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Editors Dr Kym Brindle and Dr Karen D'Souza

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The Paradox of Love

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KYM BRINDLE & KAREN D'SOUZA

Mansfield and the Paradox of Love: An Introduction

'About Love. Well each of us thinks differently'

Letter from Mansfield to Dorothy Brett [20 April 1921][1]

The passions, pains, and ambiguities of love and desire are a key theme for Katherine Mansfield's life and work. Anne Carson's observation that love can be bittersweet, as an experience of pleasure and pain, has resonance with Mansfield's writing: bitterness, Carson suggests, is 'less obvious' than the sweetness of erotic desire, but is perhaps a sentiment that comes to prominence in Mansfield's short fiction.[2] Love – particularly romantic love, as depicted by Mansfield, repeatedly disappoints, with connections thwarted in diverse ways to align with a modernist mood of change and alienation. Mansfield illustrates that evolving early twentieth-century social and cultural norms were proving problematic for relationships of all kinds – romantic and otherwise. One paradox for love is identified in the short story, 'Late at Night' (1917), when the narrator, with 'boundless love to give to somebody', expresses a desire – a desperation even – to love and be loved in order to be 'rid of this wealth, this burden of love'.[3] Ultimately, love, in modern times, as Mansfield suggests, was increasingly thought about differently. This edition of *Tinakori* explores some variation and contradiction inherent in the concept for the writer across her work and life.

We may ask, does the promise of romantic love always end badly in Mansfield's modernist world? Does it always disappoint? Finn Bowring's suggestion that 'suspicion of romantic love […] has an established pedigree in our intellectual culture' is reflected by Mansfield in stories that appear fundamentally suspicious of promises made for love and intimacy in shifting modern times.[4] Newly married Fanny in the 1923 story 'Honeymoon', for example, hesitantly explains a troubling point to her husband: 'so often people, even when they love each other, don't seem to – to – it's hard to say – know each other perfectly'.[5] An ideal of unity – to 'perfectly' know – is seldom achieved, although characters may deceive themselves that they possess this for a while. This is evident in 'A Married Man's Story' (1923) when an unhappy husband recollects: 'we were a model couple [an] ideally suited pair'.[6] Subsequent realisation of change and a reality of 'impermanent selves' revokes any positive beginnings for the couple.[7] The unnamed narrator still emphatically recognises that he loves: 'I love the night. I love to feel the tide of darkness rising slowly […] I love, I

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love this strange feeling of drifting – whither?', but despite acknowledging uncertainty in personal direction, he is sure that he no longer loves his wife as he did – this has ended.[8] Another of Mansfield's unfinished stories, 'All Serene' (1923), identifies the onset of marital alienation when shortly before seeds of disillusionment are sown for her marriage, Mona Rutherford asks herself, 'was it possible that anyone before had ever loved as they loved?'[9] Disenchantment follows in typically nuanced Mansfield fashion as Mona ultimately questions the whole notion of her identity in relation to a domestic 'ideal' under threat of breached trust.

Mansfield depicts beginnings and endings of love, and challenges wrought by separations and reunions, as topics with autobiographical resonance. Disappointment and breached trust can be readily related to life when love proved difficult to negotiate – most notably in Mansfield's relationship with John Middleton Murry. As she indicated in a letter to Elizabeth von Arnim: 'Love is a difficult thing. I love John a shade too much, I think'.[10] Illuminating the complications for loving 'too much', Mansfield wrote emphatically to Dorothy Brett in 1921:

> For M. & for me love <u>is</u> possessive. We make terrific demands on each other & if we are not all in all then we are <u>wrong</u>. We feel we <u>have</u> the right to each other & are exclusive & jealous and fierce.[11]

Carson's identification of tactics employed by lovers and issues of boundaries are all evident in the documented relationship between Mansfield and Murry, as is the critic's assertion that 'a space must be maintained or desire ends'.[12] Did space – enforced through Mansfield's illness – end desire for the couple? Or did 'possessive' love intensify with absence? Debates emanating from these questions are interrogated by Mansfield in stories that further explore sickness and care and the strains this brings for love and its promises of devotion. The opening article in this issue entitled 'In Sickness and in Health: Murry, the Mountain and the Duty of Care' examines caregiving as a situation that clarifies but potentially contaminates love. With a focus on two stories, 'The Man Without a Temperament' and 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', Jessica Whyte draws parallels between these two texts and Mansfield's relationship with Murry. Whyte also considers the relationship with Ida Baker, who cared for Mansfield during her illness, but with whom the writer had another 'bittersweet' relationship, and our contributor makes a case for love enacted through care to be as valid as that for romantic love.

Collectively, the articles in this edition ask us to consider hierarchies of love and to assess how relationships were being reconfigured in the modernist period. A tradition long established in the Western psyche is that romantic love is a basic belief for enduring, stable and positive relationships. Simon May in *Love: A Secret History*, draws attention to changing ideas about love from the time of Plato onwards, suggesting a specific problem arises in the contemporary period. His observation, that human love is now 'widely tasked with achieving what once only divine love was thought capable of: to be our ultimate source of meaning and happiness, and of power over suffering and disappointment', inherently acknowledges a philosophical and cultural shift that germinates in the modernist period.[13] The rules of commitment and desire were certainly up for scrutiny. Love is perhaps brought to crisis by the emergence of the modernist self, which is essentially threatened by the requisite commitment to share that is embedded in the promise of love. This notion is reflected in Carissa Foo's article, 'Keeping (Queer) Things Casual in Mansfield's 'Leves Amores'. Through the apparent oxymoron of 'casual love' Mansfield explores the

conventional expectations of romantic attachment. Foo's reading, however, further complicates an understanding of love posed in Mansfield's story through her compelling argument that casualness is a subterfuge for queer desire, and foregrounds how Mansfield re-stages the interdependencies between love and emotional commitment. With a focus on objects and space, Foo discusses the hotel as a transient, liminal space. Love takes place as an anonymous transaction of sexuality and desire in ruinous surroundings and this second article of our collection identifies a negation of identity involved in casual love to raise questions concerning expectations of desire and sexual bonding.

Love as romantic, sexual, bonding has nonetheless been privileged in western culture through pervasive literary depictions. Attentive reading, however, might reveal how the discourse of love is specifically circumscribed by historical or cultural hegemonies, and is, thus, continually problematic. Eavan Boland, speaking about the representation of love, observes an inherited convention of highly crafted language that constructs love as a testing courtly pursuit. Love is frequently cast as a form of elevated madness or sickness. Boland goes on to note that within this traditional language of love, '[t]here's little about the ordinariness of love, the dailyness of love, or the steadfastness of love.'[14] With the modernist turn to the ordinary and small gestures of the everyday, Mansfield's portrayals of love redirect the expectations and disillusions of love embedded in conventional rhetoric, but she also offers a counter discourse that gestures towards other understandings of love. Thinking differently about love is explored by our third contributor in an article entitled 'Painful Pleasures of Anticipation: Katherine Mansfield's "Miss Brill"'. Many of Mansfield's short stories are cameos of unfulfilled love but masked in various guises. Annie Williams examines romantic love as a process of waiting and anticipation, which reinforces the idea of love as a quest that never materialises. However, in her article, Williams draws on theories of love to demonstrate how the protagonist, while not technically a lover, engages in the bittersweet rituals of romance to bring meaning into her life. Williams argues effectively that Miss Brill, although an aging spinster, typifies the modernist lover wrestling with loneliness, rejection and the anxiety of change.

Our fourth contributor alternatively invites us to consider the tensions located in an act of altruistic love in an article entitled, '"The Impetus of Love" as "Creative Evolution": Exploring Henri Bergson's Politics of Love in Katherine Mansfield's "A Cup of Tea"'. Alan Ali Saeed convincingly argues that while Mansfield might draw on Bergson's aesthetic insights in her work, she provides a stern critique of his political thought. For Mansfield, Bergson's idealised, humanist love remains problematic in a feminist context. The failure of the protagonist's act of altruistic love is ultimately bound up with the corrupting nature of romantic love. Saeed astutely notes how Rosemary Fell is a victim of her own inability to stand outside a patriarchal paradigm even as she aspires to female solidarity, and the focus of her generosity becomes reimagined as her rival. Saeed demonstrates how, in the world of Mansfield, the realities of class and gender ultimately undermine the purity of altruistic love that Bergson prescribes.

Mansfield: Love and Influence

In this edition of *Tinakori*, we are delighted to feature an essay by Professor Ailsa Cox who examines Mansfield's influential legacy and contribution to the poetics of short fiction. Professor Cox is founder of the Edge Hill Story Prize and editor of the journal *Short Fiction in Theory and Practice* and she has also recently contributed to

The Bloomsbury Handbook to Katherine Mansfield (2021). Emphasising the significance of Mansfield for development of the short story and the wider impact of the modernist writer on the short story genre, Professor Cox also explains how Mansfield influenced her own creative practice when she wrote a story inspired by the opening paragraph of Mansfield's 'At the Bay' (1922). In her story, entitled 'How Loud the Birds', Professor Cox connects dreams with birdsong made more noticeable during the first Covid lockdown in the UK for a multi-strand structure as modelled by Mansfield.

In her essay, Professor Cox identifies the significance of Mansfield's work for successors like Alice Munro and Angela Carter – just two of her examples of women writers evidencing Mansfield's influence. As originator of some of the most influential short fiction of the modernist era, we might further consider the thematic ways that evidence Mansfield's impact upon later writers and their work. Mary Ward suggests that 'authors – poets, dramatists, philosophers, novelists and letter writers – have always looked to their predecessors to help them understand and explain the emotions and the experiences of love. So too have readers'.[15] A later generation of mid-twentieth-century women writers like Elizabeth Taylor, Rosamond Lehmann, and Barbara Pym, for example, all wrote fiction with a primary focus on love and relationships. Taylor, described as a modernist in the style of Mansfield, acknowledges the influence of earlier women writers: 'in late adolescence I was absorbed in, influenced by, Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield, and nothing either did was ever wrong'.[16] As Mansfield did before them, mid-twentieth-century women writers represent loving at odds with cohesive ideas of self, with similar portraits of disappointment, hurt, and betrayal depicted in instances of slow realisation or sudden recognition. Moving forwards to present day tales of love and an exemplar text for the twenty-first century – Sally Rooney's bestselling novel *Normal People* (2018) – there are connections to be made with Mansfield's thematic strategies beyond the short story because, as Professor Cox points out, increasingly generic boundaries are dissolving. Rooney's narrative approach echoes Mansfield's representation of intense emotion. Pared-back sentences, strategies of incompleteness and open-endedness, and a desire 'to illustrate some significant change for the protagonists' by way of revelatory moments penetrate the emotions and experiences of love to reflect Mansfield's influential literary legacy.[17]

Personal and scholarly engagement with the legacy of Mansfield is also the subject of our second interview in a planned series and we conclude this issue with Dr Gerri Kimber talking about her enduring passion for all things Mansfield. Dr Kimber helped to found the international Katherine Mansfield Society and is co-editor of *Katherine Mansfield Studies* and a Visiting Professor in English at the University of Northampton, UK. She is the Series Editor of the *Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield* (2012-16) and is currently working on a new four volume edition of Mansfield's letters with Claire Davison for Edinburgh University Press. We are pleased to conclude this edition of *Tinakori* with Dr Kimber's thoughtful responses to our interview questions.

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Notes

[1] Claire Davison and Gerri Kimber offer a note to accompany this letter in *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), I, p. 390: 'As KM would have been perfectly aware, 'About Love' is a short story by Chekhov; Constance Garnett translated it merely as 'Love' but Koteliansky's translation preferred the more accurate 'About Love'.
[2] Anne Carson, *Eros The Bittersweet* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 3.
[3] Katherine Mansfield, 'Late at Night', in *The Collected Stories* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2006), pp. 537-9 (p. 538).
[4] Finn Bowring, *Erotic Love in Sociology, Philosophy and Literature: From Romanticism to Rationality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 4.
[5] Katherine Mansfield, 'The Honeymoon', in *The Collected Stories*, pp. 326-31 (p. 329).
[6] Katherine Mansfield, 'A Married Man's Story', in *The Collected Stories*, pp. 352-63 (p. 358).
[7] Mansfield, 'A Married Man's Story', p. 355.
[8] Mansfield, 'A Married Man's Story', p. 362.
[9] Katherine Mansfield, 'All Serene, in *The Collected Stories*, pp. 393-7 (p. 395).
[10] Mansfield, 'A Married Man's Story', p. 362.
[11] Davison and Kimber, p. 389; original emphasis. In a letter dated 21 January 1922, Mansfield also expressed a desire that it should be she who made her friend, Brett, feel loved: 'I feel a bit like a man about you. I mean by that I'd like to make you *feel loved*'. Davison and Kimber, p. 435; original emphasis.
[12] Carson, p. 26.
[13] Simon May, *Love: A Secret History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 1.
[14] Eavan Boland, 'The Stoicisms of Love', *The New Yorker* – interview with Alice Quinn (29 October 2021) <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/10/29/the-stoicisms-of-love> [accessed 13 September 2001].
[15] Mary Ward, *The Literature of Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 8
[16] *Elizabeth Taylor: A Centenary Celebration*, ed. by N. H. Reeve (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), p. 95. John Taylor suggests of Taylor: 'notwithstanding her novels' domestic focus and circumscribed milieu, she was a modernist in the style of Chekhov and Katherine Mansfield'. 'I have not got a bikini' *The Guardian*, 20 June 2009 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jun/20/elizabeth-taylor-nicola-beauman> [accessed 30 July 2021].
[17] David Wallace, 'Sally Rooney on Labour and Desire', *The New Yorker*, 5 July 2021 https://www.newyorker.com/books/this-week-in-fiction/sally-rooney-07-12-21 [accessed 27 August 2021].

JESSICA WHYTE

In Sickness and in Health: Murry, the Mountain and the Duty of Care

Abstract: Katherine Mansfield's ill health, and her need for continual care, blurred the lines between love and illness in her two key relationships: with John Middleton Murry and Ida Baker (L.M). I explore how love and caregiving became intimately entangled: Baker was too devoted; Murry not enough. A crisis in her marital life and in her dependent relationship with Baker came to a head during Mansfield's stay at the Casetta Deerholm in Ospedaletti, Italy between September 1919 and January 1920. Focusing on Mansfield's intense letters from this time and the short stories 'The Man Without a Temperament' and 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', I investigate how Mansfield's stay at the Casetta can be seen as a breaking point in her 'child love' for Murry, and a turning point in her acceptance of Baker as caregiver.

Keywords: love, illness, caregiving, Casetta, Katherine Mansfield, John Middleton Murry, Ida Baker

In her seminal essay *On Being Ill*, Virginia Woolf meditated on the similarities between the experience of love and the experience of illness:

> Illness often takes on the disguise of love, and plays the same odd tricks. It invests certain faces with divinity, sets us to wait, hour after hour, with pricked ears, for the creaking of a stair, and wreathes the faces of the absent (plain enough in Health, Heaven knows) with a new significance.[1]

Illness and love are both heightened emotional states that are intensely and individually experienced. As Freud articulated, pleasure and pain are two sides of the same coin,[2] while the philosopher Richard Shusterman suggests that 'pain and pleasure have an intimate connection.'[3] I contend that love and illness are similarly, and uncomfortably, conjoined. Katherine Mansfield's ongoing ill health, her decline into tuberculosis, and her increasing dependency on care, blurred the lines between love and illness in her life. Waiting, longing, and the desire for company are characteristics of both states, but I propose that it is often difficult to distinguish between the two, and that Mansfield's life highlights this dichotomy.

Havi Carel, in *Illness* (2008), suggests that during sickness: 'It is ways of being and ways of being-with that suffer.'[4] The role of caregiver complicated and disrupted

the dynamics of Mansfield's relationships and intimacy with the two people she loved most: her husband John Middleton Murry and her frequent companion and carer, Ida Baker. Carel writes: 'In a healthy body, biological and lived experience are taken for granted, aligned and harmonious, in a malfunctioning body harmony is disrupted.'[5] It is not just internally that harmony is disrupted, but externally, complicating interpersonal relationships. This disruption became especially apparent in Mansfield's life during the intense few months between September 1919 and January 1920, when Mansfield and Baker were isolated together at the Casetta Deerholm in Ospedaletti, Italy. By examining Mansfield's personal writings during her period at the Casetta, and the short stories 'The Man Without a Temperament' and 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', I consider how love and illness became blurred in Mansfield's life and work. By revealing the complicated, shifting boundaries between love and caregiving which profoundly disrupted Mansfield's relationships with both Murry and Baker, I aim to reveal how the experience of illness can both contaminate and clarify feelings of love.

When Mansfield married Murry on 3 May 1918, she hoped that she had joined her life to a man who would love her, care for her, and support her through all of life's challenges. At the time of their marriage Mansfield considered that she and Murry shared a 'child love [...] the most marvellous, the most radiant love that this world knows.'[6] Yet their wedding day did not provide the romantic commitment she longed for. Murry did not make her feel like his wife, instead he turned away from her kiss and wiped his lips with a handkerchief, an act which shattered Mansfield's belief in the purity of their love. In May 1918, she wrote: 'In that instant you were utterly, utterly apart from me – and I have never felt quite the same since.'[7] Within a month, she found herself in Looe, Cornwall, for six weeks without her husband. Despite her plea from Looe that 'I MUST NOT BE LEFT ALONE. That really is a cry for help,' their time apart was the beginning of a pattern of separation which often felt to Mansfield like banishment.[8]

Mansfield turned to her old school friend Ida Baker (often known as L.M, but also given other nicknames: The Mountain, The Albatross and The Faithful One, depending on Mansfield's mood). In May 1918 she wrote to Baker about her anguish at being separated from Murry: 'My presence seems to positively torture him.'[9] Baker had already established herself as the ideal caregiver, having looked after Mansfield during an early spell of illness in Rottingdean in 1910. Kathleen Jones reveals how during this time Baker revels 'in the fact that she is needed. She expressed her love for Katherine in small, physical acts, caring for her like a mother with a child.'[10] The Rottingdean episode began a pattern that would last for Mansfield's lifetime, in which Baker acted as a surrogate parent, and primary caregiver. Amidst a growing awareness that Murry's care was inadequate, Mansfield turned to Baker as 'factotum, nurse and "wife"' and asked her friend to act as housekeeper in the marital home in Hampstead.[11] Baker reluctantly accepted, and, despite believing herself 'quite unfitted' for the role, she left behind her war job at a munitions factory to devote herself to Mansfield's care.[12] Baker renounced pursuing a life of her own, and admitted: 'I was really leading a double life, my own and Katherine's, and I should not have dreamt of leaving her.'[13]

While in Hampstead, Mansfield was given a definite, terminal diagnosis of tuberculosis, and understood that she would need constant care. Dependant invalid was not a role she relished. Her independent spirit recoiled, and she deeply resented needing care. In September 1919 she wrote: 'It's not being ill that matters; it is the abuse of one's privacy – it is having to let people serve you.'[14] The Hampstead experiment was not entirely successful. Baker wrote of Murry coming home only to

'bemoan how terrible it all was, how dreadfully he was suffering, and how he could hardly bear it. He was too full of self-pity to give her any help.'[15] Baker exasperated Mansfield with her 'constant, constraining care', and she berated herself for her inability to give 'the buoyant, unfettered love that she [Mansfield] needed.'[16] By September 1919 it became clear that Mansfield could not continue to live year-round in the cold English climate, and it was decided that she would travel to the continent. Mansfield, Baker, and Murry went to San Remo in Italy, where Murry stayed to see his wife settled, but then left her to the mercy of Baker's care. Murry may not have fully accepted the seriousness of his wife's illness, but she was under no illusions: unknown to Murry, Mansfield wrote an informal will before she left London.

