recollecting redundant even obsolete emotions.

Good God! Am I capable of feeling as strongly as that? But I was absolutely unconscious! I hadn't a phrase to meet it with! I was overcome! ... No second rate mind could have experienced such an intensity of feeling so... purely...³⁴

There is a complacent, ironic satisfaction in Duquette's narrative, as he rediscovers the word 'purely.' Duquette only credits the world and his world in particular, with emotive force if he can write about it. Duquette's self-importance, egotism, is apparent in his belief that he possesses a mind that is not second-rate.

Mansfield and Duquette reassess the adverb 'purely' in the next digression; they are obviously reawakening the reader to the latter's sensuality and sexual disgust with women.

It is quite dark now.
Your white hands hover over your darl shawl.
They are like two birds that have come home to roost. They are restless, restless...
You tuck them, finally, under your warm little armpits...³⁵

Mansfield is obviously reworking her concerns with male-female relations so acerbically expressed in the earlier German Pension Stories, and I will enlarge upon this shortly.

In this digression however, the choice of vocabulary

34 Je ne parle pas francais p.64

35 Je ne parle pas francaise p.64-65

explicitly suggests the man. The implications of 'it is quite dark now' seem almost metaphysical. Mansfield's 'watchfulness' through her intermediary, the narrator Duquette does seem sinister as Tomalin suggests. The physicality verges on disgust. Compare this extract to Joyce in Ulysses, where Bloom meets Bantam Lyons, after purchasing some soap.

He strolled out of the shop, the newspaper baton under his armpits, the cool wrapped soap in his left hand.

At his armpit Bantam Lyon's voice and hand said - Hello Bloom, what's the best news? Is that today's? Show us a minute. Shaved off his moustache again, by Jove! Long cold upper lip...³⁶

Both authors selected 'armpits' rather than 'arms' for some reason presumably. (The former is less commonly used and is more expansive in terms of physical resonance.) The texts are invigorated by the intense significance of the term. Bloom is celebrating his physical freshness, his capacity for personal, sensual pride. By contrast, Duquette by adopting such a familiar tone and register in dealing with Madame, ironically and arrogantly dismisses her. He has been there himself Madame is but copy for him now. It is also interesting that Duquette's earlier attacks on life, have been metaphorically rendered as 'the old hag' and 'the old bitch'. His treatment of Madame seems barely more kind. The only woman who receives adulation or praise in Je ne parle pas francais is inimicably Duquette himself: Duquette in drag.

36 James Joyce, Ulysses (Penguin, London 1922)

'I confess, without my clothes I am rather charming. Plump, almost like a girl with smooth shoulders, and I wear a thin gold bracelet above my left elbow...³⁷

Again the narrator ensnares narrative that verges on the voyeuristic. The reader has to 'enjoy' Duquette in a similar fashion, to the way in which Duquette enjoys himself, and others. Fascination and disgust are uneasy but nonetheless familiar companions. If Duquette's antipathy for women and pronounced affection for himself and his sensual appetites seem sexually equivocal - particularly after his meeting and courtship of Dick Harman³⁸ then it may be worth remembering that Mansfield had produced several other sexually ambiguous stories earlier in her career (and of course Bliss was begun only a month after she began Je ne parle pas francais.) I am referring naturally to the German Pension Collection, published in December 1911 by Stephen Swift. Aside from a marked aversion to heterosexual relations, no doubt exacerbated by her miscarriage in Bavaria, and depicted in Frau Brechenmacher overtly, Mansfield also wrote about homosexual relations in Bains Turcs' and 'The Modern soul' These two stories contain lesbian undercurrents which like their heterosexual counterparts denigrate any sexual activity or contract as unpalatable even disgusting. Mansfield's own submerged life, unlike Duquette's receives thwarted treatment in these earlier stories. As a bisexual woman, and a guilty one at that, Mansfield could never afford to

37 Je ne parle pas francais p.68

38 Je ne parle pas francais p.72

stand before a mirror, particularly a literary one, and celebrate her sexual preferences.

"What a night!" she said. "Do you know that poem of Sappho about her hands in the stars I am curiously Sapphic. And this is so remarkable - not only am I sapphic, I find in all the works of all the greatest writers, especially in their unedited letters, some touch, some sign of myself - some remembrance some part of myself like a thousand reflections of my own hands in a dark mirror."
 "But what a bother," said I₃₉

'The Modern Souls's' revelation is sardonically undercut by the shadowy narrator. Humour for Mansfield is manifestly a method of self-defence. Duquette is perhaps the tenable refraction of Sonia, the Modern Soul, some years later. The 'dark man' like Duquette's 'quite dark now' and Tennyson's 'dark mind' seem significantly related. Discredited areas of knowledge and experience in the widest sense, are obliquely explored. At times the refraction becomes reflection:

'Don't mind me you know. Woman is woman, and besides, if you'd rather, I won't look at you... I wouldn't mind betting... those filthy women had a good look at each other... And as the two walked out of the anteroom, Mackintosh Cap stared after them, her sallow face all moth and eyes, like the face of a hungry child before a forbidden table.⁴⁰

As in Dickens, Mansfield treats food and its metaphorical extensions, as a form of public sex. Mackintosh Cap wishes to devour the openly lesbian women, as they reflect back to herself, her own sexual inadequacy. They flaunt what she does not. They remain 'other' and therefore provoking and for Mackintosh Cap, untenable

39 The Modern Soul p.719
 40 Bains Turcs p.595

Duquette by contrast devours his prey almost at will. It is only with Dick Harmon that he approaches the position of victim; and of course in this, Duquette assumes some parallel with Marie - as I mentioned earlier.

Duquette is allowed to enjoy his sexual ambiguity because he is male, and therefore sufficiently other to be tolerated by the self-protective author. In Bliss the lesbian condition is symbolically refracted through the obscure image of the pear tree.

'When we first see the pear tree, through Bertha's eyes, it stands at the far end of the garden, "slender... in fullest riches bloom... perfect, as though becalmed... it had not a single bud or a faded petal." To Bertha, the 'lovely pear tree' is a symbol of her own life' (p366) perfect complete. But, ironically, Bertha does not realise, even as she dresses in imitation of the tree, even as the stay ends, how valid her comparison has been.

Because the pear tree is by nature bi-sexual, its 'perfect flowers' contain both male and female organs of propagation...⁴¹

The triangular relationship between Bertha, Harry and Pearl is only revealed in its full implications at the end of the story. Pearl is Harry's mistress in reality, courted in fantasy and unconsciously by Bertha. As Harry transcends the parameters of his wife's fantasy - life, he shatters her illusions, about Pearl and more importantly, her sexual orientation. Harry enacts, via heterosexual contact, the sexual response Bertha has suppressed and confined to 'what she and I have shared.' She does not desire her husband as she claims (p.103). She desires Pearl, but she dare not admit it. Bliss is a

41 Helen E Nebeker 'The Pear Tree: Sexual Implications in Katherine Mansfield's Bliss' Modern Fiction Studies Vol.24 Number 3, Autumn 1978, Special Issue Katherine Mansfield p.545-551

story of substitution and displacement. Harry repulses Bertha not least in his sexual need for the passive catalyst Pearl. When Harry reflects back to Bertha her sexual desire she is significantly repulsed.

His lips said: "I adore you," and Miss Fulton laid her moonbeam fingers on his cheeks and smiled her sleepy smile. Harry's nostrils quivered; his lips curled back in a hideous grin... 42

Harry is as attractive in his desires as Herr Brechenmacher or Herr Rat. Mansfield has not changed her mind, she just chose not to show it as explicitly in the later stories. She had distilled her own process. 'Something strange and almost terrifying darted into Bertha's mind.' (p.103) This is not sexual reluctance or coyness with respect to her husband, though Mansfield, as editor pretends it is. 'And you and he will be alone together in the dark room - the warm bed - ' (p.103) it is instead the residue reaction to 'what she and I have shared.' The dark room is more a place of fantasy and unidentified longings than Bertha will consciously admit. Nebeker argues that Bertha has finally realised her homosexuality 'a flashing awareness... of the homosexual urges within her' (p.550 Nebeker). Mansfield seems too physical a writer to render such thoughts explicit - even articulate Bertha simply finds an energising correspondence between her communion with Pearl and the bed! The 'dark room' is the stage for anonymously claimed sexual fantasy. Bertha is aroused, but she does not quite think about it. Duquette as author, would of course have put the light on, and suggestively digressed for several pages instead. Who else could have extracted the earnest Peggotty from

David Copperfield and transmitted her into a sexually rapacious African laundress, 'from the literary point of view' (p.66). When Duquette claims "I date myself from the moment that I became a tenant of a small bachelor flat on the fifth floor..." (p.67) we are still immersed in his account of furtive laundry room kisses and 'passons outre,' In other words we do not believe him. Again Duquette, as the central focaliser of the narrative, manipulates the story around himself in a succession of anecdotes. The unifying principle, as in Tennyson's 'Maud', is the distinctive consciousness of narrator and narrator as focaliser. The 'book' that Duquette affirms he is going to write will be radical, innovative.

'I am going in for serious literature. I am starting a career. The book that I shall bring out will simply stagger the critics. I am going to write about things that have never been touched before. I am going to make a name for myself as a writer about the submerged world... Very naively, with a sort of tender humour and from the inside, as though it were all quite simple, quite natural...' 43

How close is Duquette's 'book' to the story-as-told by the narrative voice? As in Proust's A la Recherche de temps perdus, Duquette is positioning himself for his eventual aim, to write a book. Thus the 'story' is circular. It accounts for its own existence. It justifies Duquette's life and pretensions. In other words Duquette has produced an internal critique of the story. The irony of 'natural' is deliberately provocative. It is defiant despite Duquette's studiedly laissez-faire tone.

43 Je ne parle pas francais p.67

The mask has depth. Once again the reader is disarmed or challenged as to the correct comprehension. Like a maze the fiction has many possible 'writerly' entrances, but none seem definitive, just contiguous.

'My name is Raoul Duquette.
I am twenty-six years old and a Parisian,
a true Parisian... I never think about my
childhood. I've forgotten it.'⁴⁴

Duquette repeatedly attempts to record his experiences, to tell all. Yet like Eliot, these avenues lead nowhere except in psychological terms. We learn steadily about Duquette's inner life, his 'second self'. The externals may be finally doubtful. There is nothing that cannot be undermined by Duquette's narrative. Fundamentally, like Winterson, Mansfield is questioning the actual role of 'experience' as a tangible force. Which is the actual life we live by? That of action or that of thought? Duquette deliberately fails to discriminate in his narrative between reflection and action. All utterance empowers his narration, subsidises his imagination.