Mansfield and Baker eventually settled at the Casetta Deerholm in Ospedaletti, having been ejected from a hotel in San Remo due to the hotel's fear of tuberculosis contagion. At first, Mansfield revelled in Italy's warmth and sea views, but the shine of the Casetta soon wore off. Baker called this period 'the breaking point of her [Mansfield's] old child-love for Murry', during which Mansfield's physical and mental health deteriorated rapidly.[17] Not only did Baker describe Mansfield as 'desperately lonely,' but she revealed how Mansfield was 'bound by her weakness and fever and pain, which made her depend so much on others, even though she loathed this dependence. It became a burden from which she could not free herself.'[18] But neither Mansfield, nor Baker, had a choice about the roles they now inhabited. Mansfield was too unwell to look after herself, and Baker was her only companion. Neither woman could free herself from this interdependent relationship; they were stranded, with only each other for company.

The problem with the Murrys' 'child love' became evident: Murry was *like* a child. Burgan highlights how Murry is 'quite unequal to the task of caring',[19] while Jones acknowledges 'John is no nurse; living in a world of his own and barely able to take care of himself he is unable to anticipate her needs.'[20] In his notebook, Murry admits: 'I have noticed in myself a neverending desire to be a child. I want to lose myself in another – to resign my personality, to be protected – and almost physically to be mothered like a child.'[21] When the innocence of child love confronted the brutal reality of illness, Murry was found wanting. Yet Mansfield desired her husband to step into the caring role, finding it difficult to accept that her ill health had altered the dynamics of a relationship that required them both to play the role of child. Jones suggests that Mansfield 'cast John in a role for which he is totally unfitted and he is unable to transform himself into her ideal husband.'[22] 'Gone is my childish love,' Mansfield wrote at the Casetta.[23] She believed that if Murry's love was pure: 'He'd have faced coming away with me. And that he would not do.'[24] Her letters revealed the anger, disappointment and longing he provoked when he failed to fulfil his duty of care. In December 1919, she wrote:

> The truth is that until I was ill you were never called upon to 'play the man' to this extent – and it's not your role. When you said you ought to be kept you spoke the truth. I feel it. Ever since my illness this crisis I suppose has been impending when suddenly in an agony I should turn all woman and lean on you.[25]

Murry's inadequate, vacillating response to her pleas left her bitterly disappointed. She reflected how his letters 'cut like a knife through something that had grown up between us. They changed the situation for me, at least, for ever.'[26] While Mansfield may not have favoured a marriage which played out traditional roles, once she was ill,

she fell into expectations which she might have once eschewed as old-fashioned. Also, Murry compared unfavourably to the perceived 'manliness' of Mansfield's father, who was her main source of financial support.[27] This marital crisis came to a head on 4 December 1919 when Mansfield sent Murry a poem called 'The New Husband', of which the opening stanza reads:

> Someone came to me and said
> Forget, forget that you've been wed
> Who's your man to leave you be
> Ill and cold in a far country
> Who's the husband – who's the stone
> Could leave a child like you alone.[28]

The reprimand to Murry could not have been clearer, and he was bitterly hurt by the verse. He called it 'a snake with a terrible sting,' and wrote: 'I don't think that at any time I've had a bigger blow than that letter & these verses.'[29] His focus on his own suffering in response to her suffering only inflamed the situation. He wrote: '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.'[30] Murry could not or would not escape the role of a child, and did not attempt to approach Mansfield's suffering from an adult standpoint, leaving Mansfield frustrated and feeling alone. Illness had rendered her child-like, but not in the carefree, innocent way she and Murry desired. Instead, she was helpless and dependent, and needed Murry to step into the role of an adult. In order to bridge the growing gap between them, Murry travelled to the Casetta for Christmas, but the damage was already done. Although there were signs that a truce was reached, Baker's account was less encouraging: 'He came, but something had happened, I do not know what, and he brought no happiness. The days of those two weeks were shadowed and, contrary to my expectation, he spent his nights in the little spare room.'[31]

Mansfield and Murry's much-desired reconciliation was tenuous at best. Baker wrote: 'the hurt was too deep for a quick cure.'[32] In January, after Murry had left, Mansfield recorded in her notebook the writing of her short story 'The Man Without a Temperament,' which she worked on from 9.30am until a quarter past midnight. Afterwards, she lay awake, thinking how 'all is connected with this feeling that J. and I are no longer as we were. I love him but he rejects my living love. This is anguish. These are the worst days of my whole life.'[33] Her reference to a 'living love' is of particular interest. It suggests that the experience of being with Mansfield in the present moment, amidst the reality of her illness and suffering, was not what Murry desired, and that he may have clung to the idealised version of their 'child-love' instead. The material, bodily reality of a sick and suffering wife would not equate with the dream of the playful and childlike existence they had dreamed of when they first met.

'The Man Without a Temperament'

'The Man Without a Temperament' was written at a critical time in Mansfield and Murry's relationship, when Christmas at the Casetta served to highlight the schism in their relationship. The story has elicited contrasting readings over the years, being interpreted either as a hymn of praise to Murry as the attentive husband, or as a searing critique of his coldness and lack of empathy. The protagonist of the story, Robert

Salesby, is pictured in attendance to his sick wife in a hotel abroad. Mansfield's early biographer, Antony Alpers, interprets the story as being a hostile picture of Murry, which closely echoes Mansfield's own mood and reflections at the time of writing.[34] Conversely, Burgan reads the story as portraying the male protagonist 'so sympathetically that he seems an innocent victim of his wife's illness', she wrote: 'Mansfield is able to present the caretaking man without irony; rather his downright masculinity is shown as a victimised foreground upon which his wife displays the delicate enthusiasms of her invalidism.'[35] Murry would have been happy with this reading, as it chimed with his own views. In response to Alpers, Murry said it was 'a quite fantastic misreading of the story', adding 'if ever a character was drawn with loving admiration, Salesby was. I should be very well content to go down to posterity as his original.'[36] Gerri Kimber argues that the story reveals the 'stultifying boredom facing a husband dutifully looking after his sick wife in a foreign hotel', where the emasculated husband lives in tedium and impatience.[37] My interpretation of 'The Man Without a Temperament' chimes more closely with Alpers' and Kimber's readings, although Mansfield's ambivalence about what she wanted from Murry allows for both readings of the story. Yet 'The Man Without a Temperament' reads, at least in part, as a condemnation of Murry's inability to fulfil the role of carer. On the one hand, Mansfield wanted Murry to step up and be a man, to be the decisive, strong figure that Robert Salesby represents. Yet Salesby also appears cold, callous and calculating, doing his duty reluctantly and with bad grace, while Jinny longs for him to show warmth and love. This echoes Mansfield's desire for both the childish love she believed she had with Murry, and the paradoxical desire for him to be more manly. Although the story is told mostly from Salesby's perspective, it reveals little about his inner thoughts, and the reader must instead rely on external signals to form an insight into his character – but this is a man without a temperament, and those insights are intentionally obscured. Salesby is in many ways a blank page, a man whose 'glance travelled coolly, deliberately', who sees nothing and is still; who, as he turns the signet ring on his finger, 'stared in front of him, blinking, vacant'.[38] His movements are languid, he saunters, he drawls (Man, 135). He barely says a word throughout the story, and although his engagement with the care of his wife is outwardly solicitous – he fetches her shawl, checks she is warm, and stiffly offers her his arm – emotionally, he lacks compassion or empathy. He is the strong, masculine husband, but there is something missing: the feminine softness, which Murry, the real-life Salesby, possessed, but which was also a source of frustration for Mansfield. Throughout the story there are numerous physical markers which indicate Salesby's true feelings. The most notable of these is the constant turning of his signet ring, an action repeated at key moments that symbolises his impatience and frustration with the suffocating situation. Other indications of impatience include pursed lips, sucked-in cheeks, his repeated ringing of the lift bell and barely covering a yawn (Man 135).

In contrast, the language Mansfield uses in the story emphasises how Salesby's wife, Jinny, is trapped in her role as invalid. She is initially described as moving with 'dragging steps', her hand 'like a leaf' (Man 130). The word 'drag' reappears, when Jinny laments: 'I can't expect you to drag after your invalid wife every minute' (Man 136), and again when Salesby returns from his walk and 'slowly she came to meet him, dragging the heavy cape' (Man 139). Mansfield would not have chosen to repeat this word at random, as her ethos was: 'I can't afford mistakes. Another word won't do. I chose every single word.'[39] If, as Ali Smith contends, Mansfield's 'stories are the opposite of inadvertent,' then the word 'drag' takes on significance and implies both a burden and a weight.[40] Mansfield used similar images in her letters to Murry. In June

1918 Mansfield lamented: 'It's not fair – hopelessly not fair – that you should have to drag me in a little cart after you.'[41] In December 1919 she wrote: 'How dare I lean on you as I do. Do you feel I'm a weight? I want to lean so light so light & then suddenly I get heavy and ask to be carried.'[42] There are other subtle indicators in the story which exacerbate Salesby's detachment. His clear contempt for the other inhabitants of the hotel carries negative connotations about invalids, suggested by his use of the amusing but derogatory nickname 'The Two Topknots' (Man 129), and his description of the plants by the lift as 'two crippled palms, two ancient beggars' (Man 130). In contrast, his admiration of the healthy, young Honeymoon Couple (Man 133) offers a direct comparison to himself and his ill wife. The narrative describes them as having 'olive skin, brilliant eyes and teeth' (Man 133). They are the picture of health and happiness, a stereotypical picture of how newlyweds should be. Mansfield and Murry had only been married a short while when she wrote this story, and the Honeymoon Couple offer the health-filled, happy alternative to the disjointed separateness that had marked the months since the Murrys had married.

Mansfield was expert in the use of symbols, and in this story both Salesby's watch, and the heliotrope flower, make salient points about the husband-and-wife relationship. As Salesby and his wife walk in the hotel gardens, she declares: 'I feel so well today – marvellously better' (Man 135). These words echo Mansfield's reassurances to Murry that she is feeling better, but both assurances ring hollow. Jinny sits on a bench and keeps hold of Salesby's watch while he leaves her to take a longer walk, in which he seems to breathe more easily and become more himself again. When he returns, she notes that he is three minutes late, and this emphasis on time indicates the level of constraint and scrutiny he is under and how bound to her needs he is. Mansfield was very familiar with flowers of all kinds, and they frequently play a symbolic role in her stories, so it is likely she would have been aware of the associations of heliotrope, a plant named after the god Helios and also believed to fight fatigue and ill health; it is 'referred to as the herb of love [...] and thought to symbolize devotion.'[43] So it is significant that Jinny plucks a spray of heliotrope which she carries back to the hotel. What does Jinny do with this symbol of devotion? She 'thrusts' the heliotrope in her husband's lapel (Man 141), which suggests that she forces the flower on her husband, relating both her desire for his love and devotion, but also his reluctance to bestow it. In Greek mythology, Helios is said to have abandoned his lover Clytie, a water nymph, who spent the rest of her days pining. Upon her death Helios turned her body into the heliotrope plant. This suggests a hidden message embedded in the story: that of the loyal, devoted woman abandoned by the man she loved.[44]

'The Man Without a Temperament' is laced with clues about the cold, unfeeling character of Salesby, but it is only in the last pages of the story that the message becomes more overt. As he lies in bed next to his sleeping wife, he recalls a conversation he had with a doctor, who tells him '"if she can't cut away for the next two years and give a decent climate a chance she don't stand a dog's-h'm-show"' (Man 142). This mirrors Mansfield's experience of being told by a specialist doctor in Hampstead that she would only survive if she travelled abroad. The next lines that are the most pertinent, for Salesby recalls the doctor saying: 'Hang it all, old man, what's to prevent you going with her? It isn't as though you've got a regular job like us wage earners.' (Man 142) When Salesby relates the doctor's advice to his wife she responds:

> Robert, the awful thing is – I suppose it's my illness – I simply feel I could not go alone. You see – you're everything. You're bread and wine Robert, bread and wine. Oh, my darling, what am I saying? Of course I could, of course I won't take you away ... (Man 143)

This ambiguous line reflects the constant vacillation in Mansfield and Murry's letters throughout her time at the Casetta: the misunderstandings, recriminations and bitterness, and Mansfield's personal dilemma - being torn between wanting Murry to care for her, and guilt at asking this of him.

The ending of the story is typically ambiguous. One of the last small acts Salesby does for his wife is to catch a mosquito, an act of kindness performed by Baker for Mansfield.[45] Jinny's final question to her husband is 'do you mind awfully being out here with me?' (Man 143) This question reveals her insecurity, her need for reassurance, and her uncertainty about his devotion. In reply he goes through the motions of care: 'He kisses her. He tucks her in, he smooths [sic] the pillow'; yet the only word he speaks is 'Rot!' (143). One definition of the word 'rot' is 'nonsense', as though he is saying 'don't be silly, of course I don't mind being here', yet the other meaning of 'rot' is 'to cause something to decay or weaken', which could reflect the breakdown of the marital relationship. It also evokes the commonplace saying, 'when the rot sets in', which could exemplify the state of the Murrys' relationship at the time. In this final act, Salesby's alignment with Helios, god of the sun, is mirrored by Jinny's alignment with the symbol of the moon. As Salesby watches Jinny sleep, there is an 'enormous white moon' (Man 142), and the bedroom is 'painted white with moonlight' (Man 142). There is a clear alignment with Jinny's femininity and the moon, which dominates the domestic interior of the sickroom, while outside the sun is high, signifying Salesby's masculine domain.

Unlike Murry, Salesby has ultimately stepped up and fulfilled his duty as a man and a husband, but the story's conclusion suggests that the husband's presence is far from satisfactory, and although he 'performs' the role of devoted carer, his impatience and reluctance to give his whole self to the caring role means the arrangement is fraught with tension. As Jones concludes:

> The husband is outwardly devoted to his wife's needs, but their whole relationship is warped by her fear of 'being a drag on him' and his dutiful acceptance and the necessity to hide his regrets from her. Any love he has had for her has evaporated and the story ends with a lie.[46]

This enactment of love and illness reflected the Murrys' relationship, as Mansfield felt dissatisfied both when Murry was absent, but also when he was present. Parallels can be drawn between 'The Man Without a Temperament' and elements of Mansfield's guilt and insecurity that she is a burden to Murry. Because Mansfield wrote her story from Salesby's point of view, she was able to sympathise with the predicament of the husband who longs to escape from the restrictions of caregiving, as well as the desires of the ill wife. The switch of viewpoint also contributes to the problematised reading of the story, allowing for the ambiguity of interpretation which is reflected in the differing readings by Alpers and Burgan. It is only by exploring Mansfield's letters and journals during her stay at the Casetta and understanding the context in which the story was written – the deep dissatisfaction with Murry's lack of care – that I conclude that the story was ultimately meant as a rebuke to Murry, rather than a reward. The night before she wrote 'The Man Without a Temperament', she

had lain awake thinking out the shape of the story, which she had originally titled 'The Exile', and she wrote in her notebook of her: 'appalling night of misery deciding J. had no more need for our love.'[47] Mansfield's original title suggests her feelings of alienation and isolation, although arguably the final title contains a more overt rebuke to Murry. She wrote the story as a reaction to a night of agony, in which she concluded that Murry's love was lost to her forever. Against the backdrop of Mansfield's illness, their love could no longer be pure or uncomplicated, and Murry's Christmas visit to the Casetta had not assuaged Mansfield's fears that their love was waning.

A Submission to Care

Ambivalence also epitomised Mansfield's relationship with Baker. On the one hand, Baker was surrogate family, mimicking the care Mansfield had been given as a child by her grandmother, but that she had missed from her own, ailing mother. Jones describes how Mansfield: 'Recognised in Ida a quality of absolute dependability' which provided 'the unconditional love she never had within her family.'[48] Yet Mansfield described Baker in her letters as 'a revolting hysterical ghoul', a 'lunatic attendant', and wrote to Murry: 'It is impossible to describe to you my curious hatred and antagonism to her. Gross, trivial, dead to all that is alive for me, ignorant and false.'[49] She equated Baker's dedication with a perverse desire to see her ill and dependent and, as Burgan contends, 'some of her most hectic railings against her illness came in the form of castigation of L.M as an angel of death rather than an angel of mercy.'[50] Baker became the scapegoat, as if transformed into a personification of illness, making her the target for the frustrations brought on by Mansfield's suffering.

Despite Mansfield's railings against her, Baker was a dedicated and assiduous caregiver. The Casetta was basic in the extreme, and Baker initially had to carry water up from a spring, and scrub copper pots with sand from the hillside. As Mansfield was too nervous to sleep alone, Baker slept on the sofa in her room at night. Burgan argues that illness brought 'the issue of dependency into sharp focus,' and ultimately forced Mansfield into 'a submission to care', however reluctant.[51] Despite Baker's ministrations, Mansfield's resentment and bitterness towards her friend reached fever pitch during their time at the Casetta. Angela Smith notes: 'Mansfield depended on but resented the intimacy of their relationship, partly perhaps because of irritation that the marital role was being filled by Baker and not Murry.'[52] Mansfield feared linking her life to dependence on Baker. She wrote to Murry in May 1918: 'I am frightened to take her for better and for worse – my love for her is so divided by my extreme hate for her.'[53] Yet when Murry could not provide care, Mansfield relied on Baker by default. Her family were far away, and there was no-one to whom she could turn, and certainly no-one as willing to sacrifice themselves to Mansfield's demands.