"Waiter, a whisky."
I hate whisky. Every time I take it into my
mouth my stomach rises against it, and the stuff
they keep here is sure to be particularly vile.
I only ordered it because I am going to write
about an Englishman...
'It's bad stuff to get drunk on,' says Dick
Harmon, turning his little glass in his fingers
and smiling his slow dreamy smile...⁴⁵

Duquette's stomach is sacrificed in the desire for artistic truth. Duquette like everyone else is first and foremost an actor, a star of the stage and cinema. Behind his ostentatious camp parodying of the 'literary gentleman'

44 Je ne parle pas francais p.66

45 Je ne parle pas francais p.69

Duquette sneaks in his 'subject', the effete Dick Harmon. The stylish manoeuvre ideally suits the mood and tone of the story. Harmon is not introduced, he is simply turned to, in a glance. Memories surround Duquette, the consciously whimsical protagonist and narrator; all Duquette has to do is probe another physical sensation to release one. (Like Clarissa Dalloway combing her hair to recall Sally Seton). In this case, he sips whisky. The use of the present participle in describing Harmon suspends him before Duquette and the reader. Duquette's 'powerlessness' before Harmon in actuality is offset and displaced in his reenactment. Duquette and Mansfield have observed enough to render him transposable.: a portmanteau. As Duquette suspends Harmon nostalgically before him, the former romanticises his account, before (once more!) resorting to the ironic and comic.

'Ah! how I loved that song, and how I loved the way he sang it, slowly, slowly, in a dark, soft voice... What more do you want? How profound those songs are!... "Once more, Deek once more!" I would plead, clasping my hands and making a pretty mouth at him...46

Duquette parodies the acceptable face of love; the besotted girlish female. Harmon accepts the adoration. His importance rests with Duquette's translation of him. The former is certainly more enamoured with Harmon than with any of the story's female characters. Unusually, and therefore significantly, the next digression underlines the homoerotic relationship between Duquette and Harmon.

Friction has become a method of fiction.

There again. Even with Dick. It was he who made the first advances.

I met him at an evening party given by the editor of a new review. It was a very select, very fashionable affair...

It was impossible not to notice Dick...⁴⁷

The fusion of the voice with the suggestive, celebratory description captivates with its defiance of 'normality'. Cliche has become estranged, unrecognisable. Once again Dick's interest to the reader is generated by the attentions of Duquette. To read the story otherwise is to ignore its technique and structure. Harmon's recurring conversational motifs "that's very curious... interesting.." (p.71) render him a cipher, a piece of 'blotting paper' to be imprinted by Duquette. The latter's excitement at Harmon's provocative passivity borders on the sexual.

...I was quite breathless at the thought of what I had done. I had shown somebody both sides of my life. ...Taken immense pains to explain things about my submerged life that really were disgusting and never could possibly see the light of the literary day... It moved me so that real tears came into my eyes. I saw them glittering on my long silky lashes - so charming.⁴⁸

The obvious correlation between Duquette's book 'False Coins' and his 'submerged life' is again subjected to ironic undermining, - 'never could possibly see the light of day' and of course is projected against 'Je ne parle pas francais' itself. Just as Dostoevsky's underground man revels in his vile, disruptive personality, so Duquette appears to seduce by revelation.

47 Je ne parle pas francais p.71

48 Je ne parle pas francais p.72

'I'm a sick man ... a mean man.
 There's nothing attractive about me.
 I think there's something wrong with my liver.
 But actually, I don't understand a damn thing
 about my sickness...49

'On the whole I had made myself out far worse
 than I was - more boastful, more cynical, more
 calculating...50

'Honesty' in both fictions has become another self-conscious posture, a moral or imaginative territory to be further explored, dissected. Paradoxically, however, despite Duquette's obvious decadence, his affection for Harmon provides a marked contrast in emotional terms to Dick's inanity and emptiness. Harmon, like his Dickensian counterpart John Harmon in Our Mutual Friend is in disguise. Probably as a human being - like Krook one suspects he could quite easily disappear without a trace of humanity. Dick Harmon's probable homosexuality is subtly suggested by his 'calm acceptance' of Duquette's advances and the phallic imagery related to the description of Harmon at leisure.

After that I took Dick about with me everywhere,
 and he came to my flat, and sat in the armchair
 very indolent, playing with the paper-knife.
 I cannot think why his indolence and dreaminess
 always gave me the impression he had been to sea...51

Harmon plays with his paper-knife in the same way as Peter Walsh tampers with his pocket-knife in Mrs Dalloway. Both are demonstrating some displaced aggression towards their circumstances and companions as well as displacing any sexual commitment or activity by such preoccupations. Indeed the failed aggression seems the likely outcome of

49 Notes from Underground p.90
 50 Je ne parl pas francais p.72
 51 Je ne parle pas francais p.72

unresolved sexual fears or difficulties. Both Walsh and Harmon will 'play' with the affections of women (and in Harmon's with men) without fulfilling any active, sexual romantic role.

For he was not old; life, life was not over; not my any means... He would like to make a clean breast of it all. But she is too cold, he thought; sewing with her scissors; Daisy would look ordinary beside Clarissa ... he took out his knife quite openly - his old horn-handled knife which Clarissa could swear he had had these thirty years - and clenched his fist upon it...⁵²

Knife-playing instils decision, vigour, solidity into passive, introspective determined existence. The nervous defensive habit of Peter Walsh protects him from his sense of failure by its symbolic aggression. With Harmon, the knife seems less irritating or sexually threatening as it is perceived by a sympathetic narrator, Duquette. Duquette would enjoy the phallic symbolism of Harmon, even though Harmon is really diluting its essential meaning; it is a method of tantalising disguise in Je ne parle pas Francais. In Mrs Dalloway, through Clarissa's perspective the reader is irritated and rejects Walsh's aggression and attempt at control.

It is also interesting that whilst Duquette surrounds Harmon with a mythical, sea-faring personality, implying that underneath the calm acceptance, the indifference to destiny he's a man with a journey, a mission, Woolf suggests Peter's restless travelling reveals his personal stagnation, his inadequacy in dealing with people and life

in general.

Duquette's narrative being superimposed upon the past events, could of course be underlining Harmon's unreliability and fickle attitude to his 'loving companion.' In other words with retrospect or instinct, Duquette's idiosyncratic 'role' for Harmon proves correct; Harmon will abandon Raoul and he will abandon Mouse. For a writer or poet must not just live within the constraints of one self - he must inhabit, by intuition, through detail, the credited and discredited worlds of others.

Duquette's self-conscious 'memoirs' or even parody of the memoir form at times seems highly poetic, poetic in the subconscious links and parallels between one image and another, one concentrated detail and its ultimate sequel. Writing in Je ne parle pas francais is prediction and abnegation.

In these memoirs or recollections there are gaps here and there and sometimes they are also forgetful, because life is like that... What the memoir writer remembers is not the same thing the poet remembers. He may have lived less, but he photographed much more, and he re-creates for us with special attention to detail. the poet gives us a gallery full of ghosts shaken by fire and darkness of his time.

Perhaps I didn't live just in my self, perhaps I lived the lives of others...53

Je ne parle pas francais is Duquette's 'gallery' of ghosts shaken by the fire and darkness of his time. Duquette is reenacting Harmon for his own sake not Dick's. Duquette is writing himself into existence through the repetition of other, through a series of poetic essentials

By interposing an intermediary between past event and present narration, Duquette can convert 'himself' into an object to be investigated, focalised upon. Yet this cross-examination between writer and writer as object cannot be easeful as neither can finally wish to be fixed, known. Such knowledge is imaginative death, and writing seems more concerned with liberation than status. Duquette therefore as a writer and persona can be seen as the imaginative, creative battleground between voluntary and involuntary memory. The shadows may be far more liberating than the light.

All the while we were together Dick never went with a woman. I sometimes wondered whether he wasn't completely innocent. Why didn't I ask him? Because I never did ask him about himself.⁵⁴

As in Dickens where certain characters seem particularly devoid of self-knowledge self-awareness (i.e. Bumble in Oliver Twist so Mansfield's Duquette rejects any attempt to extract a confession of self from Harmon. Perhaps Duquette could not bear the weight of Harmon's inner-absence, he prefers Kafica's 'darkness on which the memory grows'

'Artistic creation is a struggle with the angel, in which the creator is the more certain of being vanquished since the opponent is still himself. He wrestles with his shadow, certain only of never laying hold of it...' 55

Perhaps Duquette can only reveal himself through some pretence or attempt to recollect another. The self has to be analysed or perceived through false selves, falsifying prisms; one recognises oneself in terms of negative

54 Je ne parle pas francais p.72

55 Georges Gusdorf 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography' in Autobiography Essays Theoretical and Critical edited by James Olney (Princeton University Press, 1980) p.48

mirrors, negative reflections. As in Nemda's shaken ashes, the self is the residual, the survivor of time. Duquette's world, as perceived in the prismatic Je ne parle pas francais is constructed around his linguistic record of past experiences, presently attempting a transference in to truth, self-knowledge and recognition. Je ne parle pas francais and A Married Man's Story are Mansfield's most secretive fictions, because they attempt, very precisely to articulate their very beginnings and creations. Essentially they are the dark preludes of Mansfield.

"All we communicate to others," says Bachelard concerning such attempts (at autobiography)"is an orientation towards what is secret without ever being able to tell the secret objectively." Thus we might conceive of an autobiographical writing as an endless prelude; a beginning...⁵⁶

In one of the secrets is socially, even morally unspeakable, like homosexuality, then it is hardly surprising Je ne parle pas francais reads like a piece of consummately rendered 'literary drag.' The story encourages cross-gender identification and sympathies. Mansfield and Duquette deliberately tantalize the reader with their play between association and disassociation, acknowledgment and denial.

"...one night he took out his pocket-book and a photograph dropped out of it. I picked it up and glanced at it before I gave it to him. It was of a woman. Not quite young. Dark, handsome, wild looking.

"Out of my sight, you little perfumed fox-terrier of a Frenchman" said she... "That is my mother," said Dick putting up the pocket-book.

But if he had not been Dick I should have been tempted to cross myself, just for fun...⁵⁷

56 Louisa A Rezia 'The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Auto-Biography in Olney p.290

57 Je ne parle pas francais p.72-73

Woman as woman and mother and lover. The veritable matriarch that is Mrs Harmon denies Duquette's friendship and significance with Harmon. She is markedly 'other,' physical decisive and authoritative. Duquette's reaction ironically exaggerates Harmon's own feelings, which are subtly suggested and only obviously articulated towards the end of the fiction. Duquette has read Harmon and Harmon's mother correctly; his parody of religious acknowledgement and deference only again encloses the 'truth' in linguistic defences. The distinctive rhythm of the story is surely of interest here. Exposition and epiphetic climax and pathos are interwoven in a tidal narrative, that reflect the movement of a singular mind. The prosaic nature of the story makes the 'orientation' towards what is secret' more delicately balanced, more difficult to achieve. Mansfield in Je ne parle pas Francais seems concerned with unwriting the text so that the ending and beginning are interchangeable and negotiable. Yet she has to 'tell' some tale as she is outwardly employing a very limiting, restrictive form; the 'classical' short-story. (In structure, in plot, this fiction seems to adhere more to the Maupassant translation of the genre than Chekhov whilst the Daughters of the Late Colonel steadily exchanges prose for a kind of oblique prose-poetry mutation, Mansfield in this earlier story relies on technique and pace and timing to effect 'something new'. In the layering of the present/past

narratives, Mansfield allows Duquette a series of 'gaps' by which to defamiliarise and estrange his audience.

This is how we parted. As we stood outside his hotel one night waiting for the concierge to release the catch of the outer door, he said looking up at the sky: "I hope it will be fine tomorrow. I am leaving for England in the morning..."

I felt hurt. I felt as a woman must feel when a man looks at his watch and remembers an appointment that cannot possibly concern her except that the claim is the stronger...

...And then I stood on the shore alone, more like a little fox-hunter than ever...58

Description and response vie with each other in this extract for 'truthfulness' and recognition. The past seems reworked into a stylised tableau. Detachment suggests self-conscious defence and even a deliberate glance in the direction of "Art". It is of course ironical that in his duality Duquette will ally himself with 'a woman' in emotional terms, when he is suffering, a victim, but that he will inflict a similarly masculine type of behaviour on Mouse nevertheless. Pain and suffering we suspect may be simply new experiences for Duquette to be enjoyed and sampled; voyeurism has returned to its initiator. Writing himself as a fox-terrier he is mentally defying the matriarchal Mrs Harmon of course. Yet even this description of his pain as it affected him, acts only as the introduction to another stance or posture, another 'fin de siecle' role. In writing about his submerged life he has written correspondingly submerged stories. An alternative title to the story could have

been Nightwood. For in the novel of that name by Djuna Barnes, published in 1936, the heroine Nora, in the middle of an emotional crisis questions another character, the camp and ostentatiously decadent Doctor about her situation which is his speciality.

Doctor, I have come to ask you to tell me
everything you know about the night...⁵⁹

The reader in Je ne parle pas francais seems to be asking Duquette the identical subliminal question. In its oblique, poetic style, Nightwood revisits the cafes the Literati, the sexually ambiguous individuals of Mansfield's earlier story without the ironic gaps and fictional undermining of Duquette's narrative technique, Nightwood circumvents its oddity and essential duality through 'a quality of horror and doom very nearly related to the Elizabethan tragedy'⁶⁰ Nightwood is the inverted novelistic version of Mansfield's story.

Duquette's role-playing in Je ne parle pas francais can like that of Mansfield, be construed as a pose, a method of creative investigation or personal expansion. It can also be a method of private consolation. Duquette is his mirror as a 'Portrait of Madame Butterfly' (p.74) releases his disquiet and disappointment at Harmon's insensitive treatment. 'Two days after came a long, charming letter... written in a French that was a shade too French.' Duquette, for once, and with perhaps a more reliable admission of honesty, fails to adhere to the

59 Djuna Barnes Nightwood with introduction by T S Eliot, Sixth Edition (Faber and Faber) London 1988) p.117

60 T S Eliot in introduction to Nightwood p.7

literary cliché and behaviour suggested in the books he reads. (And the books Harmon also follows closely). He 'merely felt a little sick' (p.74) 'Sick' strikes an odd unusual note. It goes against the studied etiquette of Duquette's mannered behaviour. Duquette sees Harmon's actions as unfeeling, interestingly the reader moves closer, (but still arm's length) To Duquette. Mirrors in Mansfield clarify and objectify. They may highlight those thoughts that are unacknowledged or without voice.

Do you want to know how I am? Yesterday, upstairs in my room I suddenly wanted to give a small jump -I have not given a small jump for two years ... Then I went into the middle of the room and did jump. And this seemed such a miracle I felt I must tell somebody. There was nobody to tell. So I went over to the mirror - and when I saw my excited face I had to laugh. It was a marvellous experience.⁶¹

Mansfield provides her own amused audience as she is quite simply alone. There is a delicately realised courage in this admission, that belies the simplicity. Mansfield tells her self that she is excited, has triumphed and receives acknowledgement. Of course the self-consciousness of this description is minimal, a mind is quietly talking to itself. However in Je ne parle pas français when Duquette looks in the mirror, stating his excitement at who he might be, the posture seems more a method of consolation than personal aggrandisement.

'Since you left Paris,' said I, knotting my black silver-spotted tie in the (also unpaid for) mirror over the mantelpiece, 'I have been very successful, you know'...

61 Letters and Journals p.148

It was impossible not to believe this of the person who surveyed himself finally, from top to toe, drawing on his soft grey gloves. He was looking the part; he was the part...' 62

Once again Duquette 'covers' his tracks at this admission by noting it down in his book; he is inviolable a speculative creature of society and the demi-monde. Writing is not only a defence, it represents an alternative to feeling. Duquette's behaviour is also familiar to the reader, he forms a spontaneous temporary alliance for the duration of the paragraph, before his public 'role' overtakes him. Like Woolf's mirror, in the 'Lady and the Looking-glass' the image cannot ever completely deflect the truth.

Mansfield's interest in Dostoevsky, examined in the first chapter of the thesis is reflected in the stories also. In case any reader was rather cynical about the influence of Dostoevsky on their short-story, the description of Duquette attempting to avoid his concierge and the latter's squalid living accommodation surely flaunt Mansfield's interest;

But ah! the old spider. She was too quick for me. She let me run down the last little ladder of the web and then she pounced... And she beckoned with a dripping soup ladle... And all the while the blackpot on the gas ring bubbling away stewing out the hearts and livers of every tenant in the place... 63

Raskolnikov. would not seem an alien character here. Just as Duquette converts himself into a series of personas, so he converts his world. Perhaps he had read

62 Je ne parle pas francais p.75

63 Je ne parle pas francais p.76

Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment too! The reader perceives the 'gap' between the projected and lived-life of Duquette and the poverty in which he lives day-to-day. In many different ways, Duquette denies the claustrophobic conditions of his material existence. Duquette is a debauched and self-loving, swiveller. 'There is nothing I love more, Madame, than flowers on a balcony.(p.77)

This mistake on Duquette's part, is intuitively and imaginatively correct. Harmon is haunted by his mother, his oediphal attachment to her will send him immediately home, deserting both his romantic attachments without concern. Duquette, like Dick Harmon, has 'changed' too. He will not be hurt again, he will have 'fun' with Mouse and her lover.

Finally we reach the 'stale little phrase' again and realise its relation to the story; Mouse is introduced

We were introduced. She held out her hand in that strange boyish way English women do, and standing very straight in front of me.... she said wringing my hand ... je ne parle pas francais.64

Hankin suggests in her excellent discussion of the story that Mouse is a foil to Duquette. She is his opposite morally, being virginal and 'innocent' and may even represent the woman he might have been. Mouse could be Desdomona to Duquette's Iago. Sadism meets masochism in a Parisian station.

Although she is an English woman, and he a French man, Mouse is twice described as 'boyish' whilst Duquette is 'like a girl.' As if they were in some way opposing sides of the same personality, certain likenesses emerge. Both characters love Dick and are deserted by him... Duquette in his kimono thinks of himself as 'Madame Butterfly;' later he sees Mouse as 'a tiny creature, half butterfly, half woman...'⁶⁵

Harmon perhaps feels attracted to 'similar' physical types, it is unnecessary and without psychological foundation to hypothesise here. At any rate Duquette welcomes the new victim of Harmon as Mouse is not himself; therefore he feels empowered and cruelly triumphant.

Mouse attempts to be self-protective in her 'Mouse-hole' and Duquette observes her with a Mansfieldian 'burning gaze' through the 'white circles of lamplight.' The description reads oddly, a piece of parasitic, clinical voyeurism.

For Mouse was beautiful. She was exquisite, but so fragile and fine that each time I looked at her it was as if for the first time... As far as I could make out she had dark hair and blue or black eyes... She wore a long dark cloak such as one sees in old-fashioned pictures of English women abroad... Where her arms came out of it there was grey fur -fur around her neck, too, and her close fitting cap was funny.

"Carrying out the mouse idea," I decided.⁶⁶

Mansfield brilliantly creates a distinctly masculine anatomisation of Mouse's appearance; Dennis Potter or John Fowles spring immediately to mind. Duquette's fascination reveals his interest in the new sacrifice of Harmon and in his rivals' appearance and appeal. Duquette is too much an aesthete, too little an enjoyer of women,

65 Confessional Stories p.160-161

66 Je ne parle pas francais p.80

jealously to begrudge Mouse's appearance its value or attention.

Mirrored consolation therefore, becomes transformed into mirrored applause. Duquette is elated that this time he has escaped a slap in the face. Fate has made him the permitted observer; his watchfulness extends to himself naturally!

I watched myself do all this, you understand, and even managed to applaud in a private way by putting my gloved hands gently together, while I said to Mouse: "And is this your first visit to Paris..."⁶⁷

This instance would not be as effective, as revelatory, had we not seen Duquette in front of a material mirror before. Reenactment layers the incident with further irony and conotation, creates both the scene and its dramatic explanation. Fiction has become a method of historical association. Small talk then Duquette in his triumph, feels exceptionally dominant and in control.