As Mansfield came to terms with the changed status of her marriage, it led to a transformation in her attitude to Baker, and she began to appreciate and depend more on her old friend. She wrote to Murry: 'My feelings towards Lesley are absolutely changed. It is not only that the hatred is gone – something positive is there which is very like love for her.'[54] Mansfield began to understand that love as care was as worthy as romantic love, or at least it provided her with the practical support missing in her marriage. Mansfield finally appreciated that Baker's devotion and caregiving was invaluable, that to be understood and looked after was a form of love. She wrote that Baker:

> *served* me as one could not be served if one were not loved. All silently and gently too, even after all my bitter ravings at her and railing against her. She has simply shown me that she *understands* and I feel that she does.[55]

Her renewed appreciation and understanding of Baker's devotion may have influenced the story 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' and I agree with Burgan that this story represents an 'act of reconciliation with her dependence on female caregivers.'[56] The portraits of the two sisters, Josephine (Jug) and Constantia, are not altogether flattering, although there is tenderness and empathy in the story. The sisters are described as 'two black cats' (Daughters 263), 'old tabbies' (Daughters 265) who have lived under the yoke of caring for their father, living in fear of displeasing him: 'It had been a rule for years never to disturb father in the morning, whatever happened' (Daughters 270).[57] This passage echoes Baker's description of how she acted when she was housekeeper in Hampstead: 'I, in turn, crept about quietly, knocking gently at the door for fear of disturbing her [Mansfield].'[58] Smith describes how the two female protagonists, who 'have been living the lives of objects, silenced and controlled by their imperious father and his banging stick, have secret selves that could be reasserted.'[59] The sisters' lives had been dominated by the practical ministrations of care:

> There had been this other life, running out, bringing things home in bags, getting things on approval, discussing them with Jug, and taking them back to get more things on approval, and arranging father's trays and trying not to annoy father. (Daughters 284)

After their father's death, despite the teasing possibility of liberation, the sisters are unable to escape from their sense of duty and care, fearful of annoying their own maid, and overly solicitous about their father's nurse, asking her to stay and then regretting it immediately. In 1921, Mansfield wrote of 'The Daughters':

> While I was writing that story I lived for it but when it was finished, I confess I hope very much that my readers would understand what I was trying to express. But very few did. They thought it was "cruel"; they thought I was "sneering" at Jug and Constantia; they thought it was "drab". And in the last paragraph I was 'poking fun at the poor old things'. It's almost terrifying to be so misunderstood.[60]

Mansfield's comments confirm that she intended the tone of the story to be compassionate and sympathetic, rather than judgmental. Far from poking fun, the ending of the story reveals both tenderness and empathy towards the sisters. Josephine hears sparrows on the window ledge, and the sound of their cries makes her realise 'it was inside her, that queer little crying noise. *Yeep – eyeep – yeep.* Ah, what was it crying, so weak and forlorn?' (Daughters 283; original emphasis) The sisters ask themselves 'if mother had lived, might they have married?' (Daughters 283) They both, briefly, feel on the edge of an epiphany. Their life caring for their father's needs:

> Seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn't real. It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into

> a thunderstorm that she really felt herself. What did it mean? What was it she was always wanting? What did it all lead to? Now? Now? (283)

They turn to each other, wanting to say something 'frightfully important, about – about the future and what...' (Daughters 283). Yet their words trail off, they don't finish their sentences – 'Don't you think perhaps..."' and '"I was wondering if now...' (Daughters 283-4). Then, as the sun comes out, they both pretend to have forgotten, and the moment passes, probably forever. Kimber stresses the significance of the story's ending, particularly in its use of the sun and moon imagery.[61] In 1922 Mansfield wrote: 'It wasn't for nothing Constantia chose the moon and water – for instance!'[62] Just as in the conclusion to 'The Man Without a Temperament', in 'Daughters' the sun (representative of masculinity) overpowers the feminine symbols of the moon and sea, reasserting the overpowering masculine control that has stultified the sisters' development. Ultimately, the sisters are, as Kimber points out, 'unable to make that leap into self-discovery',[63] and Mansfield herself stated: 'They died as truly as Father was dead.'[64] The portrayal of the sisters at the end of the story reveals both pity and compassion, an understanding of how much of their selves they have sacrificed in order to fulfil their roles as carers.

Writing 'The Daughter of the Late Colonel' is the closest Mansfield came in her fiction to an expression of empathy with Baker, and to acknowledging the debt she owed her friend. On twenty-first January 1920, Mansfield and Baker abandoned the dark days at the Casetta and moved to the warmth of Menton. In March 1920 Mansfield wrote to Baker: 'I need you and I rely on you – I lean hard on you – yet I can't thank you or give you anything in return – except my love.'[65] One suspects that is all Baker ever wanted. Although their intimacy waxed and waned from this period until Mansfield's death in early 1923, Mansfield accepted that Baker was a necessary and dependable part of her life. The miserable months at the Casetta had, in a strange way, cemented Baker's importance.

While her relationship with Baker improved, the same cannot be said of her relationship with Murry. Although outwardly reconciled, resentment and hurt remained, and for Mansfield, their love was irrevocably changed. In January 1920, she wrote from Menton: 'I want you to forget the creature who lived at the Casetta. It was all wrong – terribly wickedly wrong to have been there. I felt your strangeness, your refusal to enter into it – that was what overpowered me.'[66] Murry wrote back: 'I feel I can never ask for forgiveness enough for not having understood the torment of the Casetta [...] it was cruel, terribly cruel of me, and there isn't any excuse.'[67] Yet soon they were at odds again, and in February, Mansfield wrote 'I love you but something has gone dead in me.'[68] By March she stated that 'the "girl you left behind you" really did die after all in that Casetta and is buried there forever.'[69] Mansfield knew that the Casetta had been a breaking point in their marriage, and she was unable to return to the child-love that marked the early days of their relationship.

Mansfield never returned to Ospedaletti. The following winter, she and Baker stayed at Menton in France, and she and Murry were again apart. During the latter part of 1921, Mansfield, Murry and Baker cohabited in Switzerland, but by early 1922, separation loomed again, as Mansfield decided to try Manoukhin's experimental X-ray treatment in Paris. Rancour over money, and her husband's inability to prioritise her care, reared its head. She was upset by his reluctance to move to Paris with her and wrote: 'Your own personal feeling was not that at this most critical of all moments in her life I could not leave Wig.'[70] Mansfield felt this was her final bid for health, and Murry's absence led her to conclude:

> I now know that I must grow a shell away from you. I want, 'I ask for' my independence. At any moment in the future you may suddenly leave me in the lurch if it pleases you. It is a part of your nature.[71]

They did intermittently live together again, but by October 1922, Mansfield had decided she could no longer rely on her husband, nor did she want to rely on Baker, her old companion. She moved alone into the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man in Fontainebleau, where she died three months later. At Christmas, she wrote to Baker urging her to no longer worry about her,[72] releasing her friend from her obligations, simplifying and re-forming their relationship with one plea: 'I'd like to be your friend.'[73] Yet to Murry she said: 'It is a horrible thing; I have almost forgotten her. And only two months ago it seemed I could not have lived without her care.'[74] In Mansfield's final months, there was a sense that she was purposefully withdrawing from her old ties and attachments. On 1 December 1922, she wrote to her husband:

> Deeper still is the most sincere feeling I am capable of that I do not want to see you until I am better physically. I cannot see you until the old Wig has disappeared. Associations, recollections would be too much for me just now. I must get better alone.[75]

Although Murry arrived in Fontainebleau on the day Mansfield died, she had chosen to spend her last months without him, no longer wishing to navigate the complicated boundaries between love and caregiving. She had seemed to conclude that while unwell, she was better off alone, among like-minded strangers at the Institute, releasing her loved ones from the bonds of care, and herself from the guilt of being cared for. She was free to stay connected to Murry and Baker from a remove, but the old dependencies, and the once childlike, radiant love between Mansfield and Murry, became nothing but a distant memory.

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Notes

[1] Virginia Woolf, *On Being Ill* (Paris: Paris Press, 2012), p. 6.
[2] Principally propounded by Sigmund Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Norton, 1975).
[3] Richard Shusterman, *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 204.
[4] Havi Carel, *Illness: The Cry of the Flesh* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), p. 53.
[5] Carel, p. 26.
[6] Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds, *The Collected Letters of Katherine* Mansfield, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), III, p. 159.
[7] Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), II, p. 187.
[8] *Letters* II, p. 230; original emphasis.
[9] *Letters* II, p. 182.

[10] Kathleen Jones, *Katherine Mansfield: The Story-Teller* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 126.
[11] Mary Burgan, *Illness, Gender & Writing: The Case of Katherine Mansfield* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 143.
[12] Ida Baker, *Katherine Mansfield: The Memories of L. M.* (London: Virago, 1971), p. 127.
[13] Baker, p. 136.
[14] *Letters* II, p. 354.
[15] Baker, p. 128.
[16] Baker, p. 127.
[17] Baker, p. 146.
[18] Baker, p. 147.
[19] Burgan, p. 143.
[20] Jones, p. 445.
[21] Jones, p. 226.
[22] Jones, p. 375.
[23] Margaret Scott, *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks: Complete Edition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). II, p. 180.
[24] Scott, *Notebooks*, II, p. 180.
[25] *Letters* III, p. 156.
[26] *Letters* III, p. 158.
[27] In 1918, Mansfield's yearly allowance from her father was £208. Footnote in *Letters* II, p. 53.
[28] *Letters* III, p. 136.
[29] Cherry A. Rankin ed. *Letters Between Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry* (London: Virago, 2014), p. 236.
[30] Rankin, p. 236.
[31] Baker, p. 145.
[32] Baker, p. 146.
[33] Scott, II, p. 188.
[34] Anthony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 305.
[35] Burgan, p. 153.
[36] Alpers, p. 305.
[37] Gerri Kimber, *Katherine Mansfield and the Art of the Short Story* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 15.
[38] Katherine Mansfield, 'The Man Without a Temperament', in *The Collected Stories* (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 129-43 (p. 129; p. 132). Further references to this story are given after quotations in the text.
[39] *Letters* III, p. 204. Original emphasis.
[40] Ali Smith, 'Introduction', *Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. v-xxviii, (p. vii).
[41] *Letters* II, p .239.
[42] *Letters* III, p. 130.
[43] Information on Heliotrope and Greek Mythology taken from: 'Heliotrope Flowers' (29 August 2010) <http://flowerinfo.org/heliotrope-plants> [accessed 14 December 2020].
[44] Salesby/Murry's comparison to the god Helios could appear tenuous if it were not for another element in the story. Salesby is referred to as 'the Ox', a symbol which also has a link to the myth of Helios – the sun god known for his herds of oxen. This element of Greek Myth was popular in modernist literature, most notably James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), which contains a section called 'The Oxen of the Sun'.
[45] Baker wrote about the Casetta: 'I always slept on the sofa in her room at night for by then she was quite nervous alone. She slept under a mosquito net, as a mosquito bite would have been very serious for her, and often I would get up to track down and kill a "monster" that had somehow got inside'. Baker, p. 143.
[46] Jones, p. 376.
[47] Scott, II, p. 188.
[48] Jones, p. 56.
[49] *Letters* II, Letter to J. M. Murry, 11 February 1918, p. 68; 19 March 1918, p. 130; 23 February 1918, p. 89.
[50] Burgan, p. 144.

[51] Burgan, p. 143; p. xii.
[52] Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 131.
[53] *Letters* II, p. 190.
[54] *Letters* III, p. 178.
[55] *Letters* III, p. 178; original emphases.
[56] Burgan, p. 163.
[57] Katherine Mansfield, 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', in *The Collected Stories* (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 262-84 (p. 263; p. 265; p. 270). Further references to this story are given after quotations in the text.
[58] Baker, p. 128.
[59] Angela Smith 'Our Own Little Grain of Truth', in *Katherine Mansfield and Elizabeth Von Arnim* (Edinburgh University Press: 2019), pp. 41-54, (p. 48).
[60] To William Gerhardi, 23 June 1921. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), IV, p. 249.
[61] Kimber attributes Mansfield's use of sun and moon imagery to her interest in the eastern philosophy of Yin and Yang, in which Yang represents 'the male principle, positive, light, heat, active, heaven, summer, solid, strong, the sun. Yin represents the female principle, negative, passivity, dark, cold, earth, winter, water, the moon. Mansfield certainly used these representations in her work.' Kimber, p. 71.
[62] Kimber, p. 71.
[63] Kimber, p. 70.
[64] *Letters* IV, p. 249.
[65] *Letters* III, p. 241.
[66] *Letters* III, p. 191.
[67] Rankin, p. 260.
[68] *Letters* III, p. 205.
[69] *Letters* III, p. 248.
[70] To JM Murry, 8 February 1922. Vincent O' Sullivan and Margaret Scott, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), V, p. 52.
[71] To JM Murry, 8 February 1922, *Letters* V, p. 52.
[72] To Ida Baker, 24 December 1922, *Letters* V, p. 339.
[73] To Ida Baker, 24 December 1922, *Letters* V, p. 340.
[74] To JM Murry, 27 November 1922, *Letters* V, p. 327.
[75] To JM Murry, 1 December 1922, *Letters* V, p. 330.

CARISSA FOO

Keeping (Queer) Things Casual in Mansfield's 'Leves Amores'

Abstract: In 'Leves Amores' (1907), a title that translates to 'casual lovers', Mansfield ruminates on the encounter between an ungendered narrator and a woman in a hotel on a winter night and toys with expectations of casual love. This article examines Mansfield's use of casualness as a subterfuge for queer desire and an exposure of heterosexist notions of love. It first focuses on the spatial presentation of casual love, then argues that Mansfield's narrative strategies transform the lack (of stability and promise, for example) associated with such love into an opening for interpretations that accommodate alternative realities of love. In 'Leves Amores', casualness is crucial to the survival of queer love and overturns social bounds. Love is casual because it cannot be closed and regulated. Rather than articulating love, the story is invested in casting suspicion on our ideas and expectations of love.

Keywords: love; queer love; casual love; Katherine Mansfield; Leves Amores

In one of Katherine Mansfield's earliest stories, 'Leves Amores' (1907), which is Latin for 'Casual Lovers', the ungendered narrator ruminates on their brief encounter with an unnamed woman in a drab hotel on a winter night.[1] Not only does the narrator attend to the things in the squalid room, they also remember the wedding-like processional walk down 'the white pathway'.[2] That love is resurrected by memory and continues into eternity is unsurprising, except the narrator and the woman are casual lovers whose nature of love is antithetical to the proverbial *love is forever*. Still more curious is how the heteronormative course of love develops alongside the workings of lesbian desire that underpin the story.[3] Given Mansfield's conflictual stance on homosexuality, where she had admitted to feeling both 'powerful' and 'physically ill' as a result of her affection for women, the casualness of love may be read as a way to affirm the existence of women who love women without affronting the heteropatriarchal order.[4] Put differently, in order for queer desire to exist, it must be casual. This article examines Mansfield's use of casualness as a subterfuge for queer desire and exposure of heterosexist and patriarchal notions of love. It first focuses on the spatial presentation of casual love and the objects in the room that recalibrate our understanding of the narrator's relationship with the woman, then argues that Mansfield's narrative strategies reflect and transform the lack (of stability and promise, for example) associated with casual love into an opening for interpretations that accommodate alternative visions of love. This 'dehiscence' of love, according to Hélène Cixous, is a wound that though healed 'opens' in us strange spaces; love forbids neat sutures and invites readers to form their own closures.[5] One

reads the story again, just as the narrator recollects, in order to practice what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes as reparative reading, where we realise 'that the future may be different from the present […] that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did'.[6] 'Leves Amores' illustrates a kind of love that is uninterested in definitions or happy endings, but invested in questioning heteronormative and accepted realities of love.

The Thing(s) About Casual Love

Casual love is associated with a variety of lexis in contemporary discourse and popular culture—including chance encounter, swinging, hookup, one-night stand, and nonlove.[7] It usually involves sexual interludes with strangers or partners who have no 'deep relationship' and who understand that these 'will not lead to emotional commitment'.[8] Philosophically, from Søren Kierkegaard to de Alain Botton, casual love is marked by the ability to 'sheer off at will',[9] likened to the occasional infidelity where one might 'call it a day' without obligations.[10] Regardless of the terminology, casual love is characterised by some degree of insubstantiality and transience. With 'Leves Amores', Mansfield consolidates the aspects of casual love as understood in common parlance: both parties are unnamed and their histories untold, ensuring anonymity; the affair takes place in a privatised public space of the Thistle Hotel, affording quick access and mobility. Scholars like Claire Drewery, and more recently Emma Short, have discussed hotel spaces in modernism as liminal sites in which 'threshold states' including the mourning of life and transient moments manifest.[11] The hotel, characterised by 'impersonality' and 'anonymity', enables non-domestic and non-familial relations.[12] In the space of the Thistle Hotel room, Mansfield's narrator and the unnamed woman are guests who come and go; unbounded by accountability and rootedness, their relationship is non-committal and transient. The casualness of the relationship is also indicated by the lack of meaningful interaction: they exchange pleasantries and requests (the narrator asks the woman to dinner; the woman asks the narrator to wait for her); the only intimate connection between them is a physical one where the narrator 'lace[s] up her evening bodice' (25). Casual love is insubstantial and also overtly transactional. The transactional nature is underscored by a power imbalance in which the unnamed woman is like a 'sleepy child' (25) and less socio-economically able than the narrator. This is reinforced by the narrator's spending power and, more crucially, their moralising and voyeuristic gaze: 'I watched her curiously. She was pulling on long, thin stockings, and saying 'damn' when she could not find her suspenders' (25). The woman is the object of their gaze; the focalisation on her thin stockings and, by extension, her legs is sensual. The narrator also expresses 'contempt' for her meagre existence; she is as vulgar as the 'revolting' (24) room in which she lives. This insight reveals not only her subjection to another's viewing pleasure but also her marginal status and destitution. The unspoken assumption is that the woman offers companionship or some kind of illicit service to the narrator. In addition to the lack of interaction and non-commitment, Mansfield's rendering of the relationship falls back on a more intuitive understanding of casual love that involves physical or sexual contact with those who will and can afford to pay for it.