Do you know - it's very absurd - but as I pushed open the door for them and followed up the stairs to the bureau on the landing I felt somehow that this hotel was mine...⁶⁸

Relationships in Mansfield are dissections of power. Duquette's ascendancy over Mouse in particular is a method of indirect revenge. He cannot overtly harm Harmon (note the name) the latter's manouevres remain largely hidden, but Mouse is a visible, practical target. Mouse becomes Duquette's possession through Harmon's neglect. Mouse's rejection by Harmon is repeated by Duquette, and endlessly and pathetically reenacted by recollection and literary repetition.

The position of the reader in this way simulates that

67 Je ne parle pas francais p.81

68 Je ne parle pas francais p.81

of the voyeur Duquette. Reading is indeed a very sneaky business!

As Mouse desires 'Tea' to reenact her normality, her conventional life, she temporarily reassumes some degree of control over the disastrous visit. 'Tea for three' coheres the situation, the individuals, the disunity of thoughts. When Duquette recommences his social chatter he is actually genuinely aiding Mouse at her crisis point. However the minimalism of the conversational response that Duquette gleans from Mouse and Harmon subtly convey the obvious strain, that 'normality' inflicts. Mouse's courage is brilliantly suggested when she battles with the 'milk' and 'sugar' without her Mouse apparatus. (p.84)

She disrobes her mouse-self, the 'feminine, beautiful victim' persona and becomes someone new, someone else to be defeated, harmed. The ironic surname of Dick surely receives fresh manipulation here? Harmon. Harm-on?

Dick's frenetic, neurotic restlessness contrasts sharply with the constrained stillness of his companions. Notably Harmon fails to drink his tea. Tea as I have said before signifies unity, cooperation, therefore Dick's refusal underlines his withdrawal from Mouse and Duquette's world and friendships. Voyeurs like literary observers and readers, need information, we delight in detail. Duquette's ambivalent concern for Mouse merely provides him with further cause to rejoice. Yet so convincing is his 'persona' his sympathetic disguise, that he actually emulates the behaviour of Mouse herself. In short, he cries. In retrospect Duquette creates a tableau, a dramatic theatrical aside; yet the tears remain. Is he the ultimate actor or a bad one? It is impossible to

separate the original action from its studied reworkings.

(Soft music. Mouse gets up, walks the stage for a moment or so before she returns to her chair and pours him out, oh such a brimming, such a burning cup that the tears come into the friend's eyes while he sips - while he drains it to the bitter dregs...) 69

The bracelets confirm our suspicion that this is another voluptuous, studied experience for Duquette. Yet Mouse also appears to be acting. What is the gap between her consciousness of her role in this scenario and Duquettes? Is it necessarily a large one? It may be possible to read Mouse's behaviour as a kind of acquiescence. She enjoys being a victim, a doomed heroine, as much as Duquette enjoys being the unreliable, scheming 'false friend'. Mouse has her own sense of theatre, limitedly rendered by Duquette's persuasion narration, yet adhering to the latter's scheme of events as much out of acceptance as necessary compliance. As readers, we too may wish her a victim, as Duquette has ordered our responses, we are tainted by the consciousness of Duquette. We may even be succumbing to our own darker natures.

Mouse's disconnected statement 'matches ... in ... candlestick. I noticed them' seems curious and vaguely religious. Smoking to Duquette is after all a personal style, an extension of the persona. Mouse's distress, her weeping at the end of the subtly theatrical scene, imitates that of Duquette. Hankin's argument about the doubling of characters may seem perfectly feasible here. The solitariness of both characters in any time of anxiety reveals Mansfield's imate sense of hopelessness

and despair. Like Ma Parker's 'There was nowhere' and
 Jude's 'But nobody did come because nobody does'⁷⁰₇₁

Duquette and Mouse must suffer, like their creator as
 spectacle and spectator combined. Pain in Mansfield
 attains an objective life, the solidity of an imaginative
 poem.

...This beauty is too much for a woman
 It is burnt across my eyes

Comparisons with H.D. and Mansfield have been made
 before, primarily of course in the similarity between
 their precarious existences in London as outsiders, and
 in their defiant liaisons with women, H.D. seems a much
 better poet than Mansfield but the latter's stories seem
 more durable and effective than H.D.'s novels. Yet their
 literary and personal temperaments appear closely allied.

Writing about H.D. Peter Ackroyd⁷² remarked that she
 'was compulsive but wilful, alert to the objective world
 and yet self-obsessed,' concerned fundamentally with
 'invisible as with visible things'. Mansfield in her
 stories, and in her two 'dark' fictions in particular,
 concerns herself with making the invisible visible and
 vice-versa. Mansfield in her illness, duality and New
 Zealand origins, recognised the painful fact that every
 human being can be made an object, can be observed as
 spectacle, fixed upon. Harmon is made an object in
 absentia, through his letters. Thus he escapes tangi-
 bility, he avoids examination. Quite simply he isn't
 there. And if Mansfield was in any way, reflecting upon

70 Life of Ma Parker p.309

71 Thomas Hardy Jude the Obscure (Macmillan, London, 1974) p.50

72 Peter Ackroyd 'H.D.'s Pursuit of Love" in The Times 16 May(1985)
 p.45

the character of her husband Middleton Murry in her portrayal of Harmon, this is a savage indictment indeed. Harmon defies creation, defies fiction. He is the least intimate character in her work. All Duquette's attempts to materialise Dick, to make him into an object, a spectacle to be at least seen, fail.

Flash! went my mind. Dick has shot himself, and then a succession of flashes while I rushed in, saw the body, head unharmed, small blue hole over temple, raised hotel, arranged funeral, attended funeral, closed cab, new morning coat...73

Duquette has provided his expectant writer with a crime. The cinematic quality to Dick's imagined demise derives from the expressive 'Flash' and the sparse staccato listings of the scenes. Duquette's understated activity in bringing the unfortunate Harmon exemplifies his sardonic high. '...raised hotel, arranged funeral, attended funeral...' Life and death can be condensed into several essential operations. Duquette flaunts his imaginative and actual power here too. He is a man in control of a relationship. With exquisite good taste the revenge of Duquette leaves the beautiful face of Dick Harmon alone. Duquette contemplates Harmon in death as the handsome lover he never was. Perhaps all scorned lovers would secretly render their ex-partners a corpse?

Metaphorically Harmon's 'love' for Mouse has become a corpse in any case. The letter, with its melodrama, insincere avowals of theatrical affection and desperate pleas for understanding contains no emotion but that of

self-obsession. In its strange tangibility, the letter stands as the Last Testament of Dick Harmon; he exists into an unthinkable relationship with his mother: Lawrentian territory not Mansfield's.

The reference to Mouse's 'spidery writing' imaginatively links the latter to the concierge, and therefore is to Harmon a woman to be feared. Harmon is too selfish to be sexual in any sense or direction. Whilst Duquette has to confront his landlady, the cowardly Harmon merely leaves a letter for Mouse. Duquette's behaviour though reprehensible and cruel, seems more justifiable in its reasoning than Harmon's. Duquette is reenacting rejection extracting a misplaced revenge. Harmon is childishly reenacting his infantile obsessions.

'Forgive me. Don't love me anymore.
Yes, love me
Love me - Dick'⁷⁴

Duquette's elation is unforgiveable. Yet it is the elation of victory. His recollection, with the detachment that he therefore enjoys exaggerates his instinctive reaction. The tears and the voice after all are compared to 'a tiny, cold sea-shell swept high and dry at last by the salt tide.' The metaphor is claimed with retrospect. It was not lived. Duquette wishes to see how far he can alienate or revolt his reader, once again resembling Dostoevsky's underground man. For how far has Duquette travelled imaginatively to convert the beloved, sea-faring Harmon into Mouse with her 'cold, salty little

voice.'? They are both part of Duquette's extended metaphor and transmutation. Alternatively is Duquette insulting Mouse and Harmon's importance via indifference? He is blaspheming upon his own fantasy perhaps.

Mouse in her refusal to leave Paris, and attempt to reclaim the straying Harmon once again resembles Duquette. Duquette's position regarding her refusal is unclear. Did he anticipate it with the knowledge of an arch-manipulator or Svengali? Or is he forced to be spontaneous, to act naturally?

'She stood up. "I have no plans. But - it's very late. You must go now, please." How could I get her back? I wanted her back. I swear I was not acting then.'⁷⁵

The possessor does not wish to be dispossessed. Duquette cannot allow his control, his activity to be usurped. The direct emulation by Mouse of his own position is too obvious to be tolerated. Duquette has to extinguish the mirror image of the self he was and could be again, in order to survive as the posturing, homosexual, pimp.

'I succeeded. She came out of her hole...timid ... but she came out'⁷⁶

Mouse is reconverted into Mouse in a Mouse-hole. Duquette cannot allow her to reject the persona that perpetrates her victimisation by men. As Duquette 'clasped her boyish hand' their doubling is apparent. Duquette found Harmon's facility for expression 'a shade too French' in his personal 'dismissal' letter from Dick. Mouse's ignorance of French heightens her tragedy and effect

75 Je ne parle pas Francais p.89

76 Je ne parle pas Francais p.89

upon Duquette, the man of a thousand words and machinations. If Duquette mistakenly links Mouse's 'boyish' hand with Dick's, then the next comment is easy to comprehend,

'Why they were suffering ... those two ... really suffering. I have seen two people suffer as I don't suppose I ever shall again.'⁷⁷

The reader is not convinced at the supposed extent of Harmon's suffering. Unknowingly perhaps, Duquette is talking about himself; as Duquette the homosexual rejected lover, and as Mouse, the female abandoned virgin. The original version of the story specifies explicitly Mouse's unconsummated relationship with Harmon. Thus the treatment of Mouse is more obviously degrading and cruel.

Yet Duquette, the man of expression fails to explain to the reader or himself why he neglects Mouse. In a narrative so layered, where time is manipulated and revisited, surely it would not be unlikely that some sort of explanation (no doubt a corrupt one) would be found?

Even now I don't fully understand why. Of course I knew that I couldn't have kept it up. That had a great deal to do with it ... Je ne parle pas francais. That was her swan song for me...⁷⁸

Duquette's inarticulacy paradoxically reflects that of Mouse. Her innocence is incompatible with his experience. With Harmon as a distraction, the two polarities would have had to confront each other. Duquette couldn't have trusted his text, or his persona to survive. He attempts to sell Mouse at a distance rather than risk any intimacy. However such a despicable procedure seems

77 Je ne parle pas Francais p.89

78 Je ne parle pas Francais p.90

largely an act of conversational fanstasy, a Wildean suggestion to perhaps seduce another. There is a strange tension in 'I've got the little girl for you mon vieny...'. Mouse is a little girl who resembles a boy who resembles Duquette; again literary transvesticism. The mockery that immediately follows gives no guarantee of the straightforward verocity of the preceding sentence. As ever, Duquette is wallowing in antithesis and suggestive ambiguity. The projected images and fantasies that anticipate the ending of the story emphasise this point.

...The same girl, the same boy, different costumes -sitting at an open window, eating fruit and leaning out and laughing.
All the wild strawberries are for you Mouse
I won't touch one!⁷⁹

Gender has become unfixed; a matter of dress and preference. Remarkably it is not Harmon who is happily playing with the young Mouse but Duquette. In a world before explicit formed sexuality, Duquette and Mouse can enjoy and friendship, some relationship. Duquette's fantasy highlights his capacity for goodness in a story that has consistently revealed only his corruption. Like Iago, he has 'fallen' through jealousy and demeaning thoughts. 'Je ne parle pas francais' is Duquette's 'Song of Experience' just as Mansfield's Journal represents the same to her. Their refuge in 'Innocence' is unsurprisingly found in recollections or stories of childhood; as C K Stead points out Mansfield needed Prelude to write Je ne parle pas francais and vice-versa. Like Dickens

Mansfield can only believe in innocence, if it is before sex.

I must go. I must go ... You haven't dined yet? she smiles.
No, not yet Madame⁸⁰

If Duquette is suggesting that he is about to 'eat' Mouse or even Madame herself then the ending of the story can only be a 'cry against corruption' by indirection. (Duquette has compromised his brief, earlier idyll of strawberry eating and innocence with Mouse). The reader is repulsed in other words by such decadence, and therefore rejects 'corruption' for something finer, something intrinsically 'better'. Reaction has become a moral stabiliser.

However, if the reader by this point in the story has come to accept Duquette's voyeurism as the acceptable norm, even as an attractive method of perception then Professor Stead is right to suggest that the story celebrates rather than condemns the corruption it portrays.

I see the final moments of the story as a depiction of the conflict between these points of view. The innocent, morally aware Duquette who promises not to eat the appetising, sexually suggestive strawberries and who will leave them for Mouse to savour privately and in her own time, contradicts explicitly the experienced, world-satiated Duquette who will 'eat' women sexually, out of boredom and moral perversion. Duquette's lack of romantic interest in women intensifies the cold sensuality of their treatment by him.

Both aspects of Duquette's moral 'self' are therefore placed visibly before the reader. Mansfield is exploring the areas of the psyche that are ordinarily suppressed or covered. She has provided Duquette with two mirrors; the first is the reader, the second is his submerged self. (In A Married Man's Story this is rechristened the 'second self' as I shall discuss shortly.) The final pause in Je new parle pas francais is the hesitation of Duquette before a moral cross-roads or precipice. He may succumb, he may resist temptation. The reader has to write the next beginning, which seems perfectly in keeping with the friction between the moral polarities and fictional ambiguities that provide the impetus for the rest of the story.

Madame's knowledge of Duquette (p.91) like that of the reader, is as enigmatic as her smile; and it seems fitting to ascribe her as Pater's Mona Lisa rather than Da Vinci's. The smile like the narrative is present by way of an intermediary, a literary understudy. The pause is the hesitation of the sphinx. And no-one was more sphinx-like than Mansfield.

A Married Man's Story: The further
distillation of the Voice

In August 1921 during Mansfield's second period of sustained marital harmony, Mansfield was at work on one of her greatest and most remarkable stories, At the Bay. This hardly seems surprising to a reader of this story, as the fiction is celebratory and life-affirming. Mansfield's earlier dilemmas concerning child-bearing and marriage appear to have been solved or at least positively dealt with. The German Pension stories have been exorcised.

... She checked herself and said to the boy coldly, 'I don't like babies.'
'Don't like babies?' The boy couldn't believe her.
'Don't like me? He waved his arms foolishly at his mother...
...He didn't believe a word she said.
...The tears danced in her eyes.
She breathed in a small whisper to the boy,
'Hallo, my funny!'⁸¹

However what is surprising is that Mansfield wrote another story during the same 'happy' period. This story though unfinished was entitled, A Married Man's Story. The fragment seems neither life-affirming nor celebratory. It is sinister, negative and unaccountably destructive. C K Stead remarks,

It is a fascinating thought that in order to achieve it (the unity and beauty of At the Bay) she had to lay aside 'At the Bay' and pour out the old horrors in the form of 'A Married Man's Story.' The result was a fragment as genuine and compelling as anything in her collected work.⁸²

When Mansfield had declared that 'everything has its

81 At the Bay p.223

82 C K Stead 'Katherine Mansfield and the Art of Fiction' p.36

shadow' in the Journal she was speaking of her fiction as well as her attitude to life and its relationships. In order to explore relentlessly, this shadowy negative psychological territory, Mansfield created a narrator and character who has elected to withdraw from human contact and social chaos. A Married Man's Story reads as the gloomy soliloquy of an individual who has abandoned visible physical activity, for the invisible unseen world of the introspective self. The Married Man's married 'persona' is ironically but an empty mask, a facade, yet suggests some alliance with the marital state and self, if only in name. Mansfield in her social role playing, her chameleon personality and with her ambivalent attitude to husbands and lovers of either sex, no doubt found this story exciting if not terribly pertinent. Perhaps that is why it remained unfinished.

Instead of using symbols at once to convey and mask psychologically significant meanings, the narrator is made to reveal himself without dissimulation. Perhaps because of this lack of emotional distancing, Katherine Mansfield found it impossible to complete a story which too nearly exposed her inner most feelings...83

Hankin astutely diagnoses the story's particular intensity. The reader is made almost too intimate with the world and character of the solitary narrator. Personality and affectations are exposed and savagely laid bare; it is an interesting thought to entertain that we hide behind our symbols. For if there is an 'absence of symbolism' in the story, then Hankin is

implying that the fiction articulates, however obliquely, these secret places that symbols normally describe. In other words, Mansfield writes a 'Married Man's Story with almost preternatural knowledge; it is a fiction with no hiding places for the narrator, the writer or the reader. It is hardly an exaggeration to talk of the story's terminal claustrophobia for 'personality' has become distilled to its essence, its residue and perhaps no character can sustain such intensity and survive intact.

Before embarking upon a close textural study of the 'Married Man's Story' I wish to cite a curious, later parallel to Mansfield's fiction. In the first part of his autobiography The Tongue Set Free Elias Canetti opens with the following memoir;

My earliest memory is dipped in red. I came out of a door on the arm of a maid, the floor in front of me is red, and to the left a staircase goes down, equally red. Across from us, at the same height, a door opens, and a smiling man steps forth, walking towards me in a friendly way. He steps right up close to me, halts and says: "Show me your tongue." I stick out my tongue, he reaches into his pocket, pulls out a pack-knife, opens it and brings the blade all the way to my tongue ... "Not today tomorrow" ... The threat with the knife worked, the child quite literally held his tongue for ten years.⁸⁴

Even with hindsight the explanation, Canetti recalls his childhood experience with a detached, ritualistic tone that borders on the incantatory. Symbolism can only be attached later to this incident. Like Mansfield's story, the precise articulacy of the narration undermines any attempts to subvert it symbolically. The

84 Elias Canetti, The Tongue Set Free (Picador, London 1989) p.3

horror is remorseless and without symbolical digression. Just as many of Mansfield's Journal entries seem feverish and even neurastheric, so Canetti's nightmare memory reads as a type of hallucination, alienation. The 'tongue' was quite simply estranged from the rest of his body. The child is silenced through his synecdochical humiliation and torture. He lacks his 'tongue' and therefore cannot speak. Any perception which employs synecdoche repeatedly, consistently alienates the object, and spectacle from the observer. The world lacks unity, clarity and may assume even absurd dimensions. Gogh in his stories knew this perfectly well.

About two minutes later a nose really did come out. It was wearing a gold-braided uniform with a high stand-up collar and chamois trousers... And it was abundantly clear that the nose was going to visit some-one...85

The nose has ironically claimed more humanity for itself than the suffering, nose-less protagonist Kovalyer. Indeed the nose outrageously parodies a human being who represents all that Kovalyer ever aspired to be. The nose in its synecdochical freedom entirely disassociates itself from its birth-place. Synecdoche therefore seems more indicative of alienation than metonymy which retains a sense of correspondence to the whole. To paraphrase Ionescos' words, 'all Art is neurosis, and without neurosis there is no art. Canetti's imposed obsession with his tongue and Kovalyev's with his nose seem brilliant and disturbing articulations of this premise.

85 Nikolai Gogol 'The Nose' in the Diary of a Madman (Penguin London 1972) p.48

In Mansfield's story as we shall see subsequently, fragmentation and disassociation are manipulated for an estranging effect. In his refusal to construct a unified reality, the Married Man absolves himself of his stereotyped responsibilities, as husband, father, lover. He makes his world absurd as he cannot tolerate its conventionality, its established roles. Synecdoche, repetition, fantasy and ritual sustain a complex examination of a mind irrevocably alone, irrevocably orientated towards some dark psychological initiation.

It is evening. Supper is over. We have left the small, cold dining room, we have come back to the sitting-room where there is a fire. All is as usual. I am sitting at my writing-table which is placed across a corner so that I am behind it, as it were, and facing the room. The lamp with the green shade is alight; I have before me two large books of reference, both open, a pile of papers ... All the paraphernalia, in fact, of an extremely occupied man. My wife, with her little boy on her lap is in a low chair before the fire ... an immense Mother and Child...⁸⁶

As in the dramatic monologue, language has become an object, linguistic sculpture. The psychological plausibility of this description is devastating in its icy control. 'Being' is the enactment of a few social procedures. As the narrator endeavours to tell 'all' so an explanation for the peculiar tone and mood of the practical topography in the room, belies its deflective significance. The Married Man is summarising his emotional life through the montage of external details. The repetition and finality of 'supper is over... All is

as usual' suggest a world on the point of extinction, a world of stagnant feeling. Mansfield's employment of the present tense, accentuates the finality and despair of the situation. The suffocation endured by the narrator is not unworthy of an Ibsenite drawing-room.