Notwithstanding the presentation of a casual love that is rather conventional, the narrator's inability to turn away from the encounter and fixation on reliving the moment in detail and with sensitivity cast suspicion on the casual nature of the relationship. In the opening line, the narrator declares that they 'can never forget the

Thistle Hotel' (24). In lieu of a straightforward recollection of the affair, the narrator offers their memory of the hotel room. Casual love is spatialised, grounded in the meticulous detailing of the ramshackle room and its furniture:

> So I looked round at the dreary room […] For furniture the room contained a low bed, draped with revolting, yellow, vine-patterned curtains, a chair, a wardrobe with a piece of cracked mirror attached, a washstand. But the wallpaper hurt me physically. It hung in tattered strips from the wall. In its less discoloured and faded patches, I could trace the pattern of roses - buds and flowers - and the frieze was a conventional design of birds, of what genus the good God alone knows. (24-5)

The gaze is watchful and self-absorbed, focusing on the objects that are repulsive to the narrator. While the material focus could imply the lack of attention to the woman and accentuates the casual relationship, the spatial arrangement of the room and order of objects presented as it appears to the observing narrator reveal a concern and connection that do not belong to casual love. Objects, as Janet Wilson notes in her study on Mansfield's aesthetics, are narrative props: 'they focus perspectives that are dependent on the viewing position and the moment of being seen'.[13] The narrator moves from a relatively low angle of the bed to eye-level and the curtains, taking inventory of the room before reacting aversely to the wallpaper. The shift in tone is anticipated, for their disgust is already indicated in description of the curtains. Still more revealing of the narrator's perspective, I think, is the casual detail of the cracked mirror that is an addendum to the wardrobe. Stress falls on the mirror when the description of the wardrobe is protracted, as if the narrator is looking more intently at it. What is reflected in the mirror is presumably the room that just seconds ago they judged to be 'revolting' (25) and also the image of themselves inhabiting such a room. On the role of objects, critics like Douglas Mao have commented on the modernist fascination with them as 'other' and 'fragments of Being', subject to 'human power' but also 'noble' and transcendent.[14] This unsettling relationship is apparent when the distance between the subject and object(s) collapses as the narrator becomes part of the mise-en-scène that reeks of the 'squalor of [the woman's] life' (25). Their existence blends with that of the woman within the space of the hotel such that they are at once the spectator and the spectacle. That the mirror is a cracked one further blurs the distinction between their realities. An inevitable correspondence between the narrator and the woman and a levelling of their differences are enabled by the setup of the room, which reveals an affinity closer than that of casual lovers. In other words, the rearrangement of the space temporarily allows the woman and the narrator to connect on relatively equal grounds, where one is like the other by virtue of inhabiting and experiencing the same space.

The cracked mirror is also the first damaged object in view, unable to perfectly reflect the present moment or the room, much less the woman. It affords the non-identity associated with casual love and, more symbolically, obstructs the performance of self associated with the looking glass. For Bill Brown, objects like the mirror in the hotel effect *thingness* – that is, they have reobjectified in ways that 'dislodge' them from their usual use and take on 'multiple objectifications'.[15] This *thingness* is exemplified as the mirror denies a reflection of the woman yet in its denial of performance enables the unveiling of the self, destabilising the relation between object and subject. The self that is unable to present an identity is not anonymous, but

rather non-performative. This is the self that is presented exclusively to the narrator – one that is 'dull and grey and tired' (25). Even though the narrator has a privilege of perspective that is tied to their power in the casual relationship – the woman is, after all, the object of their desire, reliant on their patronage – the narrator is not a passive viewer and is motivated by a desire to better see (and know) the woman. This is evident in their focus on the wallpaper – the second ruinous thing in the room. Given the negative description of the room, it follows naturally that the 'hurt' inflicted on the narrator is because of the tears and worn condition of the wallpaper. Yet, their attention is neither on its flaws nor the torn bits but on 'its *less* discoloured and faded patches' (25; my emphasis). The narrator searches for traces of beauty and life – 'buds and flowers' (25) – that hark back to the woman's past and promise before the disrepair, revealing also their want for more than an anonymous profile of the woman. To some extent, they can be said to be 'inhabiting' the space of the hotel room such that the subject of interest, that is, the woman, becomes embodied and made meaningful through the narrator's interactions and movements in the room.[16] As the narrator becomes interested and fixated on aspects of the room, they also become invested in its inhabitant. This care and curiosity for the woman continue in the narrator's response to the 'squalor of her life' (25). After the exposure of the woman's vulnerability in a physical and emotional sense, the narrator sympathises and laments the effects of old age, effectively transposing the sense of neglect associated with the woman into their feeling of being 'left behind' by Youth (25). Reflexively, the narrator absorbs the woman's fatigue and dullness, which attests to a certain spontaneity and ability to react to the other's predicament. Even though they may never know her inner world or past, an empathic relation between the narrator and the woman is forged – one that is built not on the premise of understanding or intimacy but on an active responsiveness. The relationship is indeed casual, for the narrator's way of relating to the woman is reactive and spontaneous; at the same time, this casualness makes room for a relationality that is respectful of distance, and intuitive. The narrator's seemingly cursory glance of the room and its broken things while waiting for the woman to get ready turns out to be a re-vision of the couple's relationship. The hotel room, a choice place for casual love and sex, becomes a space that deepens the connection between the estranged lovers.

Reading Too Much Into Things

Mansfield engages with conventional expectations of casual love and explores its potential on her own terms. Her expansive regard of casual love not only accommodates familiar and imaginative perspectives in terms of content, but also extends to her experimentation with a narrative structure that mimics the caprice and ephemerality attributed to casual love, to form what might be an early version of the fragmentary and episodic style that characterises her more mature fiction. Like many of her later stories such as 'A Dill Pickle' (1920) and 'The Garden Party' (1922), 'Leves Amores' begins *in media res*, plunging the reader into the heart of the desire narrative. Just as the narrator-protagonist and woman are nameless and without backstories, the narrative too lacks a finite beginning and ending. Casual from Latin *casus* means 'chance, accident, opportunity' – the encounter is enigmatic and lacking in accountability, though, as the narrator has established at the outset, everything that has transpired in the hotel on that winter night is substantial enough to stand for their love. This particular fragment of their memory is a synecdoche of the affair. Casual love does not belong within a teleological boundary and the lovers are not directed

towards heteronormative end points – noted by Sara Ahmed as, 'the conventional forms of the good life' including having a good marriage (heterosexuality) and stable families (community).[17] Still, even without the promise of happiness, casual love is unforgettable. The fragment of love haunts the narrator, as a phantom limb hurts the amputee. As the narrator remembers love, they also simultaneously recall the loss of it. The narrative of desire, in this regard, is Lacanian which stems from lack – specifically, 'a lack of being' that is rooted in a repressed Oedipal desire.[18] What is significant in the Lacanian configuration is the recognition that desire is a ceaseless but unfulfillable drive that ever remains in the negative.[19] This tension manifests in 'Leves Amores', where the narrative relies on two things: one, an action-driven, verb-heavy writing and, two, indirection. These narrative moves keep the relationship going in detours and circles while never quite arriving at an end point; they are Mansfield's ways of 'trying to get as near to the *exact* truth as possible'.[20] Echoing the modernist sentiment to subvert 'presence' and play with the "conspicuously absent', the narrator in 'Leves Amores' enfleshes the woman via her surroundings, watching her curiously and searching the wallpaper for its promise.[21] In the same way, the reader too has to read the text carefully and repeatedly for lack and absence.

The outward simplicity of 'Leves Amores' lies not only in its brevity – it is a five-hundred-thirty-one-word story – but also in the way actions are directed with clarity and in sequence. Consider how the paragraphs are loaded with verbs and revolve around the narrator's actions. The story is easy to follow, for one is cued in on the situation: the narrator first 'asked' the woman to dinner, then 'knocked' at the door and 'entered', and later 'sat' on the bed and 'looked round' at the room (24). The passage reads almost prescriptively and promises an order that follows the narrator's footprint. To this, Gerri Kimber observes that Mansfield's stories often 'cut straight through to the action […] as if a stage direction is being given'.[22] Indeed, the sentences packed with actions seem to be instructional, explaining what is unfolding in the scene. The line, 'She *said* she was *finished*, and I might *sit* on the bed and *wait* for her' (24; my emphases), for example, reads like a laundry list of things said and done. The tendency to list actions and things in the manner of recounting also occurs in the aforementioned example where the narrator describes the room. Although the section is peppered with nouns, one follows the narrator's eyes that move from one thing to another, conscious of their viewing experience. While the homodiegetic narrative gives the impression that the narrator is retracing their actions, describing the scene from a personal standpoint, the manoeuvre of listing, of giving examples of things seen and done, is not simply descriptive or explanatory. Rather, as John Nash suggests in his reading of Woolf's things, the list is 'more coded exhibition than personal insight', 'carrying a distinctiveness that propels narrative and opens it to multivocality'.[23] Extending Nash's insight to 'Leves Amores', listing is a narrative move that, on the surface, works towards a straightforward presentation of things; but more critically, it works within the linear structure and paves gaps in the list that make space for the unsaid and unexpected to emerge. Returning to the sentence example, the actions seem to lead from one to the other and from the woman to the narrator quite logically. However, hidden within the actions is the juxtaposition of the woman's assurance that 'she was finished' and the narrator's hesitation to 'sit'. In addition, a slight tension arises when the completion is followed by a need to 'wait'. A closing act is accompanied by an opening up, indicated by the woman's temporal exit from the narrative and the narrator's enlarged view of the room. What seems linear and appears like stage directions becomes multivalent. Because slight re-orientation occurs gradually within the structure of the list of actions, the reader is

progressively clued into the subtleties and becomes sensitive to minute details, picking up on a kind of reading lens that would make one pause and parse heavy-laden scenes and sections.

The story's subversive force is also latent in Mansfield's use of indirection. Her stories, as Anna Friis discerns, are distinguished by a style which 'hints and suggests rather than asserts'.[24] Towards the end of 'Leves Amores' when the couple share a tender moment of feeling glad that the night has come, the narrator tells us, 'I did not ask why […] It seemed a secret between us' (25). What seems like a double claim on the exclusivity of the moment, appearing assertive rather than suggestive does not, in fact, assert anything but suggests that the truth will be withheld, for the narrator has no desire to probe and that the sense of secret-sharing is more important than the secret itself. On the suggestive nature of Mansfield's prose, Vincent O'Sullivan and Andrew Bennett comment on how 'allusion, suggestion, inference', and 'careful imprecisions' are ways for the reader to intimate the ineffable and hidden without obtruding into characters' worlds or exposing delicate relations; this art of indirection makes the reader feel as if something is not quite right, that it is 'not saying what is said'.[25] A notable instance of this feeling occurs as the narrator fuses the image of the room with that of the woman and exclaims, 'I felt within me a certainty that nothing beautiful could ever happen in that room, and for her I felt contempt, a little tolerance, a very little pity' (25). The revulsion is consistent with distaste for the curtains and wallpaper, as if the woman and her inhabitation are one where, as Lauren Elkin writes, the hotel room functions as 'a barometer of [one's] social standing'.[26] The assumption is that the narrator has 'little tolerance' and 'very little pity' for the woman and her desolation. Yet, given how the narrator searches for the good in the wallpaper that symbolises the woman's potential and how they too felt the neglect that she had experienced, their 'contempt' might be directed towards something else. Mansfield's careful syntactical construction is at work here. First, the comma that separates the room and the woman signals a necessary divorce, suggesting that the two should be treated differently. Second, the preposition, 'for her', is equivocal, meaning the negative feelings are *because of* her and *towards* her. Or, 'for her' could also mean *on behalf of* her. The latter is consistent with the narrator's care and curiosity for the woman. And just as the narrator is certain that 'nothing beautiful could ever happen in that room' (25), they also become aware that the woman's beauty and potential likened to the 'pattern of roses' (25) in the faded parts of the wallpaper will not be able to flourish. From this perspective, there is appreciation for the woman's presence and also frustration at the inevitable atrophy which is already happening to the 'dull and grey and tired' (25) woman. And so, knowing the woman's dire circumstances, the narrator expresses stronger resentment for the room because it has and will continue to imprison her. The degree of the narrator's contempt for the room reflects a depth of concern for the woman. Rather than explicit statements of affection, the expression of love is indirect and lacking on the surface level and the reality of casual love can only be found in the implicit and explicit meanings of the short story.

Something Queer About the Wedding

'Leves Amores' does not encourage a conclusive reading but creates gaps and even confusion to allow ambiguity. Existing scholarship on Mansfield spotlights her commitment to multiplicity, mobility, and fractures. Joanna Kokot and also Bennett have related the dualities and elusiveness to the presence of many mutable selves and realities.[27] Mansfield herself rejected the representation of a true and singular self,

advocating instead for the concept of various selves or what she thought to be 'hundreds of selves'.[28] Other scholars like Aimee Gasston and Enda Duffy have focused on the 'life-limit' and 'shadow of mortality' that infiltrate the story-world and blur out subject-object boundaries.[29] While 'Leves Amores' shares the premonition of death and vivacity of life – 'Come, this Old Age' and 'Youth was not dead' (25), the suggestion and indirection in the story point to something unmentionable – one that is less a matter of the elusive and unknowable self than a deliberate obfuscation of an 'unspeakable' identity and perverse desire that the young Mansfield sought to hide away. Written in 1907 when Mansfield was barely nineteen, 'Leves Amores' was never published and was given to Vere Bartrick-Baker. Claire Tomalin describes how Mansfield had 'feared [Vere] all her life' because she was privy to 'the other side of her nature' – a side that had to do with her love for Edith Bendall and Maata Mahapuka, and her later bisexual experiences.[30] Mansfield's unease with her sexuality is recorded in her journals and letters dating back to 1907, where she admits her attraction to women – 'Am I particularly susceptible to sexual impulse?';[31] and also laments that she was 'afflicted with the same terror' as Oscar Wilde.[32] Her self-association with Wilde is significant: she shared his 'terror' and his resort to art as 'a means of controlling the forbidden'.[33] On the effect of her troubled sexuality, Sydney Janet Kaplan and Mary Burgan call out her 'relentless homophobia' that permeates stories like 'Je ne parle pas français'(1918) and 'Carnation' (1918).[34] While 'Leves Amores' shares the apprehension about sexuality, it is not antagonistic towards homosexual eroticism. Rather, it is tentative and resilient, seeming to explore the potential of queer love in spite of the air of malaise. To offer a more sanguine reading of the young Mansfield's attitude towards homosexuality, this section of the article will examine how certain moments in the text teeter on the edge of heteronormative end points only to reveal the makings of a textual defence mechanism that protects the sexual identities of characters. By keeping the narrator and the woman in a room of their own where casual love is a subterfuge of queer love, Mansfield refuses to *out* her characters and creates a safe space for them to exist without beginning and end, without boundaries and definitions.[35]

Mansfield's narrative of queer relations written just months after the eye-opening romance with Bendall is revealing of her perspective on the possibility of queer love and its means of survival in a heteronormative environment.[36] In 'Leves Amores', as well as the much-anthologised 'Bliss' (1918), queer tensions exist within a heterosexual milieu. This is most prominent in the two images of union and eternity that commonly accompany relationships that are consummated in marriage.[37] The first unfolds when the narrator and the woman return to the Thistle Hotel after dining out and going to the Opera:

> It was late, when we came out into the crowded night street, late and cold. She gathered up her long skirts. Silently we walked back to the Thistle Hotel, down the white pathway fringed with beautiful golden lilies, up the amethyst shadowed staircase. (25)

The descriptions of the woman gathering up her long skirt, the couple walking silently 'down the white pathway' and surrounded by lilies piece together an image reminiscent of a wedding scene. The bride would be careful not to trip on her dress as they walk down the aisle laced with flowers. The wintry weather and the colours white and golden further paint the picture of a white wedding. These suggestions of union are brought together by the final detail that solidifies the marriage scene: the couple

are returning to a hotel that is no longer dilapidated but decorated with amethyst and flowers, as if they were newlyweds celebrating their wedding night. Despite the meticulous staging, the image of bliss and union is out of place, for the gender ambivalence of the narrator and the surface casualness of the couple's relationship inhibit a public and certain declaration of love. It is noteworthy that the union occurs on the stairs in the lobby – a 'passageway between the outside world and the interior of the hotel" that is marked by "transitions'.[38] In other words, the image of commitment is juxtaposed with the symbol of movement. Still, the slight references to recognisable images are enough to feed the readerly impulse to imagine the scene of union for the casual lovers. As Kate Fullbrook points out, Mansfield was wont to use 'clichés' to 'comment on the power of entrenched imaginative forms to control the contents of consciousness'.[39] The strength of the wedding imagery reveals the extent of the power of heteronormative conditioning: love is expected to amount to something, even though queer love could not lead to marriage in 1907, and casual love 'historically did not translate into direct linear increments in reproductive success'.[40] The subversive potential of the scene thus lies in the appeal to the ordinary and recognisable, falling back on norms and clichés only to challenge the legitimacy and accepted behaviours of love required by society.

That 'Leves Amores' is 'undisguisedly lesbian', given the gender ambivalence and the context in which it was written, anchors Mansfield's critique of the socially accepted behaviours of love in her exploration of the potential of queer love.[41] Initially, the culmination of the relationship in a marriage-like union is near conservative and reproduces heterosexual goals, suggesting that queer love is subject to the terms of the dominant sexuality and 'entrenched' in social scripts and the conventional arrangement of love. However, as with Mansfield's elusive realities, the scene is not as straightforward as it appears. Bookending the wedding-like processional is the double emphasis on the 'late' night and the 'amethyst shadowed staircase', both connoting darkness and an impending gloom.[42] Immediately, the walk down the aisle is framed by shades of darkness; the contrast between dark and white highlights the surreal wedding scene in the same way the ominous Thistle Hotel and the streets are shrouded with negativity. In tweaking contrast and playing with clichés, Mansfield lays out the visceral presence of the threats to queer love, as well as the resilience and persistence of the lovers to walk on despite the rough beginning and dark prospects. The previously discussed 'happenstance' nature of casual love that involves opening *in media res* and needs no accountability now acquires a new significance: this love cannot offer a backstory or follow-up because the future is foreclosed and history has no place for the 'apparitional' lovers who, as Terry Castle describes, are 'always somewhere else', hidden and 'out of sight'.[43] Notable in Castle's discussion is a murkiness and absence that characterise lesbian existence. In this regard, the gloomy hotel room is an accurate site for queer love. More specifically, a lesbian love, given the context in which the story was written shortly after Mansfield was 'locked' in her room after an evening flirtation with Maata.[44] But rather than read the description of the room as an indication of hopelessness and self-defeatism, I propose to interpret the narrator's attentive survey of the room as their attempt to erect the place to which their lover has been relegated. And, in rebuilding the dark room again and again as they remember the encounter, the narrator is gradually shedding light on queer existence albeit through the use of negative affects. This mode of resistance that relies on darkness and a kind of pessimism is reflected at the end of the story when the woman lights a candle in the dark and 'the light filled the room with darkness' (25). For queer theorists like Heather Love, such resistance has to do with

historical injury which sets the homosexual apart; they are romantically exceptional as well as damaged.[45] Accordingly, an understanding of the predicament and life of the queer individual cannot be isolated from history, the pains of suffering and the perpetrators of oppression.