Ironically the narrator's apparent collusion with social normality is explicitly rendered in the first person plural 'we.' The integration rapidly proves false, for as the 'we' becomes singular and 'I' so the narrative assumes a steadily more distancing tone. The 'small cold dining-room' seems impersonal with retrospect, subtly without any capacity for nurture at all. 'Fire' reads as a social convention and nothing more; as much a mask and pretence of sociability as the narrator's studied tone. The particular defence of the narrator his 'writing-table' signifies his singularity; like 'Je ne parle pas francais' this is a writer's story. With the 'green-shade' the character of the room approaches the Lawrentian-Mansfield 'unthinkably alike...' 'Facing' therefore takes on a sinister conotation. What type of face would such a narrator wear? The 'room' with its familial inhabitants appears as a character to be feared. The surreal lamp is 'alight' with more emotional intensity than the narrator. It has at least some personal commitment to the scene! 'Green' casts a facing, supernatural shade on the scene. (Gawain).

The fastidious voice who wearily abscribes his defensive world a 'paraphernalia' hardly seems red-blooded enough to inhabit the term 'man'. 'My wife' indeed is juxtaposed to underline his past sexuality, his past mistake. For 'my wife' is in possession of 'her little boy'. The husband disassociates himself from his son completely; he has made him into an object, deprived him of personality. The tenderness of the woman contrasts markedly with the cold detachment of the voice. The scene of the 'mother and child' is translated as a tableau. She is an image of fertility and even divine purity and care.

The married man loads his perception with irony as it is the outcome of obsessive, repetitive thought. This is reduced to a 'pile' of objects, masquerading as human beings. The residue of feeling in the narrator requires some expression without conflict or absolution.

Outside it is raining. I like to think of that cold drenched window behind the blind, and beyond, the dark bushes in the garden... While I am here, I am there, lifting my face to the dim sky, and it seems to me it must be raining all over the world - that the whole earth is drenched, is sandy with a soft quick patter or hard stead strumming... And all at once and at the same moment I am arriving in a strange city, slipping under the hood of the cab while the driver whips the cover off the breathing horse... I am conscious of tall houses ... dripping balconies and sodden flower-pots...⁸⁷

The lyricism of this description surprises. The narrative has been invigorated with sensual knowledge not the first time he has dwelt on this scene, nor felt so peculiarly alienated from his home and family. The

narrative therefore achieves a depth and resonance which is unnerving in its terrible simplicity. The reader finds this fictional excursion perhaps too familiar or too possible for comfort. Mansfield is depicting a world about to fall apart. Tennessee Williams repeatedly revisited such precipices in his violent cycle of dramas.

With the surety of a successful dramatist, Mansfield introduces a change of perspective. She has researched her character well. The Married Man could not emotionally follow the demands of the 'Mother and Child' upon the wall. The tableau would have been a form of creative annihilation.

After the almost rarified, cerebral narration of the opening paragraph, this sensuousity is refreshing and surprising. The new 'self' the projected wandering, fantasy self is being baptised again! Prose approaches poetry in its adherence to rhythm, metre and choice of image. The debris of the cluttered suppressed old self, is scattered by the enervating water. Like Lawrence in The Rainbow and The Virgin and the Gypsy and Somerset Maugham in 'Rain' water signifies change, revolt, renewal even at the costly destruction of the old. 'While I am here, I am there,' such an utterance completely dismantles the rigid precision of the narrators imaginative and practical position in the first paragraph. Interestingly, the solitary figure has also suggested that he shares his cathartic experience with the rest of the world; 'the whole earth is drenched.' The individual has become a member of a community. The bracketed "(You know how soft and almost crumbling the wood of a summer-house is in the rain)" reenacts a Browning-moment: the silence of the

marriage is offset by the reader's audience with the narrator. The evocative choice of image and detail are well-chosen gestures in the reader's direction.

The 'snail under the leaf' idea is a recurring dilemma of Mansfield. A revisitation of 'everything has its shadow' ambiguity again.

'Aren't those just the signs, the traces of my feeling? The bright green streaks made by someone who walks over the dewy grass? Not the feeling itself. And as I think that a mournful, glorious voice begins to sing in my bosom. Yes perhaps that is nearer what I mean...88

This is the fictional enactment of the 'snail under the leaf'. The narrator elects to control his visionary-self. He adheres to practical as well as personal-time; the empty space has to be filled. The imagined renewal highlighted in the 'stirring' of the trees, makes his intolerable existence bearable. Cruelly perhaps, the narrator resists any attempt at solving or discussing his mental estrangement through private fantasy and escape. It begs the question naturally, whether the married man's introspection came before or after the marital problem. The narrator's liquid purging glorifies his unreality. He chooses to live by deflection. Mansfield significantly refuses to present the wife's point of view. Perhaps it would have been too personal; at any rate, within the context and psychological exigencies of the story, the Married Man never thought to ask, or even think what it might be.

The cruelty and sinister certainty of the narrator's knowledge about his wife. reveals the depth of his indifference and boredom in the marriage. She is a book he has read too many times; and he is too much of a

writer to ignore this.

Suddenly my wife turns round quickly
 She knows - how long has she known?
 - that I am not 'working'... 'What are
 you thinking?
 I smile and draw two fingers across my
 forehead in the way I have. "Nothing,"
 I answer softly...
 ... Then I really meet her gaze, meet it
 fully and I fancy her face quivers.
 Will she never grow accustomed to these simple -
 one might say - everyday lies?
 Will she never learn not to expose herself -
 or to build up defences?
 Truly, I was thinking of nothing. 89

The malignance of the 'smile' is deadly. The narrator in this story seems inhuman, removed from any kind of positive, life-affirming response. The persona or mask of the Married Man refuses a confrontation that could cause pain, disruption or change. Dissatisfaction and indifference are 'experiences' to the narrator in the same way that sexual decadence attracts Duquette in 'Je ne parle pas francais'. Reprehensible to many as the latter type of experience might be, Duquette's performance is less isolating and calculated to erode, than that of the married man. As I keep writing 'married man' it naturally underlines his social severance, his refusal to communicate. Duquette at least admits his names, his age and his occupation. Fundamentally the married man is disassociating himself from his relationships and 'role' in life whilst perversely flaunting his socially integrated state. He is practically a Beckettian-voice. 'A voice comes to you in the dark - Imagine.'(COMPANY) 'Nothing' is Beckett's 'nowhere' - an absolute negation of respon-

sibility and selfless feeling. And even this comment is rehearsed, second-hand. The narrator despises the vulnerability of his wife and her dependence on his behaviour and conduct. He reacts in a similar way to Mansfield writing to Murry, when she admonished him to 'cover yourself' in relation to Lawrence's destructive behaviour. However, it is worth remembering that the structure and narrative technique of the story perhaps prejudice the reader too strongly against the narrator. We have only his word that he meets his wife's gaze 'fully' and the 'everybody lies' after all could be viewed as necessary hypocrisies. Reading the text may be a completely different task to living it. The false confirmation, 'Truly, I was thinking of nothing' is self-detonating. 'Truly' antagonises 'nothing' completely. Social behaviour, as in the earlier story, denies the care and consideration it imitates. Learnt behaviour has become reconstituted and reworked.

When the husband fails to recognise his baby and cannot accept that his wife is capable of maternal feelings he is attempting to extinguish his own responsibilities and position. Quite simply he transfers his own doubts onto his wife. His expectations of motherhood seem stereotyped and inflexible. He seems a particularly unimaginative individual when it comes to dealing with other people. Perhaps he is a victim of his class and social and cultural upbringing.

Where is that ... animal ease and playfulness, that quick kissing and cuddling one has been taught to expect of young mothers ... At any rate, isn't it a trifle indecent to feel like this about one's own wife? ... And one other thing. How can I reasonably expect my wife, a broken-hearted woman to spend her time tossing the baby? 90

The narrator resorts to inherited expectations when it suits him. Duquette in his flaunted immorality never employs such deceit. The words 'taught' and 'indecent' underline the type of male we are reading. Indoctrination perhaps needs some sympathy. Yet the loaded irony of the italicised 'broke-hearted woman' seems inexcusable. He condemns her 'lack' of maternal behaviour in terms of her relative non-conformity to type; then the husband parodies her social and emotional position. If the italics emphasise the familiarity of this label in order to dismiss its importance, then the contradiction is apparent. The wife is condemned for her behaviour perse! Perhaps the real insinuation is that it is the husband who is really broken-hearted. The woman is only imitating such behaviour, being incapable of such a depth of feeling. Transference again. Mansfield has succinctly conveyed the complexity of the situation by this three worded social and private summary. As in 'Je ne parle pas Francais' it is difficult to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion because the narration anticipates our reaction. 'Endings' become open and oblique. 'But that is beside the mark. She never even began to toss when her heart was whole.'(p425)

The final paragraph in the first section of the story highlights the revulsion that can exist behind a domestic facade. The relative truthfulness of the description is debatable. 'Oh, I know just as surely as if I'd gone to see,' (p.425). However it is the feeling that engulfs such a premise that is most important. The pathetic hopelessness of the woman, her adherence in his imagination to the stereotypical neglected but-ever-hopeful wife role, reveals the obverse side of his marriage. It has been as he describes it. The imagination of the married man enjoys distinct parameters. He lacks originality, he repeats what he has lived or read. The wife is suffocatingly enclosed by his image of her. It is not altogether a surprise that the marriage is foundering. 'And yet, being a woman, deep down, deep down, she really does expect the miracle to happen; she really could embrace that dark, dark deceit rather than live - like this.'

Familiarity invites melodrama. Like Duquette, the husband is aware of his stage, his audience. Repitition removes the intensity. Life is made art. In her suffering it is significant that she is 'a woman'. The husband by contrast remains 'I' singular, androgynous, solitary and therefore of an altogether grander stature. The husband may be a Hamlet, but the wife is a pretty down-market, forlorn Ophelia. In the obvious pleasure that the narrator extracts from the 'dark, dark deceit' we are reentering Duquette's seedy, sensual world once more. The present-moment of the narrative reduces the 'gap' by which the reader can enter the fiction. The self-consciousness of the husband is largely implicit except

at moments like this where the text appears to be suddenly written, committed to fiction and the habitual world. Even alone, Mansfield's narrator is capable of many more identities than one.

The married man's conscious preference for withdrawal into his private, inner life is related both to his playing a part and his conception of the 'second self,' Katherine's compulsive role-playing caused her to refer to the second self in story after story: it was as though she never quite believed in her own fixed identity - and never really liked the identities she invented.⁹¹

Paradoxically in Mansfield's fiction, dissatisfaction and disharmony are the necessary pre-requisites to self-knowledge. 'A Married Man's Story' is constructed around this dilemma. Each section represents a subtle change of voice, of persona, of identity. This change generates the psychological interest within the fiction and provides its creative impetus. More densely written and obviously experienced than 'Je ne parle pas francais,' the later story relies on tone and mood to suggest mental attitude rather than the use of rhythm and syntax.

When synecdoche is employed, the 'mood' reveals the extent of the disturbance.

Now she turns him over on her knee, and in this light, his soft arms and legs waving, he is extraordinarily like a young crab. A queer thing is I can't connect him with my wife and myself - I've never accepted him as ours...⁹²

The disassociation is explicit. The narrator refuses to compromise. The fascination reduces the child's connection to humanity and himself. The narrator defies

91 Confessional Stories p.174

92 A Married Man's Story p.424

social conversation almost by instinct. His later condemnation of his wife's behaviour towards the child is therefore more ambiguous, perhaps less reprehensible. The only connections the narrator is capable of are linguistic, literary affairs; 'reality' simply provides the raw material. In order to renew himself, to explore his 'second self' the previous connections have to be rewritten, exorcised.

To live like this... I write those words very very carefully, very beautifully. ...But, seriously, isn't it staggering to think what may be contained in one innocent looking little phrase? It tempts me - It tempts me terribly. Scene! The supper table...⁹³

Every experience, every feeling can be converted into a phrase, a series of words. 'Je ne parle pas francais' and A Married Man's Story' share the same fixation. Life as Copy Text as copy of life as copy. (The high self-consciousness also reduces the tension. This 'new' persona in the second section of the story resembles Duquette in his assumed, contrived decadence, sly wit and choice of expression. As in most dramatic monologues the narrator in Mansfield's story does not actually change his mind. Instead he adopts new masks, offers fresh glimpses of the bizarre, contradictory landscape that shelters behind the confining title of mind. Why should a narrator always sound the same? In a monologue in particular, where the speaker is more focused upon than the subject of his speech, it seems limiting and unrealistic to listen to

the same voice throughout. With her capacity as a ventriloquist as I have mentioned earlier in this thesis, it is only to be expected that her monologues should offer the reader some alternative voices as well. If articulation is difficult, and it obviously was to modernists like Mansfield and Eliot, then masks and changing voices offer different approaches to truth. Truth by indirection again.

A modern story may have to be told against itself, to be told at all.

"You don't have to get to know me," he said, "because one day you're going to grow up and then you're going to be me... The club is your hand," he said. "It's your bone. It's your whole arm and your skeleton and your heart."... .. "Don't just watch," he said. "See" I looked ... I could see the tips of my father's shoes. I was sixteen years old and waiting for the next thing he would tell me.⁹⁴

Beginnings again. Life consists of repetition, consolidation and rehearsal. The aim of much modernist and post-modernist fiction seems to be concerned with making us aware of the fact. Fiction like living is inextricably related to sight; what we choose to see and what remains invisible, dictates our progress through experience.

Mansfield's letters and Journals as well as her fiction (cf The Stranger, Marriage a la Mode and the New Zealand Stories) repeatedly questions the possibility of happiness in marriage, even alternative 'marriage'

94 Ethan Canin 'The Year of Getting to Know Us' in Empoeror of the Air (Picador, London 1989) p.42-43

My deadly, deadly enemy has got me today and I'm simply a blind force of hatred. hate is the other passion. It has all the opposite effects of love It fills you with death and corruption, it makes you feel hideous, degraded and old, it makes you long to Destroy... When L.M. goes I don't know what I shall do. I can only think of breathing - lying quite still and breathing. Her great fat arms, her tiny blind breasts, her baby mouth, the underlip always wet and a crumb or two or a chocolate stain at the corners ... That's one thing I shall grudge Virginia all her days - that she and Leonard were together ...95

Intimacy breeds hatred as much as love. Repulsion is the uneasy partner of passion. Mansfield's destructive self is released through her unhappiness and dissatisfaction in marriage with Murry and 'marriage' with Ida Baker. Hardly surprisingly Mansfield can only perceive relief from this emotional pressure in terms of elemental living 'breathing.' In her private outburst Mansfield of course polarises her emotions; hate is not the only reaction to marital disease. The Married Man reveals his indifference, cold detachment. Hammond in The Stranger' his fear which becomes personalised and grotesquely real. 'Sex' and 'fear' adequately balanced signify passion (Winterson) when the balance is disturbed the opposite is true.

The fire had gone red. Now it fell in with a sharp sound and the room was colder. Cold crept up his arms. The room was huge, immense, glittering. It filled his whole world. There was the great blind bed, with his coat flung across it like some headless man saying his prayers...96

The adjective 'blind' is loaded in Mansfield. It signifies impotence, thwarted and rejected desire. What

95 Letters and Journals p.152

96 The Stranger p.363

has been familiar, best known, has now become strange sinister and threatening. Hammond's coat, like Kovalyar's nose, has taken on some 'life' of its own. The coat represents a grotesque, mirror-like parody of Hammond; and he knows it. Such knowledge renders his world impotent. His physicality has assumed fatuous external expression.

The essence of the world has changed. Mansfield marvellously reveals the terrible undermining that can occur when the familiar becomes other and autonomous. All the Married Mans's Story is narrated within this territory.

In A Married Man's Story, it is interesting to study her attempt at arguing the case for an unhappy marriage or alliance. The husband tries to make explicit, what Mansfield had previously only revealed implicitly in her fiction.

.. And the next time you hear of them they are still together. You see - you've reckoned without the unknown quantity - which is their secret relation to each other... But this brings me to a thought I've often half entertained. Which is that human beings, as we know them, don't choose each other at all. It is the owner, the second self inhabiting them, who makes the choice...⁹⁷

'Secret relations' and 'second selves' what is the narrator driving at? The second self according to the narrator dominates the 'other,' If the couple were happy or unhappy together, it is purely a matter of fate, of chance. The 'second self' and the 'secret relations' are no doubt those unexposed, unexpressed areas of

of personality which are formed and shaped upon the past. 'Character' is derived from both the unacknowledged and acceptable experiences of the individual. The husband's oblique rationale of his behaviour, his passivity in reshaping his marital life, makes his story some type of psychological puzzle to be deduced by the reader. (If at all,) One secret may know another, and in this acknowledgement the individual personalities are trapped. Perhaps cynically, Mansfield is highlighting, even here those 'everday little lies.' Rationality after all can be as much a system for delusion and escape as fantasy. In exploring at least mentally, a variety of personas in 'A Married Man's Story' the husband may be exploring the 'second self'. The most 'secret relation' of all is finally that of the self to the self in the mirror.

As the wife leaves the room and retires, the husband feels relieved of the intense pressure that his false persona, that of 'playing' the husband, encourages. The room ceases to be 'strained' and becomes familiar once more.

She is gone; she will not come back again tonight.
It is not only I who recognise that - the room
changes too. It relaxes, like an old actor. Slowly
the mask is rubbed off; the look of strained
attention changes to an air of heavy, sullen brooding.
Every line, every fold breathes fatigue. The mirror
is quenched; the ash whitens; only my sly lamp
burns on...98

This is Hammond's position in 'The Stranger' reversed. The familiar is only subtly different from its estranged double. The room is the direct reflection of the husband's

secret self. He writes about the room in personal, human terms. Transference once more.

A Married Man's Story is Mansfield's own Kruntzer Sonata. Relationships, in Tolstoy are trials of endurance and energy, self-destructive intermingling of roles. The 'Verameer' tableau suddenly yields to diversion. The 'sly lamp' transferred from Duquette's apartment swivels the narrative upon its heels. The innocent knowledge of the lamp in the 'Doll's House' has come of age in A Married Man's Story. The 'sly' perception of the lamp is the married man's own. The introduction of the 'solves' into the narrative is self-conscious literary falsity. The married man expects no answer to his question 'or should I perhaps be flattered?' and guarantees the narratives resistance to explanation through his introduction of the obscure series of images. Once again Mansfield adopts Eliot's problem with language, 'why is it so difficult to write simply... no effects - no bravura. But just the plain truth, as only a liar can tell it. (p.428) The epithet is irresistible, yet demonstrates the very stylistic tendency that the narrator supposedly wishes to eliminate. An epithet is a false closure. It invites and then refuses to leave the mind. The Wildean persona is continued at the beginning of the next section, where 'I light a cigarette, lean back, inhale deeply - and find myself wondering if my wife is asleep...' (p.429) The Vermeer tableau has

become that of Dorian Gray. Once again, the 'self' is being revised, reedited and enjoyed.

In true aesthetic tradition, the Wildean persona in this section is concerned with physical beauty, or its opposite. The 'hideous photograph' like the rest of the details in this fragmented story reflects far more upon the observer than the observed. Once again an explanation for the marital problem is introduced, partially argued and then left to the reader to decide. The text is the exposition of the constricted 'second self'

If the previous section substitutes Affectation for veracity, section IV discloses details of the past that appear to confront such posturing head-on.

The marriage had been successful. And then something occurred 'last autumn.' The reader may conclude that the baby was born at this time, and that its birth caused the disruption in the marriage. However, the reasons for this effect are unclear. This fourth section of the story attempts to suggest, obscurely, possible causes. Finally we confront the narrator's past.

But really to explain what happened then I should have to go back and back - I should have to dwindle until my two hands clutched the bannisters, the stair-rail was higher than my head... As he (my father) came up, first his bald head was scarlet, then it was yellow... For he was a chemist. I was born nine years after my parents were married. I was an only child, and the effect to produce even me - small, withered bud I must have been - sapped all my mother's strength. She never left her room. Bed, sofa, window, she moved between the three...⁹⁹

Mansfield with her narrator-as-focaliser in this extract parallels the literality of the child-like perception of Joyce at the beginning of Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and of David Copperfield during his unhappy cohabitation with Murdstone, after his mother's ill-fated marriage.

These instances are not a description of what we remember but are more importantly examples of how we remember. Incantation reenacts voluntary and involuntary memories without suppression or editing. As the world shrinks, the language of perception must reflect this change. The narrative becomes kaleidoscopic, like Carroll's Wonderland.