Just as casual love is re-enacted in an allotment of time and space parceled out by the narrator, queer love also survives in the cracks of a heteronormative reality. The narrative of queer love is precarious: to extricate the lovers from the real world and locate them in the imaginary is to revert to the apparitional status; yet, to remain in this world is also to expose them to the threats of society. Mansfield's middle ground, then, is a narrative that unfolds in a brute heteronormative reality, and her offering of protection of the lovers and defence against the system are ironically contingent on the dominant or other sexuality. Diana Fuss explains this defence procedure: 'heterosexuality [as with any sexual identity] secures its self-identity and shores up its ontological boundaries by protecting itself from what it sees as the continual predatory encroachment of its contaminated other'.[46] In other words, the envisioning of queer love needs a view of the normal inasmuch as it challenges its imposition. This conflicted perception manifests in the second image of union that closes the story:

> Like a sleepy child she slipped out of her frock and then, suddenly, turned to me and flung her arms round my neck. Every bird upon the bulging frieze broke into song. Every rose upon the tattered paper budded and formed into blossom. Yes, even the green vine upon the bed curtains wreathed itself into strange chaplets and garlands, twined round us in a leafy embrace, held us with a thousand clinging tendrils. (25)

Following the wedding-like processional is the return to the room where the couple would spend their wedding night. Indeed, this is a scene of affection where the narrator and the woman disrobe and are locked in a tight embrace. Like the first image of the wedding, it continues the aspects of union and bliss but dramatically subverts the traditional images of affection. To begin with, the description of the woman as a child reaching out to the narrator is at first comforting and banal. Upon the realisation that the narrator then takes on a maternal role, the relationship quickly becomes unsettling—this is an example of how Mansfield's queer tendencies could be read as Mary Burgan suggests, as her 'search for the mother's embrace'.[47] The rapidity with which the relationship shifts from familial to erotic, the embrace from maternal to sexual, pluralises the potential of the embrace. More significantly, the understanding of love is no longer singular but may contain overlaps of different kinds of love. Following this, the embrace is erotically and maternally charged. The diction – 'bulging', 'broke', 'budded', 'blossom' – draws out the flowering of desire which culminates in an orgasmic, 'leafy embrace' (25). At the same time, Mansfield's invocation of nature associated with nurturance and growth is undoubtedly related to 'the tradition of nature personified as a female goddess or as mother earth'.[48] The crux of the scene is not the lovers per se, but the animated flora and fauna. For example, the activities of the plants simulate the liveliness of springtime. Also, the faded wallpaper and the revolting curtains come alive; the prints metamorphose into plants and birds that perform a variety of actions, enabling the couple's consummation of love. The scene is highly energetic and generative, resurrecting not only the dead and dull things of the room but also re-enacting an alternative possibility for a queer and casual love. Even though reproductivity and posterity may be foreclosed to the queer

lovers, maternal fecundity promises a love that will outlast the moment as a thousand tendrils cling onto them. Truly, this love is everlasting, for the narrator has told us at the outset: 'I can never forget […] I can never forget' (24).

At the end of 'Leves Amores', Mansfield leaves us with this image of the couple encircled by garlands and chaplets, held by vines and tendrils. In her analysis of the affinities between Arthur Symons's poem 'Leves Amores' and Mansfield's story, Stephanie Pride notes how Mansfield invigorates the 'relatively unarresting' image of the vine in Symons's poem, transforming it into 'a striking concrete representation of an arresting yet pleasurably plural and ambiguous cluster of ideas'.[49] The vines in Mansfield's ending are material rather than metaphorical, physically holding the lovers together. Not only is love preserved by nature, the lovers are nursed and embraced by plant life, as if Mother Nature has given them her blessings. What is purely erotic in Symons' poem becomes both sensual and maternal, highlighting the plurality of feminine relations. In addition, the flowering ending may be read as an affirmation of a love that was illegal under the Marriage Act in 1907. More importantly, it prolongs and breathes life into casual love, allowing it to blossom in a devastated room. What might have been a defeatist narrative is recuperated a century later with existing and still emerging queer scholarship, where historical injury, shame, and silence are refigured as necessary and even transgressive, seeping into the text in narratological ways. Queer is not simply a matter of identity but is a direction that 'fails' to return to heteronormative destinations.[50] This pathbreaking tendency opens up the text to other interpretations that according to Sedgwick should be driven by reparative motives. A reparative reader is one who reads again and again, who 'surrender[s] the knowing' and is open to all surprises.[51] In many ways, Mansfield invites a reparative reading of queer in which she engages with indirection and suggestions as defence against the demand to *out* her characters. Instead of an obtrusive reveal, 'Leves Amores' is short but strategically written to question expectations of love and to motivate readers to look hard enough and to interrogate (un-)expected moments of connection between the lovers. In this sense, the reader, like the narrator, is positioned to read reparatively, to move between 'changing and heterogeneous relational stances' in a way that 'assemble[s]' and 'repair[s]' the incongruent and negative into something 'satisfying'.[52] A reparative reading practice is powerful for it oscillates between stances, always giving more shape and presence to the existent; the reader is directed to search their memory and interpretations of reading about casual love to find hope even if it exists in a dilapidated and abject place. The point of writing about love and reading about love, as suggested in 'Leves Amores', is to create an open structure that proliferates and reimagines the possibilities of love. Love, be it casual or queer, comes through most potently when it is not closed down or limited to one interpretation.

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Notes

[1] Mansfield's 'Leves Amores' draws specifically on the Symbolist poet Arthur Symons's 'Leves Amores' (1897), sharing its title and its use of imageries including the bedroom and vines. Both texts

concern, as Stephanie Pride suggests, 'a sexual encounter with a woman' and 'attribute voice and sensate properties to inanimate objects, mourn the transience of youth'. Stephanie Pride, 'Mansfield's "Leves Amores", French Symbolism and Gender Politics', in *Worlds of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Harry Ricketts (Palmerston North: Nagare Press, 1991), pp. 85-101 (p. 92).

[2] Katherine Mansfield, 'Leves Amores', in *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories*, ed. by Margaret Reynolds (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 24-5.

[3] Critics like Margaret Reynolds and Claire Tomalin confirm the workings of lesbian desire in 'Leves Amores'. Tomalin provides the context for the 'undisguisedly lesbian' story written a year after Mansfield's infatuation with Edith Bendall. Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (London: Viking, 1987), p. 35. For Reynolds, the short story reflects the influence of sexology on Mansfield who was acquainted with 'the gloomy diagnoses of [Henry Havelock] Ellis and his like'. Margaret Reynolds, 'Introduction', in *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories*, ed. by Reynolds, pp. xiii-xxxiii (xxi).

[4] Margaret Scott, *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, 2 vols (Canterbury, New Zealand: Lincoln University Press, Daphne Brasell Associates), I, pp. 103-4.

[5] Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2005), p. 71.

[6] Eve K. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 146.

[7] Pamela C. Regan, *The Mating Game: A Primer on Love, Sex, Marriage* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), p. 121.

[8] Raja Halwani, 'Casual Sex', in *Sex from Plato to Paglia: A Philosophical Encyclopedia, Volume 1: A-L*, ed. by Alan Soble (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), pp. 139-43 (p. 136).

[9] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Volume I*, trans. by David F. Swenson and Lilian M. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 243.

[10] Alain de Botton, *Why You Will Marry the Wrong Person & Other Essays* (London: The School of Life, 2017), p. 13.

[11] Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 3.

[12] Emma Short, *Mobility and the Hotel in Modern Literature: Passing Through* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 7.

[13] Janet Wilson, 'Veiling and Unveiling: Mansfield's Modernist Aesthetics', *Journal of New Zealand Literature: Special Issue: Katherine Mansfield: Masked and Unmasked*, 32 (2014), 203-25 (p. 205).

[14] Douglas Mao, *Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 4; p. 9.

[15] Bill Brown, 'The Secret Life of Things (Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism)', *Modernism/modernity*, 6 (1999), 1-28 (p. 2).

[16] Short, p. 173.

[17] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 255.

[18] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan, Volume 2: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 223.

[19] Anthony O'Shea, 'Desiring Desire: How Desire makes us Human, all too Human', *Sociology*, 36 (2002), 925-40 (p. 929).

[20] Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), II, p. 222.

[21] Stephen Kern, *The Modernist Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 23.

[22] Gerri Kimber, *Katherine Mansfield and the Art of the Short Story* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 15.

[23] John Nash, 'Exhibiting the Example: Virginia Woolf's Shoes', *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, 59 (2013), 283-308 (p. 285; p. 298).

[24] Anne Friis, *Katherine Mansfield: Life and Stories* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1946), p. 132.

[25] Vincent O'Sullivan, 'The Magnetic Chain: Notes and Approaches to K.M.', in *The Critical Response to Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Jan Pilditch (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 129-54 (p. 140). Andrew Bennett, *Katherine Mansfield* (Devon: Northcote House: 2004), pp. 22-3.

[26] Lauren Elkin, 'The Room and the Street: Gwen John's and Jean Rhys's Insider/Outsider Modernism', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27 (2016), 239-64 (p. 248).

[27] Joanna Kokot, 'The Elusiveness of Reality: The Limits of Cognition in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories', in *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism*, ed. by Janet Wilson, Gerri Kimber and Susan Reid (Auckland: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), pp. 67-77.
[28] *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by John Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1954), p. 205.
[29] Aimee Gasston, 'Phenomenology Begins at Home: The Presence of Things in the Short Fiction of Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf', *Journal of New Zealand Literature: Special Issue: Katherine Mansfield: Masked and Unmasked*, 32 (2014), 31-51 (39). Enda Duffy, 'Dirty Snow: Mansfield, Joyce and the Modernist Snow Globe', in *Katherine Mansfield: New Directions*, ed. by Aimée Gasston, Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), pp. 43-60 (p. 47).
[30] Tomalin, p. 37.
[31] *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, pp. 12-13.
[32] *Letters* I, p. 90.
[33] Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origin of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 26; p. 36.
[34] Mary Burgan, *Illness, Gender, Writing: The Case of Katherine Mansfield* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 133.
[35] I use 'homosexual' to designate same-sex relations and 'queer' as a descriptive label that encompasses non-conforming and normative relations. 'Queer' may also be used as a verb, to imply transversive and deviance from socially-directed pathways and linear trajectories that have heteronormative end points.
[36] During her time spent with Edith Bendall, Mansfield had written in her diary entry in June 1907: '[I] realized a thousand things which had been obscured'. *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, p. 14.
[37] For Ahmed, 'one of the primary happiness indicators is marriage', for it is defined as 'the best of all possible worlds', maximising happiness. *The Promise of Happiness*, p. 6.
[38] Short, p. 71.
[39] Kate Fullbrook, 'Freedom and Confinement', in *Katherine Mansfield: Selected Stories*, ed. by Vincent O'Sullivan (New York: Norton, 2006), pp. 379–86 (p. 380).
[40] David M. Buss, 'The Evolution of Love in Humans', in *The New Psychology of Love*, ed. by Robert J. Sternberg and Karin Weis (New York: Yale University, 2006), pp. 65-86 (p. 47). It is also noteworthy that despite the Marriage Act's recognition of only opposite-sex couples in England, same-sex couples like Frances Power Cobbe and Mary Lloyd, Rosa Bonheur and Anna Klumpke 'modelled their relationships on romantic marriage'. Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 205.
[41] Tomalin, p. 37.
[42] There are affinities between the Mansfield's description of the walk back ('gold', 'amethyst', 'rose', 'leaves') and Wilde's 'Magdalen Walks' (1881). Mansfield admired Wilde and her works often drew inspiration from his. Michael Forrest, 'The Oscar-Like Thread,' *The Wildean* 44 (2014), 57-81. Given that Wilde's poem centres on a walk in spring, Mansfield's rendering of the walk between the narrator and the woman may be read as an insistence on the blossoming of desire despite the darkness and illicit nature of the characters.
[43] Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 2.
[44] Allison Laurie, 'Katherine Mansfield', podcast audio, Queer History 101, 11 January 2011 <http://www.pridenz.com/queer_history_katherine_mansfield.html> [accessed: 10 May 2021].
[45] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
[46] Diana Fuss, 'Inside/Out', in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. by Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 1-12 (p. 2).
[47] Burgan, p. 40.
[48] Janet Wilson, 'Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, and the Nature Goddess Tradition', *Literature and Aesthetics*, 27 (2017), 17-38 (p. 24).
[49] Pride, p. 92.
[50] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2006) p. 21.
[51] Sedgwick, p. 146.
[52] Sedgwick, p. 128.

ANNIE WILLIAMS

Painful Pleasures of Anticipation: Katherine Mansfield's 'Miss Brill'

Abstract:
Katherine Mansfield's work is well versed in the painful pleasures of anticipation. Across her oeuvre, lovers wait anxiously for letters; for parties, for long-absent ships to dock. A more unexpected kind of lover is found, however, in Mansfield's short story 'Miss Brill'. Mansfield's eponymous protagonist is not, strictly, a romantic, but she is well versed in the art of waiting. This, I propose, aligns her closely with the definition of love outlined in both Roland Barthes' A Lover's Discourse *and Anne Carson's* Eros the Bittersweet. *For these two theorists, a lover can be defined as such: 'I am the one who waits'.*[1] *In this sense, Barthes' and Carson's philosophies enable us to tease out an alternative form of love in Mansfield's work: one in which love is more closely intertwined with temporality than with romance.*

Keywords: Katherine Mansfield; love; time; anticipation; modernism; philosophy; temporality

'Lovers are always waiting. They hate to wait; they love to wait. Wedged between these two feelings, lovers come to think a great deal about time, and to understand it very well, in their perverse way'.[2] Thus reads Anne Carson's *Eros the Bittersweet*. This text, as a study of romantic love in classical philosophy and literature, explores what it is to be a lover. Specifically, Carson is interested in the lover's relationship to time, and in the 'painful pleasures' of anticipation and yearning.[3] Carson's *Eros* can be aligned closely with another philosophical work: Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*. Barthes' fragmented text also wrestles with this relationship between time and desire. 'The lover's fatal identity', writes Barthes, is as such: 'I am the one who waits'.[4] In this sense, both Carson and Barthes characterise romantic love as intimately, and often painfully, bound up with anticipation. This conceptualisation pairs these texts well with Katherine Mansfield. Mansfield's work is well versed in the painful pleasures of waiting. Across her oeuvre, lovers wait anxiously for letters; for parties, for long-absent ships to dock. A more unexpected pairing, however, is with Mansfield's 1920 short story, 'Miss Brill'. Mansfield's eponymous protagonist is not a lover in the traditional sense. She has no partner and does not pursue romantic relationships. Nonetheless, Miss Brill is always waiting.

Miss Brill, in a state of almost perpetual anticipation, waits to walk; to work; and for the weekend to arrive. In this sense, she inhabits, much like the lovers of Barthes' and Carson's work, the moment between 'then' and 'now': relentlessly wondering 'what was going to happen' next.[5] In this respect, drawing on Barthes' and Carson's

critical work teases out an alternative form of love in Mansfield's short story. Miss Brill behaves, according to Barthes' and Carson's conceptualisations, much like a lover. This argument is twofold: not only does waiting serve as an expression of her dedication and desire, but it is often the wait itself that Miss Brill loves best. However, Barthes' and Carson's theories also expose why the story's conclusion is quite so devastating. Miss Brill's willingness to wait, and the pleasure she locates in that wait, likens her to a romantic lover. This is why her heart breaks when she learns how she is perceived: as a 'stupid old thing' (29) who, unloved, has waited too long.

Much of Mansfield's work can be characterised by its climate of 'feverish suspense'.[6] Many of her most celebrated short stories, including 'Bliss', 'The Garden Party', and 'Her First Ball', relish the moments before a long-awaited event. This technique, as suggested by Rishona Zimring, invites the reader to 'join its protagonist's breathless anticipation that something 'divine' is about to 'happen'.[4] This is a familiar modernist trope. For Ronald Schleifer, the early twentieth century was accompanied by 'an altered conception of temporality' in which time was suddenly perceived as 'inexorably bound up with […] events'.[7] Furthermore, as Yee Tam reminds us, this 'remarkable break' was intricately bound up with another modernist process: 'reinventing the language of love'.[8] These processes can be identified throughout modernist literature. Notably, Virginia Woolf, another innovative writer of the period, experimented keenly with the relationship between love and anticipation. In *Mrs Dalloway* especially – a text that, like so many of Mansfield's short stories, anticipates a party – the air is infused with expectation; an 'indescribable pause; a suspense'.[9] Crucially, it is this suspense that Mrs Dalloway loves best: 'Heaven only knows why one loves it so'.[10] It is clear why Woolf is the writer with whom Mansfield is most often paired. Both writers, like many of their modernist contemporaries, experimented with temporality and the language of love; seeking, as suggested by Bryony Randall, to illustrate 'the value of time in all its variety'.[11] However, the singularity of Mansfield's approach to these concepts might clarify why she was, famously, the only writer that Woolf had ever been jealous of. Mansfield explores the relationship between love and time in a distinctive way. 'Miss Brill' is not, at first glance, a short story about love. It is a short story about aging, observation, and loneliness. However, a philosophical inquiry into the nature of love, as performed by Carson and Barthes, enables us to liken these themes to romantic love. Crucially, such an inquiry enables us to locate Miss Brill's desire, much like a lover's desire, in anticipation. In this sense, Mansfield's short story echoes Barthes' and Carson's investigation of what it is to love, and what it is to wait.

Miss Brill is not, technically, a romantic lover. She has no partner, and, noting her title 'Miss', does not appear to have ever had one. However, she does *love*. Miss Brill loves music. She loves furs and high fashion. She loves almonds hidden in honey-cakes. Miss Brill loves these things so fiercely that she orients her life, and her time, around them. Once a week, she buys a slice of honey-cake at the baker's shop. Sunday after Sunday, she listens to the band in the *Jardins Publiques*, the surrounding crowd 'nearly always the same' (24). Miss Brill does not find these routines monotonous: rather, she enjoys waiting for these weekly 'treat[s]' (29). In this sense, her relationship with desire can be characterised by her willingness to wait. Indeed, it is rarely the actual fulfilment of her routine that gives her the most pleasure: it is instead the anticipation of the following week. This is evident from the very beginning of the text. Mansfield's story spans a single Sunday afternoon. Yet, as Miss Brill takes her 'special seat' (22) in the *Jardins Publiques*, she reflects that there are 'a number of people out this afternoon, far more than last Sunday' (23). Here, Miss Brill compares

the day's crowd to the previous Sunday's crowd. This implicitly collates both crowds with next Sunday's crowd. Already, as Schleifer noted of modernism in general, time is 'inexorably bound up with […] events', leaving Miss Brill in a relentless state of anticipation.[12] This idea is strengthened by Miss Brill's observation that the conversation amongst her fellow concertgoers is 'disappointing' on this particular Sunday. It is 'disappointing', but only momentarily— perhaps the others 'would go soon'; perhaps next week would bring more interesting discussion (23). Mansfield does not claim that Miss Brill ever actually enjoys the conversation, but instead that she always *looks forward* to it. For Miss Brill, therefore, the pleasure is in the anticipation, rather than the realisation, of a bigger crowd or a better conversation. The same can be said of Miss Brill's honey-cake habit. 'Sometimes', Mansfield writes, 'there was an almond in her slice, sometimes not. It made a great difference. If there was an almond it was like carrying home a tiny present – a surprise – something that very well might not have been there' (29-30). Miss Brill would prefer not to have an almond in her honey-cake every week, despite the fact that she favours the slices that contain them. Instead, Miss Brill craves the 'surprise': the suspense of whether or not next week there could be an almond hidden amongst the sponge. This tells us something about love – for, as Barthes states, 'the lover is constantly surprised' – and about modernism, which, according to Kate Stanley, teaches us to 'anticipate and invite surprise'.[13] Crucially, it is this sense of anticipation that Miss Brill loves best.

Miss Brill's relationship with desire can be characterised by one phrase: 'not *yet*' (29). However, this phrase is actually employed by a different character in the story. As Miss Brill listens to the band in the *Jardins Publiques*, a boy and a girl sit beside her. 'They were beautifully dressed', she thinks; 'they were in love' (29). However, to each of the boy's amorous advances, the girl retorts 'not now', 'not here', or 'not *yet*' (29; original emphasis). For this giggling couple, there is pleasure in delaying their intimacy. This, for Barthes and Carson, is typical of romantic love. In *A Lover's Discourse*, Barthes defines 'the lover's fatal identity' as such: 'I am the one who waits'.[14] For Barthes, desire occupies 'a kind of insupportable present', 'wedged between two tenses'.[15] Carson explores similar ideas in *Eros*. Love, she writes, creates a kind of paradox in time and space in which 'far' and 'near' collapse into each other.[16] Carson compares this desire to 'holding ice in your hands': a kind of painful pleasure where 'the longer you hold it, the more it melts'.[17] These ideas can be applied productively to Mansfield's story. The lovers, 'beautifully dressed' (29), may be protecting their privacy by delaying their intimacy, but they are also, alternating between sentimental giggles and angry whispers, relishing the pain and the pleasure of 'not *yet*' (29; original emphasis). This reading is enhanced by etymological investigation into this phrase. The verb form of 'yet' derives from the Old English 'ġēotan', meaning to flow or to pour. 'Not *yet*', then, is to *not* flow, to *not* pour: it is to delay, or in Carson's words, the melting. In this sense, Carson's icy metaphor also recalls an earlier line in 'Miss Brill': 'the air was motionless, but when you opened your mouth there was just a faint chill, like a chill from a glass of iced water before you sip' (21). Carson's analysis, therefore, sheds light on the fact that Mansfield's story is infused with this sense of 'not *yet*' (29). This pleasure is best represented as ice that is 'wedged', to borrow Barthes' phrase, 'between two tenses': neither solid nor liquid, neither yet melted nor yet sipped.[18] This exemplifies Barthes' 'insupportable present', suggesting that love does indeed occupy that moment of unfulfilled desire between 'then' and 'now'.[19] In this sense, therefore, Miss Brill

echoes the lovers' subjection to the painful pleasures of 'not *yet*' (29; original emphasis).

I

For both Barthes and Carson, the lover is in a state of 'between': between now and then, between near and far, between 'reach and grasp'.[20] Carson is very interested in the lover's relationship to time. In her most popular work to date, *Autobiography of Red*, Carson writes that 'time isn't made of anything'.[21] Instead, she suggests, 'it is an abstraction': 'just a meaning that we impose upon motion'.[22] This interpretation of time, in keeping with Carson's attachment to ancient Greece, chimes with Aristotle's argument that we are conscious of the passing of time only by discerning change or movement.[23] Carson explores this argument further in her verse novel, *Red Doc>*: 'TIME PASSES TIME does not pass. Time all but passes. Time usually passes. Time passing and gazing. Time has no gaze. Time as perseverance. Time as hunger'.[24] Here, time is not measured in minutes or hours, but in passing, in gazing, in perseverance, in hunger. Observing, persisting, eating: these are the routine pursuits by which Miss Brill also measures her time. Moreover, according to Griffin Poetry Prize press, this repetition of the word 'time' in *Red Doc>* can be read as an 'intensifier, mantra, chant, chorus'.[25] This idea evokes another element of Mansfield's short story: music. In 'Miss Brill', music, like love, is bound up with time, suspense, and repetition. As she listens to the band in the *Jardins Publiques*, Miss Brill observes 'a little "flutey" bit- very pretty!- a little chain of bright drops' (22). She is 'sure it would be repeated' and soon finds that 'it was; she lifted her head and smiled' (22-3). Here, as in *Red Doc>*, time can be measured in musical reprise. Crucially, Miss Brill locates pleasure in her anticipation of that reprise: 'she lifted her head and smiled' (23). She enjoys hearing the original 'little chain of bright drops' (22) – but not as much as she enjoys waiting to hear it again. This is reflected in Mansfield's punctuation. The semi-colon between 'it was' and 'she lifted her head and smiled' deliberately slows the reader, forcing us to linger there, right on the edge of fulfilment (23). Again, Miss Brill is caught between 'then' and 'now', eagerly wondering 'what was going to happen' next (26). This is only furthered by Miss Brill's commitment to her routines. Miss Brill anticipates the reprise because she listens to the band every week, 'Sunday after Sunday' (24). She is so familiar with the band that she can even identify if they play 'louder', or if the conductor's coat is 'new' (22). She not only smiles, therefore, because she predicts the reprise, but because she anticipates predicting it again the following week. As such, much like her conversations and her honey-cakes, she collates the band's performance with both previous and future performances. Miss Brill's time, therefore, is indeed measured in 'gazing', in 'hunger', and most crucially of all, in 'perseverance'.[26] Carson's fascination with the lover's relationship to time reminds us that it is Miss Brill's perseverance with her routines, week after week, that is the best evidence for how deeply she loves. She is not necessarily 'moved' (28) by the music itself: it is instead her successful anticipation of the musical reprise that brings her to tears.

Miss Brill evidently finds pleasure in repetition. Her 'treat' (29), after all, is to maintain the same routines, week after week. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, she begins to imagine herself as an actress. Repetition is intrinsic to theatre. Definitively, a play is a sequence of events that an actor has rehearsed and performed many times.[27] It is logical, therefore, that Miss Brill starts to conceptualise her Sunday routine as a play: 'oh, how fascinating it was! How she enjoyed it! How she loved sitting here,

watching it all! It was like a play. It was exactly like a play' (26-7). It is equally logical that she comes to identify herself as an actress in this sequence, with her own role to play:

> They weren't only the audience, only looking on; they were acting. Even she had a part, and came every Sunday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all. How strange she'd never thought of it like that before! (27)

This identification speaks both to her love of repetition and her status as a lover. By imagining herself as an actress, Miss Brill performs a mode of identification that, for Barthes, is crucial to the lover.[28] An actress, like Miss Brill herself, is a figure that repeats herself for a living. For Barthes, this description can also be applied to the romantic lover. In *A Lover's Discourse*, Barthes argues that the 'scenography of waiting' is 'acted out as a play', in which the lover plays the only available role.[29] Here, Barthes suggests that a lover who finds themselves waiting tends to imagine themselves playing a role. This is exactly what Miss Brill does. In this sense, her behaviour also emulates Marvin Carlson's concept, outlined in *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, of theatrical 'ghosting'.[30] In this text, Carlson argues that theatre is a 'vast, self-reflexive recycling project' in which the same 'stories, texts, actors […] even spectators' appear over and over again.[31] This is certainly true of Miss Brill's imagined play, which takes place every Sunday, with the surrounding crowd 'nearly always the same' (24). Furthermore, this again reflects the language of *A Lover's Discourse*, in which Barthes outlines the concept of the 'Ghost Ship': the lover, he writes, always wanders 'from love to love', doomed to repeat himself eternally.[32] This, too, describes Miss Brill, wandering from Sunday to Sunday, love to love. Her identification as an actress only reaffirms that she remains caught between 'then' and 'now', repeating herself ceaslessly. The only difference is that she does not perceive this routine as 'doomed' until much later in the story.

Miss Brill's identification as an actress, at first, actually prompts her to anticipate further pleasure in her weekly routines. Thinking of the 'old invalid gentleman to whom she read the newspaper four afternoons a week' (27-8), she delights to imagine his surprise at learning that she might be an actress. 'Yes', she imagines herself telling him: 'I have been an actress for a long time' (28). Miss Brill does not merely identify as an actress, therefore, because she is familiar with repeating herself, but because such an identification provides her with further potential anticipation. Usually, the old invalid gentleman to whom she reads 'while he slept in the garden […] if he'd been dead she mightn't have noticed for weeks' (27). However, at the thought of herself as an actress, she imagines that his 'old head lifted; two points of light quivered in the old eyes' (28). Miss Brill's desire to be perceived as an actress is rooted in her desire to have even more to look forward to. As always, her pleasure is located in the anticipation, rather than the realisation, of a better reception.

It is important to note that Miss Brill imagines herself having been an actress 'for a long time' (28). Crucially, this 'long time' is not real time: it is imagined time. This idea is strengthened, again, by Aristotle's theories on time. According to Bas van Fraassen, one question that arises from Aristotle's argument – that the passing of time can only be measured through discerning change – is whether time is a mental entity, or if it could exist independently of the mind.[33] This problem, according to van Fraassen, can be solved by Thomas Aquinas' suggestion that a distinction can be

posited between 'real time' and 'imaginary time'.[34] In a typically modernist experiment with temporality, this is a distinction that Mansfield explores in 'Miss Brill'. Mansfield's protagonist not only waits, but imagines waiting. She not only repeats but imagines repeating. Miss Brill often indulges in fantasy. She imagines herself an actress. She imagines herself in a play. Sunday after Sunday, she observes other people from her 'special seat' (23) in the *Jardins Publiques*, fantasising about their discussions, their disagreements, and their love affairs. These fantasies, according to Carson, liken her to a lover: 'imagination is the core of desire'.[35] However, the crucial function of Miss Brill's fantasies is to *anticipate*: to imagine 'what was going to happen' (26) next. Furthermore, even in her fantasies – 'imaginary time' – Miss Brill maintains the same routines, only with better conversation, a better reception, or an almond in her honey-cake. Miss Brill does not imagine anything radically different. Instead, to repeat Barthes' phrase, like a lover, she plays 'the only available role'.[36] In this sense, Carson's *Eros*' supports the idea that Miss Brill's commitment stretches across time both real and imaginary, and thus that 'imagination' is indeed the core of the lover's desire.[37]

II

'Miss Brill' carefully constructs this relationship between imagination, time, and desire. In fact, Mansfield's style carefully mimics her protagonist's propensity to wait. In *The Technique of Katherine Mansfield*, Lillian Greenwood argues that most of Mansfield's stories written before 1918 'tend to move too much by the clock', advancing in 'mechanical jerks from incident to incident'.[38] In 'Miss Brill', however, Mansfield blends 'the 'tenses' of […] existence'.[39] This, to return to Schleifer's *Modernism and Time*, aligns with modernism's tendency to 'resolve itself into self-conscious spatial and temporal constellations'.[40] 'Miss Brill', as noted, spans a single Sunday afternoon, and narrates its protagonist's day chronologically. However, within this, Mansfield subtly collates Miss Brill's Sunday with previous and future Sundays, looping both memories and prophecies into single sentences. When Miss Brill begins to identify as an actress, she muses that:

> it explained why she made such a point of starting from home at just the same time each week- so as not to be late for the performance- and it also explained why she had quite a queer, shy feeling at telling her English pupils how she spent her Sunday afternoons. (27)

Here, Mansfield blends together the present performance in the *Jardins Publiques*, the Sunday afternoons in which Miss Brill started 'from home at just the same time' (27), and the revelatory details of her previous classes with her English pupils into a single sentence. Here, 'in a syntax of semi-colons, constellations of sentences', to borrow Schleifer's phrase, Mansfield collates 'voices […] classes […] and, above all, time'.[41] This technique is deliberate. Although 'Miss Brill' is narrated chronologically, Mansfield rarely carries us directly from event to event: her sentences often include an intrusive thought or memory intended to detain us. Mansfield makes the reader wait to see what is 'going to happen' (26) next, too. This argument is furthered by the moment that Miss Brill anticipates the musical reprise: 'it was; she lifted her head and smiled' (23). Technically, this sentence is chronological, taking us from one moment to the next. However, as suggested already, the semicolon forces the reader to pause: to linger between anticipation and fulfilment. Mansfield's style, therefore, leaves the

reader, like Miss Brill herself, waiting nervously in suspense. Here, as Carson suggests in *Eros*, the experience of reading is 'almost like being in love'.[42] Reading, like loving, involves anxious anticipation. This analysis of Mansfield's style reveals that even the reader experiences the pain and the pleasure of 'not *yet*' (29; original emphasis).

The greatest irony of 'Miss Brill' is that it is this phrase, 'not *yet*' (29; original emphasis), that threatens to bring Miss Brill's routine to an end. As she listens to the two giggling lovers in the *Jardins Publiques*, Miss Brill overhears their amorous delay: 'not now', 'not here', and 'not *yet*' (29; original emphasis). Devastatingly, however, she also overhears them mocking her.

> 'No, now now,' said the girl. 'Not here, I can't'.
> 'But why? 'Because of that stupid old thing at the end there? [...]Why does she come here at all- who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?'.
> 'It's her fu-fur which is so funny', retorts the girl. 'It's exactly like a fried whiting'. (29)

In this crushing moment, Miss Brill learns how the lovers actually perceive her: as a 'stupid old' (29) woman in a faded fur. The crucial word here is 'old' (29). Essentially, the lovers are mocking her for having waited, or lived, too long. They are also mocking, to note again her title 'Miss', the fact that nobody 'wants her' (29). Miss Brill is sitting in the *Jardins Publiques* alone. The young lovers have noticed, or assumed, that she is not loved herself. Miss Brill has been between for a long time. She has been happy to repeat her monotonous routines, never seeking that 'discerning change' by which Aristotle would measure the passing of time.[43] However, change has occurred, nonetheless. Miss Brill has grown old. Her fur has faded. The things that Miss Brill loves best – her fur, her 'special seat' amongst her fellow concertgoers in the *Jardins Publiques* – may no longer be valuable or viable (23). Here, the question is whether love can survive the deleterious reverberations of time, aging, and wear. Mansfield appears to suggest not. This suggestion is affirmed by a line from *Eros*. Carson, quoting, W. H. Auden's verse 'As I Walked Out One Evening', reminds us that 'time watches from the shadow / and coughs when you would kiss'.[44] This line – even more poignant in the knowledge that Mansfield herself died during a tubercular coughing fit – indicates that time can be fatal to the lover. This is certainly true of 'Miss Brill', in which time threatens to bring its protagonist's routines to a bitter conclusion. Indeed, according to Emilie Walezak, this story can even be said to 'pathetically anticipat[e] Miss Brill's own death'.[45] Modernist fiction, as noted previously, sought to illustrate 'the value of time' – something that, Randall asserts, required the questioning and the deconstructing of the everyday.[46] However, Randall's argument does rest on the assumption that time, 'along with death, is the only thing in life of which we can be sure'.[47] This is an irony that Barthes and Carson anticipate: that the lover's relationship with anticipation hinges on the fact that it is possible to wait too long for fulfilment.

Lovers love to wait, but they also 'hate to wait'.[48] In this line, Carson appears to anticipate the dangers of a lover waiting too long. This is a fear shared by Barthes, for whom one of the greatest threats posed to the lover is the 'abrupt production […] of a counter-image of the loved object', in which 'the subject suddenly sees the good Image alter and capsize'.[49] This is exactly what happens in 'Miss Brill'. At the beginning of the story, Mansfield's protagonist is 'glad that she had decided on her fur': 'dear little thing! It was nice to feel it again' (21). After having suffered the two

lovers' derision, however, Miss Brill hurries home and, 'quickly; quickly', returns her fur to its box (30). Equally, early in the story, Miss Brill eagerly anticipates the bright crowds of the *Jardins Publiques*. However, soon, this image, too, alters and capsizes: she suddenly finds the crowd 'odd, silent, nearly all old' (24). This 'abrupt production' of the 'counter-image of the loved object', of course, is bound up with shame.[50] The lover, for Barthes, does not 'suffer jokes lightly': he is 'vulnerable' to the 'slightest injuries'.[51] This is another instance in which Miss Brill behaves exactly like a lover. Miss Brill does not simply roll her eyes at the naïve young couple because, like a lover herself, she is too vulnerable. Miss Brill is aware of the changes that time has inflicted, and almost ashamed – with that 'queer, shy feeling' (27) – of the time that she has dedicated to her routines. In this sense, 'Miss Brill' becomes the story of a woman humiliated. Drawing on Carson's text teases out the fact that Miss Brill, in order to identify as a lover, has to experience both the pleasure of anticipation and the pain of what she has lost.