'First his bald head was scarlet, then it was yellow...' (p.430)

When you wet the bed, first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oil sheet. That had the queer smell...¹⁰⁰

'I rambled downstairs to find anything that was like itself, so altered it all seemed; and roamed into the yard. I very soon started back there, for the empty dog-kennel was filled up with a great dog-deep mouthed and black-haired like him - and he was very angry at the sight of me, and sprang out to get at me.'¹⁰¹

Dickens captures perfectly the confrontation between innocence and experience. 'Innocence' manifests itself as a world 'that was like itself'. Experience by its antithesis. Innocence is literal, sensuously locatable, experience transmits all that was 'best-known' into strange, threatening images. Fear becomes visited upon the external world personally. A world that is not like

100 James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 4th Edition (Granaða, London 1980) p.7

101 Charles Dickens David Copperfield, 15th Edition (Penguin London 1981) p.93

itself.

Mansfield's focaliser becomes mixed irretrievably with the older narrator. The description of the 'head' seems immediate, childlike and 'true.' The sequel, the voice of the elder, reflecting narrator who can place himself against the experience of being himself. His mother seems a Proustian figure. The implicit suggestion is that by being born, the narrator ruined his mother's life; quite literally he killed her as slowly but as certainly as the father he comes to emulate. The silence of his mother, before the grotesque advertisements that perhaps parody her life, makes her role irretrievably obscure. The narrator possesses little knowledge of his mother even in retrospect; she appears to be a phantom figure, permanently symbolic of the narrator's failure and guilt.

The fascination the young narrator shares with his father over the 'gaudy' young girls underlines his sexual awakening and the unusual circumstances by which he embarks upon it. Sex seems furtive, dangerous, damaging to women, necessary and empowering to men. The narrator parallels the seedy, desperate world of the chemist's shop with the world outside. 'That's what it's like out there!' Behaviour and attitudes are learnt and modified. With a role-model like his corrupted father, it is hardly surprising that the narrator as a husband and father will find the roles difficult. He is merely repeating behaviour he observed and suffered from as a child. Much of his past he suppresses entirely. When the horrors that are described are remembered, the

unspoken horrors become terrible to even contemplate. He deflects these entirely discredited experiences through simile and image.

Do you remember your childhood? ... I certainly don't. The dark stretches, the blanks, are much bigger than the bright glimpses. I seem to have spent most of my time like a plant in a cupboard.¹⁰²

'Natural' evolvment, growth and maturity are therefore hampered by circumstances that are largely unarticulated. Mansfield's choice of simile is deliberately perverse. There is something revolting, sensuously abhorrent, in a plant that has been deprived of light. We are not shocked at all at the attitudes of others to him at school. Image precedes and anticipates enactment and behaviour. The latter is inevitable and exactly appropriate, (which of course makes it nonetheless cruel.)

I knew, too, how they turned away from my shocked, staring eyes. I was small and thin and I smelled of the shop; my nick-name was Gregory Powder. School was a tin building, stuck on the raw hillside. There were dark red streaks like blood in the oozing clay banks of the playground. ¹⁰³

Just as the physical presence of the father is loomingly rendered by the narrator, so his own sense of self and surroundings seem besmirched tainted objects, repulsive in their ugliness and singularity. This is the externalised psychological landscape of Mansfield's 'great black bird'. Discredited knowledge is embarrassingly realised. The effeminate strange child reflects the moral and physical decay around him. He is infected and diseased by experiences he cannot understand nor assimilate. Like

102 A Married Man's Story p.432

103 A Married Man's Story p.432

Canetti's tongue, the memory is approached opaquely through colour and tableau. This is the dark, unspeakable world of The Woman and the Store and 'Maud'

We were on the brow of the hill, and below us
there was a whare roofed with corrugated iron.
It stood in a garden, rather far back from the
road... A thin line of blue smoke stood up
straight from the chimney of the whare...104

I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,
Its lips in the field above are dabbled with
blood-red heath,
The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror
of blood,
And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers death. 104b

Maud behind Mansfield reinforces the idea of violence, disturbance, secrecy. Landscapes bear witness to the sins committed in their vicinity. The school, shop and whare seem connected in their grim, intimate detail and repulsion. They are imaginatively rendered through the same moral perspective, which struggles between decadent indulgence and styled horror. The suffering of the gaudy customers of the maimed man's chemist father, even appears to anticipate the death of the mother in tone and implication. Sexual fascination and fear, alienating to his fellow students and masters becomes externalised in bloody terms. The horrible incident with the 'dead-bird' that is implanted in the narrator's pocket accentuates the sense of horror (murder, menstruation and cold dissassociation.) It appears a gratuitously cruel image, reinforcing the state of mind suffered by the narrator. The trauma of his early life has inhibited, even destroyed his capacity to feel.

104 A Woman at the Store p.552
104b Tennyson, 'Maud' (1)

But I didn't feel sorry for it - No!
 I wondered ... And that is the first time that
 I remember singing - rather ... listening to a
 silent voice inside a little cage that was me...¹⁰⁵

The narrator denies his instinctive response, (which was horror) and has substituted wonder: detached, unfeeling curiosity. The child has become his father unawares; he has corrupted his own imagination and freedom. The bird seems to signify down in a Chekhovian sense. It could even be Coleridge's albatross. However as I have said earlier, the distinct lack of symbolism in the story makes such conjectures unnecessary. Implications are intellectually deferred. Instead the 'dead-bird' works physically upon the reader in the same way that the blotting-paper like the tongue of the dead-kitten does in Je ne parle pas francais.' They are compressions of experiences; condensed, layered memories, an imaginative short-hand. Once again the world of the 'Dolls House' and the innocent 'dark blobs' of jam have become revisited in other, more revolting terms.

In section VI, Mansfield and the narrator anticipate the reactions of frustrated 'rational' readers. 'But what has all this to do with my married happiness?' Mansfield highlights the collage assembly of the self.

Who am I, in fact as I sit here at this table,
 but my own past? If I deny that I am nothing.¹⁰⁶

Psychologically intimate truths cannot be addressed head-on; the simplistic notion of cause and effect has to be reworked. Fragments and glimpses of the unknown have to be juxtaposed by the conventional, the everyday.

105 A Married Man's Story p.433

106 A Married Man's Story p.434

My mother's death for instance... One night I woke up with a start to see my mother, in her night-gown, without even the hated flannel dressing-gown, sitting on my bed... I said, or I think I said, "Is that you, mother?" And as she turned around, I saw in the moonlight how queer she looked... She leaned towards me. "I've been poisoned... You're father's poisoned me."^{106b}

The mental damage caused by this 'dream' visit is incalculable. Guilt and inutterable despair can be denied or deflected through the possibility that the visit never happened; it was all a dream. Horror has to be resolved through humour and innocence, so the narrator becomes small again, converts his father into Murdstone and copes accordingly.

That hat so gleaming black and round was like a cork covered with black sealing wax, and the rest of my father was awfully like a bottle, with his face for the label - Deadly Poison. And Deadly Poison, or old D.P. was my private name for him from that day.¹⁰⁷

The pride in his imaginative resourcefulness seems bizarre if not indecent. Ironic fantasy allows the narrator to avoid the possibility that his father might have murdered his mother, but it does not abolish his own, relentless, unconscious sense of guilt, it simply redirects it.

'Night' becomes a friend. The liberating landscape for a man who has quite literally seen too much. Guilt is transferable, negotiable. The night contains all the narrator's fantasies, and correspondences. Once again we find a new persona, even a Mephistophelean figure,

106b A Married Man's Story p.434
107 A Married Man's Story p.435

enveloped in 'the tide of darkness.' The latter image perhaps is a metaphor for Mansfield's creative process or impulse. The 'second self' and Duquette's 'submerged life' are explored and carried forward by this tide, this ambivalent mental attitude and type of thought. Sexual curiosity has become sensuality, even disgust. Duquette's African Laundress seems far less sullied. It appears inevitable that the narrator's own sexuality would be affected, tampered with.

"Little sneak! Little sneak!"
 But not as if she were angry - as if she
 understood, and her smile somehow was like a
 rat - hateful!¹⁰⁸

Sex is furtive, perverse. Mrs Harry Kember has even made a reappearance with the reference to 'rat'. The narrator despises himself for his attraction to the prostitute, because he cannot prevent his curiosity or reasonably assimilate it for what it is. Innocence has been sacrificed to adulthood and experience. Mansfield's own disquiet about adult sexuality, her ambivalence about relationships, are visited upon her narrator here. The underlying guilt about his mother's death prevents the narrator being able to enjoy his own sexuality. Fantasy becomes reduced to an 'awful dreariness... it crept up from my knees to my thighs, into my arms; I ached all over with misery.' (p.436)

The narrator's imprinted sterility and impotence will subsequently be interpreted as uninterest and coldness in relation to his wife and child. The narrator

is too concerned with his shadowy second self, his past, to adequately or humanely deal with the present. 'Who am I?' I thought. What is all this?... the barriers were down between us - I had come into my own world!' The personal world that the narrator enters is inadvisable except in terms of the narrator's history and imagination. So estranged has the husband become from wife, child, surroundings - even present conditions, that the new reality manifests itself as a kind of fiction or hallucination. The writer has rewritten himself into a removed alienated world without human contacts. The 'Wolves' can be read as metaphorical expressions of neurosis; the "silent brothers" are the wolves distilled. The strange syntactical structure of the last clause, highlights the unreality of the narration by this point.

...but I from that night did beyond words
consciously turn towards my silent brothers...109

The narrator is invoking a ritual, an acquaintance with the 'second self' that is untranslatable, 'beyond words.' The passive, impotent husband has found emotional safety in a world where he cannot even function as a writer. Writing defines him. If he cannot write he cannot be defined. Without language, without acting as authors of our own experiences, we can have little sense of the past. Deprived of our pasts, we subsequently remain free from guilt and any sense of blameworthiness. A Married Man's Story is the consummate paradise regained.

Innocence is reclaimed through the process of antifiction, mental self-detonation. The narrator's desire to lose his mind, so that he will not care for anything, nor be responsible for anything, is granted through fictional over-exposure, disorientation and fragmentation. To lose one's mind is to liberate oneself. Ultimately language is disposed as well. The fiction seems as 'finished' as any other. Its incoherence is a necessity, a form of personal expedience on the part of both the author and narrator. A Married Man's Story demonstrates conclusively the effects of attempting a mind at bay. For Mansfield had produced her ultimate fiction, her personal revelatory 'Wasteland'. her brilliant, disturbing incantation on the death of the word itself.

Je ne parle pas francais is Mansfield's search for a beginning. A Married Man's Story is her search for an ending. It is to her credit that she found both - somewhere within the discredited self: Her Mind at Bay.

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