Miss Brill loses many things to the young lovers' derision. Above all else, however, she loses the sense that she belongs. Miss Brill's routines may have left her in a constant state of anticipation – but they also gave her a place to be. The 'special seat' (23) in the *Jardins Publiques*; the specific honey-cake from the specific bakery: these routines stemmed from Miss Brill's desire for a sense of place. Crucially, this is also why she began to imagine herself as an actress. This gave her a role to play, and thus a place to be: 'no doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all' (27). In this sense, this identification validated her need to sit in the *Jardins Publiques*, week after week: it made her feel needed, and even wanted. This is why the lovers' remarks – 'why does she come here at all- who wants her?' (29) – are so devastating. Miss Brill is denied that sense of belonging. Suddenly, she is displaced. Her distress can be felt even more keenly in application with *Eros*. For Carson, jealousy or rejection in a lover is *spatial*: it is 'concerned with placement and displacement'.[52] To be denied a sense of place is to be denied love. This is the denial that Miss Brill faces. Crucially, Miss Brill has been displaced specifically because she has been subjected to change. She is not wanted because her 'mug' is 'old' and her 'fur' has aged 'like a fried whiting' (29). Miss Brill, who had imagined herself as an integral part of the scene in the *Jardins Publiques*, suddenly finds herself too old to be in it. Here, again, the subject watches as the 'good Image alter[s] and capsize[s]'.[53] Miss Brill had thought of herself, in Barthes' words, as 'between'.[54] Indeed, she can be said to have occupied a space outside time: her routines continued 'just the same time each week' (27) without substantial change. However, the young lovers' sudden mockery serves as a reminder that, despite this strict routine, time has passed and change has occurred. Moreover, their mockery reminds Miss Brill that her routine will not be sustainable forever. In this sense, Miss Brill suddenly learns that, no matter how fierce her commitment, her love will not survive the passing of time.

Miss Brill, at first glance, is an unusual kind of lover. Rather than love a specific person, she invests herself in music and furs, in almonds in honey-cakes, in sitting in the *Jardins Publiques* week after week. However, Barthes' and Carson's texts, as philosophical studies into the relationship between loving and waiting, enable Miss Brill to be defined as a lover in the traditional sense. Miss Brill, as Carson attests, 'love[s] to wait' almost as much as she 'hate[s] to wait'.[55] In this respect, she does indeed 'think a great deal about time, and understand it very well'.[56] Mansfield's protagonist is, in many ways, typical of a modernist lover: she wrestles with loneliness, rejection, and anxieties about change. In other ways, however, Miss Brill

is highly distinctive: singular in her commitment, her scrupulousness, and her imagination. In this sense, the reader shares both the pain and the pleasure that Miss Brill locates in anticipation. Indeed, the most poignant element of this short story might be the fact that Mansfield leaves the reader with their own sense of anticipation. Mansfield deliberately leaves many of the story's questions unanswered. Will Miss Brill ever return to the *Jardins Publiques*? Will she wear her fur again? Will she ever buy another slice of honey-cake? Mansfield ends this story abruptly to avoid definitively answering these questions. Instead, she would prefer to keep us waiting, wondering 'what was going to happen' (26) next. In this sense, Mansfield's story expands Carson's project by proving one of *Eros*' fundamental principles of writing about love: 'neither reader nor writer nor lover achieves such consummation'.[57]

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Notes

[1] Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by R. Howard (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), p. 40.
[2] Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998), p. 117.
[3] Carson, p. 112.
[4] Barthes, p. 40.
[5] Katherine Mansfield, *Miss Brill* (London: Penguin Classics, 2015), p. 26. Further references to this story are given after quotations in the text.
[6] Rishona Zimring, 'Mansfield's Charm: The Enchantment of Domestic "Bliss"', in *Katherine Mansfield and the Fantastic*, ed. by Delia da Sousa Correa and others (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 33-50 (p. 33).
[7] Ronald Schleifer, *Modernism and Time: The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science, and Culture, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.
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[11] Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 26.
[12] Schleifer, p 1.
[13] Barthes, p. 177; Stanley, p. 29.
[14] Barthes, p. 40.
[15] Barthes, p. 15.
[16] Carson, p. 111.
[17] Carson, p. 114.
[18] Barthes, p. 15.
[19] Barthes, p. 15.
[20] Barthes, p. 15; Carson, p. 30.
[21] Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 60.
[22] Carson, *Autobiography of Red*, p. 90.
[23] Bas C. Van Fraassen, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Time and Space* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 22.
[24] Anne Carson, *Red Doc>* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), p. 143; original emphasis.
[25] Griffin Poetry Prize, *TIME PASSES TIME* (2019) <https://www.griffinpoetryprize.com/time-passes-time-2/> [accessed 13 September 2021].
[26] Anne Carson, *Red Doc>*, p. 143.
[27] Tzachi Zamir, 'Theatrical Repetition and Inspired Performance', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 67 (2009), 365-73 (p. 1).

[28] Barthes, p. 129.
[29] Barthes, p. 37.
[30] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 7.
[31] Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 3.
[32] Barthes, p. 101.
[33] van Fraassen, pp. 22-108.
[34] van Fraassen, p. 26.
[35] Carson, p. 77.
[36] Barthes, p. 37.
[37] Carson, p. 77.
[38] Lillian B. Greenwood, *The Technique of Katherine Mansfield* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1965), p. 81.
[39] Greenwood, p. 75.
[40] Schleifer, p. 53.
[41] Schleifer, p. 54.
[42] Carson, p. 85.
[43] van Fraassen, p. 22.
[44] Carson, p. 111.
[45] Emilie Walezak, *Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories: An Introduction* (Lyon: Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon, 2012), p. 1.
[46] Randall, pp. 2-28.
[47] Randall, p. 2.
[48] Carson, p. 117.
[49] Barthes, p. 25.
[50] Barthes, p. 25.
[51] Barthes, p. 95.
[52] Carson, p. 14.
[53] Barthes, p. 25.
[54] Barthes, p. 15.
[55] Carson, p. 117.
[56] Carson, p. 117.
[57] Carson, p. 109.

ALAN ALI SAEED

‘The Impetus of Love’ as ‘Creative Evolution’: Exploring Henri Bergson’s Politics of Love in Katherine Mansfield’s ‘A Cup of Tea’[1]

Abstract: Several critics address the relationship between the philosopher Henri Bergson and the work of Katherine Mansfield to situate her work in the field of Bergson’s impact on literary modernist writing more generally. The consensus has been that Bergson’s work on aesthetics and personal insight was enabling and positive for Mansfield and other modernist writers. This essay specifically examines Bergson’s social and political thought and Mansfield’s critical response to this with a reading of her 1922 story ‘A Cup of Tea’. Modern critics read this work as a satire about an upper-middle-class Bohemian woman. This article posits an alternative reading of the story developed from Mansfield’s engagement with Bergson’s political concept of ‘love’, which resulted in her questioning Bergson’s philosophy as praxis to suggest that it poses significant difficulties for women framed in a patriarchal paradigm.

Keywords: Bergson; Katherine Mansfield; politics; love; intuition; patriarchy

Several critics have argued that Henri Bergson’s philosophy enthused and inspired Katherine Mansfield as well as many other British modernist writers. While this article primarily explores Bergson’s political theory in relation to Mansfield, it recognises the innovative previous research undertaken by critics such as Angela Smith, Julia Van Gunsteren and Eiko Nakano in the field of theorising how Mansfield’s fiction can be connected to Bergson’s thought in terms of his formulations of aesthetics and memory.[2] Developing this work, I argue that there is a distinct departure in the relationship between Mansfield’s writings and Bergson’s philosophy when it comes to his political thinking. Mansfield can be seen as questioning and critiquing this aspect of Bergson’s thought, when situated within a feminist context, even though she may deploy his aesthetic insights. This article reads Mansfield’s short story, ‘A Cup of Tea’ (1922) in terms of Bergson’s political theory. It focuses on the fact that the story centres on a sudden, spontaneous act of (apparently) compassionate, humanist love, driven by what Bergson calls intuition, that nonetheless ends in abject failure. Intuition as discussed later in the essay is a central and pervasive concept in Bergson’s thought. Wealthy Rosemary Fell spontaneously decides to rescue and take into her own home a destitute young woman she meets on the street during a luxury shopping expedition, thereby crossing the gulf of class relations and pointing towards

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the possibility of human solidarity between those who have and those who have not. While there is a critical consensus that the story is one of the protagonist Rosemary's failure, there is less agreement as to the reasons for her failure, the motivation behind her actions, or how we should subsequently contextualise and interpret this failure. Many of the differences between critical views turn on how sympathetically we should regard the protagonist herself and the reader's attitude to the protagonist is crucial to any subsequent critical interpretation of the story. I argue that Mansfield uses Rosemary Fell's intentions, and her failure to achieve them through her actions, to explore the limitations and difficulties of Bergson's political thinking for women, an exploration by Mansfield that is framed by the assumptions of a patriarchal society. Emily Herring has drawn attention to Bergson's importance to feminists of the period and it is this connection I suggest, that Mansfield interrogates.[3] I argue that Rosemary Fell's failure to 'rescue' the destitute Miss Smith exemplifies the problems of Bergsonian thought when put into social practice.

I

Henri Bergson was retired and largely forgotten by his public when he published *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* in 1932. Here he developed his earlier theories into a more explicit political and social philosophy where he defined 'love' as the driving force of social and individual transformation. He is not referring to romantic love, but instead to a compassionate, altruistic love for humanity by the individual that is 'capable of transfiguring' rather than just 'preserving the social form'.[4] Love of this kind is the spur to political and social action and, for Bergson, is associated with mysticism and spirituality more than rationality and reason.

Bergson's thinking in *Two Sources* is not, it should be said, any radical departure from his earlier work, rather it tries to restate the implications of *Creative Evolution* in terms of explaining how an emphasis on the qualitative experience of the individual, by means of emotional intuition, can still yield a progressive morality that points towards transformative social progress in human life and culture. Bergsonian intuition is an emotional force that is opposed to habitual ways of thinking, and which 'consists in entering into the thing, rather than going around it from the outside'.[5] His new emphasis on social theory was, in part, an answer to the many detractors who accused his work of inherent irrationality and subjectivity, although qualitative experience was never about subjectivity and, for Bergson, his concept of emotional intuition was about seeing phenomena as they really are.

Two Sources therefore explores how a set of shared assumptions and identity can be created between individuals in an intersubjective way, while maintaining fidelity to earlier Bergsonian concepts that seem to focus more upon the individual in terms of intuition. Alexandre Lefebvre, in his seminal account of Bergson's political and social theory, observes that Bergson's commitment to what he calls an open society is a commitment to future social evolution.[6] This was a fact grasped at the time and, as Henry Mead explains, the influential, modernist British intellectual T. E. Hulme (1883-1917) went from an ardent admirer and translator of Bergson in 1909 to a trenchant critic by 1912, associating Bergson with social revolution.[7] Bergson suggests that his political thinking recognises that the 'social form' can be exalted, which could be interpreted as a call for revolutionary change:

> '[S]ocial pressure' and 'impetus of love' are but two complementary manifestations of life, normally intent on preserving the social form which was characteristic of the human species from the beginning, but, exceptionally, capable of transfiguring it, thanks to individuals who each represent, as the appearance of a new species would have represented, an effort of creative evolution.[8]

How does the conservative 'impetus of love' become progressive? It does so through a distinction between 'open' morality and religion as opposed to 'closed' morality and religion. Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard-Leonard suggest: 'Closed morality and static religion are concerned with social cohesion. […] Indeed, for Bergson, closed morality is always concerned with war.'[9] In contrast, as Frédéric Worms explains, 'open morality' is determined by dynamism, intuition, emotion, innovation and inspiration.[10] Open morality thus permits the possibility of transformation and progress, while closed morality works towards the opposite social tendency.

Bergson saw 'social obligation' *per se* as inherently conservative even if it was necessary. It could not produce change alone and hardly coheres with his argument about the productive evolutionary movement in *Creative Evolution* as a process driven by the *élan vital* but realised in personal terms from the subject's emotional intuition. This movement of the *élan vital* (the universal life force that drives the evolution of the individual):

> proceeds rather like a shell, which suddenly burst into fragments, which fragments, being themselves shells, burst in their turn into fragments destined to burst again, and so on for a time incommensurably long.[11]

For social progressives, any advocation of equality between men and women or greater social and economic equality between the classes was inherently at odds with conservative beliefs about preserving existing social norms and conventions. 'A Cup of Tea' dramatises, in Bergsonian terms, how a flash of emotional intuition can lead to a belief in the possibility of realising social evolution and political change, but it also shows, in opposition to Bergson, that there are grave problems with the development of this intuition in a progressive social context.

Bergson's idealised version of love as a way to explain how intuition can be developed as a progressive force is in certain respects traditional. Bergson sees sexual love and desire as unimportant when compared to what he views as a love that 'embraces all humanity'.[12] As Lefebvre and Melanie White have argued, Bergson's account of love is therefore fundamentally a reworked version of the Christian concept of ecstatic *agape*, an unconditional sacrifice of the self to God's love.[13] Or one might argue that, rather than a desire for a love object, it is instead the love of all humanity that Bergson proposes as the subject's preferable epiphanic *jouissance*. It is, in this sense, like Freud's notion of sublimated desire reoriented toward social, political or artistic effort.[14] Lefebvre and White explain:

> At the heart of Christianity is the idea that God creates a new relationship with humanity by loving us in a way that we cannot love each other unaided. […] instead of God enabling love it is what Bergson calls, 'life', 'evolution' of the 'élan vital' that performs this role.[15]

As Stéphane Madelrieux argues, this is certainly a form of 'global supernaturalism', which defines nature as a 'supraconsciousness' (existing above the level of rational or logical thought), that is hard to distinguish from pantheism, despite Bergson's claims that he was not a pantheist.[16] Pantheism is non-theistic and argues that the universe is God and, therefore all individuals are linked to an immanent (not transcendent) God, which they are part of, as potential mystics. While Bergson does not use the term God, he nonetheless sees all individuals as part of a supraconscious nature. For the pantheist, everyone is a potential mystic, as it does not require specific, divine revelation; Bergson's thought parallels this.[17]

Lefebvre's and White's second point is therefore no less crucial to understand Bergson's argument. It is that he makes an 'addition' to his recast *agape* in which emotion in the form of 'love' allows an individual human being to connect to the 'universe' or 'life'.[18] As Bergson argues in *Two Sources*: '[Love's] direction is that of life's *élan*'.[19] This is to say, while it may occur like modernist epiphany – a flashing, sudden insight of something greater, more valuable than the self – it yields through compassion a universal love for others and the world. As Bergson writes:

> It [the self] would be content to feel itself pervaded, though retaining its own personality, by a being immeasurably mightier than itself, just as iron is pervaded by the fire which makes it glow. Its attachment to life would henceforth be its inseparability from this principle, joy in joy, love of that which is all love. In addition it would give itself to society, but to a society comprising all humanity, love is the love of the principle underlying it.[20]

The above paragraph sounds very Christian in its use of terms suggestive of the traditional discourse of *agape,* such as 'love of that which is all love', and the argument that the self is not lost through this process, but rather augmented by it when it surrenders its attachment to ego. The Bergsonian 'mystic' must therefore allow themselves to be in touch with the vitality of the universe (as anyone can potentially be) and it is this which primarily leads to an understanding for the need for social evolution rather than knowledge or theory, which is secondary. Bergson praises such mystics as examples of great moral/ political/ religious leaders whose contact with 'the vital impetus of life' allows these exceptional individuals to see how to lead their societies to transformation.[21] However, the examples Bergson suggests are usually extraordinary and always men. Paramount of these is Jesus Christ, not perceived as the son of God in this instance (which would be theistic), but as a great and inspiring social and religious reformer. Bergson thereby sets an extremely high standard for those who would aspire to be mystics who can lead social progress and reform.

II

'A Cup of Tea' is a popular story with readers but has not been a frequent subject of critical analysis. There has been a shift in critical views over the years. James H. Justus, in 1973, took a largely sympathetic view of Rosemary as an example of a 'well-to-do young innocent whose romantic dreams are shattered by the realism of the actual world'.[22] In Justus' view, the character's intentions are liberal and honourable, but the child-like Rosemary encounters a reality she was unprepared for and ignorant of. However, contemporary critics tend to perceive the text as a rather caustic satire of a flawed, affectatious, upper-middle-class Bohemian woman who, while well-

intentioned, is wholly unconscious of both the advantages of her social class and wealth, and the superficiality of her concept of feminism. Isobel Maddison, for example, calls it 'a thinly disguised attack' on Rosemary and suggests that Rosemary has only 'pretensions to female solidarity'.[23] Rosemary's justification for her decisions sometimes seems to bear this out, as do the narrator's comments. A penchant for mild, somewhat voyeuristic contraventions of the norm, such as inviting artists that Rosemary views as 'quaint creatures' to dinner parties to shock her guests, points to a moneyed class position that allows such minor transgressions.[24]

The style of omniscient, third person narration that Mansfield deploys in the story is unusual and innovative. As Terence Patrick Murphy and Kelly S. Walsh remark in a perceptive recent article, 'A Cup of Tea' shows from the very beginning a fundamental narrative problem, which they dub 'unreliable third person narration'.[25] Arguing that 'the absence of a clear modulation back and forth between objective narrative and the viewpoint of the central character creates a strong sense of unreliability', they 'contend that Mansfield's use of this form of unreliable third-person fiction is her unique contribution to the short story genre'.[26] 'Unreliability' is a term derived from the seminal work of Wayne C. Booth and is more normally associated as a quality of the first-person narrative mode (where the story is narrated by a character); such unreliability asks how far the reader can trust a narrator to give an objective and neutral account of events.[27] As Murphy and Walsh explain, Mansfield's deliberate strategy of narrative unreliability makes 'the reader's aesthetic experience' unusual, insofar as it 'consists in coming to terms with the central character's misplaced confidence about herself, her judgments of other people, or her understanding of the world she inhabits'.[28] In effect, unreliability becomes transferred from narrator to protagonist and readers discover that Rosemary Fell is unreliable in her perceptions and judgements.[29]

For example, consider the sharp and disconcerting opening remark about Rosemary by the supposedly neutral omniscient narrator:

> Rosemary Fell was not exactly beautiful. No, you couldn't have called her beautiful. Pretty? Well, if you took her to pieces . . . But why be so cruel as to take anyone to pieces? (461)

This is the omniscient narrator speaking, but who exactly is being focalised by this pointed comment? I argue that by the end of the story, the reader will realise it is a deeply ironic remark in terms of what undoes Rosemary. It focalises her hidden or unconscious anxieties as constructed by patriarchal norms that emphasise a woman's physical appearance above all other qualities. The opening remark turns out to be ironic as it recognises that Rosemary is a victim of her own inability to free herself from a patriarchal paradigm.[30]

One way to resolve this apparent problem of narration in the story is to understand that Mansfield, as author, intervenes through the voice of the omniscient narrator to ensure that Rosemary is continually undermined. This partly explains why some critics have seen this as a story driven by autobiographical concerns. For example, Nick Hubble argues that Rosemary is a satirical portrayal of Virginia Woolf and the hapless Miss Smith is Mansfield herself.[31] Maddison argues that Rosemary represents Mansfield's cousin Elizabeth von Arnim with whom Mansfield was angry for her 'patronising' and 'superficial' attitudes.[32] Rosemary may also owe something to the wealthy, Bohemian aristocrat, Lady Ottoline Morrell, a friend and patron of Mansfield and other modernist writers and artists. Mansfield was part of Lady Ottoline's circle

at Garsington Manor.[33] Mansfield, like most of her many artistic guests and beneficiaries believed Lady Ottoline to be far wealthier than she actually was.[34] Richard Cappuccio has connected Rosemary Fell and Lady Ottoline Morrell in terms of Mansfield's uncomfortable attitude to literary patronage.[35] It is also noteworthy that not only does 'Morrell' sound like 'Fell', but Rosemary Fell and Lady Ottoline Morrell have husbands who share the same forename: Philip. There may be some truth to such biographical readings, but Mansfield's depiction of Rosemary could also be a fantasy of herself (or at least one of the many potential 'selves' she often spoke of).[36] The frequently impoverished Mansfield could have imagined what she might be like if she were incredibly rich. Mansfield was, after all, a Bohemian and a writer just as fascinated by Russian intellectuals as Rosemary Fell.[37]

One problem with reading this as the story of an upper-middle class Bohemian like Woolf or Von Arnim is that this does not necessarily equate with Rosemary's class (which remains unclear), or her socio-economic position according to the narrator. We are told at one point early on that: 'if Rosemary wanted to shop she would go to Paris as you and I would go to Bond Street' (461). As Rohan McWilliam argues, Bond Street developed in the period as a shopping and pleasure centre, a place of fashionable upper-middle class female consumption and Bronwen Edwards has connected this to its role in fashion magazines like *Vogue*.[38] However, Paris, not London, was still the exotic centre of *haute couture* for the very wealthy and fashionable, epitomised by the designs of Coco Chanel. Rosemary clearly prefers Paris because of her socio-economic status, as well as her desire to be *à la mode*: '[T]hey were rich, really rich, not just comfortably well off, which is odious and stuffy and sounds like one's grandparents' (461). Rosemary's views are pompous and elitist but Mansfield is also suggesting that Rosemary's world is not that of a Mrs Dalloway and the British upper middle classes. She is in an altogether different league where unnecessary extravagance and overindulgence is the norm, (but paradoxically she herself does appear to worry). Waste is largely meaningless or amusing for the very rich and Philip calls her fondly at the end of the story his 'little wasteful one', as an affectionate, patronising diminutive.[39]

The text is enigmatic and elusive about the source of Rosemary Fell's wealth, as well as her class status. Is she an aristocratic scion of the landed gentry or upper middle class with aristocratic pretensions; is she from traditional money or one of the industrialist *nouveau riche*? Did she bring to the marriage settlement a significant dowry like the first Mrs Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, or did she marry a rich man? Rosemary asks her husband at the conclusion of the story if she may buy the expensive box, suggesting she might need his permission (though she does not seem to need it when giving Miss Smith three-pound notes). However, the narrator undercuts Rosemary's remark almost immediately: 'But that was not really what Rosemary wanted to say.' (467). There is no mention of a country estate, nor of her wealth being derived from industry. Rosemary shows the sense of entitlement and impulsiveness characteristic of the aristocracy and seems to think she can do as she wishes, but nonetheless she worries in more *bourgeois* fashion, about extravagance in relation to the antique dealer's expensive trinket. Rosemary childishly thinks of herself like a character in a fairy tale ('fairy godmothers were real' [464]), able to bestow random largesse, as if money was a kind of magic. Such contradictions help to mythologise Rosemary as singular, as does the way she 'gazed in her dazzled, rather exotic way' at the flowers she buys (61). She has the financial potential and lack of specific class adherence and consequent rigidity to become, in principle, one of those fluid Bergsonian progressives who can transform herself and society. This clarifies the

narrator's initial emphasis that Rosemary represents what is 'new' (in Bergsonian terms the progressive force of 'creative evolution'). She is: 'young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books' (461).

The scene in the exclusive, little antique shop in Curzon Street, Mayfair, illustrates the affluent exclusivity of Rosemary's world. According to the canny shopkeeper, speaking of his wares, she is not 'someone who does not appreciate them, who has not that fine feeling which is so rare . . .' (462). 'Feeling' is the significant word here, as it suggests Rosemary is one of the *cognoscenti* because she has intuition and discernment rather than knowledge. Bergsonian intuition, insofar as it is about seeing the object in itself, allows a sensuous appreciation of the aesthetic object that does not require information such as who made it, which pottery it came from or any of the ordinary ways that an object of this kind might be valued. Significantly Rosemary never asks any of these obvious questions to the shopkeeper in the story as her own judgement is enough for her. However, this is a commercial transaction and perhaps, this treatment of a favoured client of such 'sensitivity', is no more than flattering sales patter tailored for a customer the shopkeeper regards as naïve and self-regarding. After all, he hopes to sell to her the 'exquisite little enamel box with a glaze so fine it looked as though it had been baked in cream' (462). Even Rosemary balks at his price of twenty-eight guineas for this (possibly overpriced) *objet d'art*. Mansfield points here to Rosemary's Bergsonian possibilities, while simultaneously undermining them through the context. It is not just that the commercial transaction undermines the potential value of Bergsonian intuition, but that this is no modernist work of art she wishes to buy. Imagine if she were instead purchasing a painting by Stanley Spencer or Mark Gertler, rather than an object that is described as a sentimental depiction of romantic love. The woman on the lid appears to be hanging onto the male figure for support:

> On the lid a minute creature stood under a flowery tree, and a more minute creature still had her arms round his neck. Her hat, really no bigger than a geranium petal, hung from a branch; it had green ribbons. And there was a pink cloud like a watchful cherub floating above their heads. (462)

It is significant that as Rosemary leaves the shop, regretting having not made her purchase, that she is struck by a sense of loss, 'a strange pang' with the weather symbolising her sense of disorientation and confusion: 'with the rain it seemed the dark came too, spinning down like ashes' (462). For reasons unspecified, the experience seems to have thrown her into despair: 'there are moments, horrible moments in life, when one emerges from shelter and looks out, and it's awful' (462). It is at once a moment of epiphany, insofar as she meets Miss Smith and finds a new purpose in her life (or so it seems to her), that potentially answers this existential unquiet and dread, and also a moment of Bergsonian intuition. Rosemary calls her meeting with Smith 'an adventure' (463) because intuition is the basis for creative evolution for the subject rather than being mired in repetitive, everyday habit: intuition is an adventure of insight.

Josiane Paccaud-Huguet suggests in a psychoanalytic reading of Mansfield's work that epiphany leads to a transcendence of gender and class roles in exchange for the ecstatic pleasure of *jouissance*. In this case, epiphanic *jouissance* leads to the type of self-abnegation which allows individuals to feel directly connected to the Bergsonian

élan vital (vital spirit) of the cosmos.[40] This helps to explain the peculiar exhilaration and renewed sense of purpose that Rosemary feels when she meets Miss Smith outside the antique shop. It makes her feel as if she can step beyond being female, rich and aristocratic/upper middle class. While she specifies female solidarity – 'that women *were* sisters' (463; original emphasis), it is significant from the point of view of a Bergsonian reading that she couches her discussion in emotional, but socio-economic terms when she says that 'rich people had hearts' (463). Her compassion is emotional, a love for humanity, and not intellectualised or thought out. Rosemary finds her experience of meeting Miss Smith strange and novel as it points to transformation. Her motives of female solidarity and social benevolence are admirable, even if she is not fully aware that she can only behave in this way because of her material and social capital.

Rosemary explains that her rescue of Miss Smith was inspired by her reading of Dostoevsky (463).[41] This appears potentially Bergsonian, as Dostoevsky was himself a visionary writer, whose novels, such as *Crime and Punishment* (1866), contain themes of Christian mysticism and, as Lyudmila Parts argues, a radical Christian 'pity' (or love) that implies social utopianism.[42] The character of Sonia Marmeladov in *Crime and Punishment*, who convinces Raskolnikov to confess to the murder he has committed, is exemplary of self-abnegation, self-sacrifice and *agape*. However, what might be a strikingly Bergsonian image and parallel is undercut by the caveat that Rosemary perceives her action as a case of pleasurable self-dramatization. She is not following moral guidance, which requires an intellectual framework, as much as enjoying the acting out of an assumed role. It is ironic insofar as she does not comprehend the nuances of her reading. She understands little of the importance to Sonia (or Bergson) of self-abnegation, indicated when she calls Miss Smith: 'the little captive she had netted' (463). This is an image of possession and not self-abnegation. Rosemary further trivialises the situation and suggests egotistical reasons for the rescue, such as hoping for 'the amazement of her friends' (463).

Rosemary has no coherent or cogent plan of action once Miss Smith is at her home and no real idea of what to do with her in the future. Philip later asks: 'But what on earth are you going to do with her?'; Rosemary's vague reply is: 'Look after her. I don't know how' (466). Earlier, in her chauffeured limousine, replete with footman, she says to Miss Smith: 'If I'm the more fortunate, you ought to expect . . .'; she then admits to herself that she does not know, 'how the sentence was going to end' (463). There is no Damascene conversion for Rosemary alerting her to the necessity for social equality and justice. Her altruistic intentions, such as removing Miss Smith's wet clothes herself, quickly become comic and frustrating, as she has no idea how to do so or what to do with them. Rosemary acting on Bergsonian intuition alone, to show her human solidarity with the destitute Miss Smith, has run up against the limits of Bergsonian practice in terms of what to do after the initial intuition. Her behaviour appears childish, rather than childlike, as when she thinks sugar is nourishing food, or tries to give Miss Smith brandy, who then shows moral uprightness by refusing alcohol.

While Mansfield uses Rosemary to point to the problems of Bergson's theory of political transformation, especially for women, there was a tradition of women who worked to transform society. Despite their disenfranchisement, remarkable British women had long played key roles in the social reform movement.[43] Bergson may set the standard too high with Jesus, but female social reformers, such as Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845), Angela Burdett-Coutts (1814-1906), Louisa Twining (1820-1912) and Beatrice Webb (1858-1943) as just a few examples, used their privileged lives to

improve those of the poor. What they possessed (which Rosemary lacks) was a cognitive, rational understanding of how to improve social justice and ameliorate poverty. However, while these female social reformers came from the upper-middle or aristocratic classes, they possessed a sound education (usually from private tutors), a coherent understanding of society, a deeply religious drive to altruism that often originated in traditional non-conformism, as well as supportive, intellectual spouses and family networks. Rosemary is, in contrast, an isolated figure throughout the story. Rosemary does not just squander potential insight from her intuition, but she lacks the ability to do anything coherent or meaningful with it. Her husband, Philip, implies that Miss Smith is a destitute, 'sweated' milliner's apprentice (he suggests he will read the *The Milliner's Gazette* to speak to her) and her depiction does conform to such traditional images.[44]

Philip is clear that Miss Smith must leave their house but it is his wife's hidden anxieties that accomplish this. He remarks of Miss Smith, 'she's so astonishingly pretty' and '[s]he's absolutely lovely' (466). Her beauty 'bowled [him] over' (466), which confirms Miss Smith as a possible rival for Rosemary for his affections and makes Rosemary jealous and apprehensive. It is hard to discern whether his comments about Miss Smith's beauty are manipulative, unconscious or simply inadvertent. Philip knows he has said something out of the ordinary as he apologises for his comments being 'crude and all that' (466). He lets Rosemary make the decision to send Miss Smith away with a financial gift, rather than making any decision himself. As Rosemary ponders when at her writing desk: 'Pretty! Absolutely lovely! Bowled over! Her heart beat like a heavy bell. Pretty! Lovely!' (466). Rosemary is prepared to return to her traditional female role as object of desire and giving up her independence, in exchange for being considered attractive and loved in a romantic way. (Rather like the scene depicted on the lid of the enamel box.) As Mansfield herself observed: '[i]t is the hopelessly insipid doctrine that love is the only thing in the world, taught, hammered into women, from generation to generation, which hampers us so cruelly'.[45]

III

The story concludes in Rosemary's painful downfall, which exemplifies the shortcomings of Bergson's political thinking, especially when applied to women. What should have been so much easier because of Rosemary's charm, compassion and wealth turns out to be disastrous for both her and Miss Smith. As Hubble remarks: 'Rosemary ends up symbolically reducing the young woman […] to the level of a prostitute: amusing herself with her in her bedroom before paying her and sending her on her way.'[46] We do not know if Miss Smith is humiliated by the encounter, but Rosemary is certainly undone. She is left desperately trying to convince her husband Philip (and herself) that she is indeed 'pretty' in comparison to Miss Smith. The narrator's initial comment about Rosemary's absence of pulchritude has been spectacularly fulfilled'. Rosemary is indeed in 'pieces' and descended into an infantilised state by the end of the story – seen after she has climbed on Philip's knee and he has bounced her up and down as you do an unhappy child, and when she asks 'am I *pretty?*' (467; original emphasis). Significantly, the story's dynamics of the compassionate love of all humanity have been eclipsed by love that is now erotic, flirtatious, and needy. The story reverses the forward movement of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, where Nora moves from being an infantilised child-woman dependent on her husband's approval, to seek to become a person in her own right by the end of the play

as she leaves the house. However, Rosemary's apprehensions, indicate that her subjectivity is already spoken by and constructed within patriarchy.[47] No matter how rich she is, or whatever her accomplishments, patriarchal society judges her by her appearance'.

Rosemary is infantilised (Philip likes to call her 'my child') and seems completely dependent on his decisions by the story's close, just as an infantilised Miss Smith (the narrator refers to her as 'a child' [464]) was dependent on Rosemary's decisions. Maddison suggests that the story shows that Rosemary is only a 'theoretical feminist', but it seems the case that Rosemary has, at best, an intuition of female and human solidarity with neither a theoretical framework nor a practical understanding of feminism.[48] She underestimates and ignores the power of patriarchy. Rosemary may have repeatedly incited the value of solidarity and sisterhood to explain her generosity to Miss Smith, but ironically, the story suggests that what they share (but which Rosemary does not understand), is that both are oppressed and constructed by patriarchy. Mansfield was not a straightforward social progressive. Sydney Janet Kaplan, for example, argues that Mansfield was neither feminist nor Marxist, and as a result her perceptions of social injustice were politically disorganised.[49] Nonetheless, they are still perceptions of social injustice and of contradictions and hypocrisy. Kathleen Wheeler argues that Mansfield 'does not portray women as victims and men as perpetrators or victors. Rather, women are shown to be as much enslaved by themselves as by society or by men'.[50]

Patriarchy too, which Bergson ignores in his discussion, is a hill Rosemary finds impossible to climb. In this regard, Rosemary's failure points to the considerable shortcomings of Bergson's political philosophy. Despite the demonstrated power of intuition and, as with other stories such as 'The Garden Party', Mansfield's characters do not become progressive leaders. Instead, characters such as Rosemary travel to emotional, political, and spiritual dead ends. If Rosemary gains something from her epiphany, then it does not outlast her prompt re-habituation to the patriarchal norms inscribed in anxiety about her lack of traditional beauty.

That Mansfield chose not to make her engagement with and critique of Bergson's political thought more explicit in the text is unsurprising, as it would have confirmed the views of critics at the time who believed that Bergson, women and irrationality were interlinked terms of disparagement.[51] They would have ignored Mansfield's carefully nuanced reading of how material, socio-economic factors, and patriarchy limited women, or how Bergsonian political theory left much to be desired as political practice and seen the issue instead in essentialist terms. In 'Compulsory Service: A Forecast of the Influence of Woman in Complete Control at Home' (1915) from the populist, satirical British humour magazine *The Bystander* (1903-1940) the 'affrighted' male writer remarks:

> [T]he position of affairs will, at least, be a gigantic test of Bergson's theories. Everything will, of course, be done by intuition. Trains will be driven, arrive, and depart as Woman's sub-sub-conscious mind directs. There will be no such thing as *scheduled* time, only Time – if that.[52]

This sounds somewhat like the satiric voice often channelled by the narrator in 'A Cup of Tea'. While Rosemary may not cause a train crash, her attempt to aid Miss Smith does end in an emotional crisis. Mansfield suggests in the story that Bergsonian altruistic love for humanity, taken alone, may not be enough to create genuine and lasting social transformation.

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Notes

[1] Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. by R. Ashley Audra and Cloudsley Brereton, with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter (Notre Dame, IL: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 96. Original publication: Henri Bergson. *Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris: Félix Mean, 1935).
[2] Angela Smith, 'Katherine Mansfield and *Rhythm*', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 21 (2003), 102-21. Julia Van Gunsteren, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991); Eiko Nakano, 'Intuition and Intellect: Henri Bergson's Influence on Katherine Mansfield's Representations of Places', *World Literature Written in English,* 40 (2002), 86-100; Eiko Nakano, 'Katherine Mansfield and French Philosophy: A Bergsonian Reading of *Maata*', *Katherine Mansfield Studies,* 1 (2010), 68-82.
[3] Emily Herring, 'Henri Bergson, celebrity', *Aeon,* 6 May 2019 <https://aeon.co/essays/henri-bergson-the-philosopher-damned-for-his-female-fans> [accessed, 2 November 2020].
[4] Bergson, *Two Sources*, p. 96.
[5] Leonard Lawlor, Valentine Moulard-Leonard, 'Henri Bergson', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/bergson/> [accessed 21 April 2020].
[6] Alexandre Lefebvre, *Human Rights as a Way of Life: On Bergson's Political Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).
[7] Henry Mead, 'The Evolution of T. E. Hulme's Thought', *The Modernist Journals Project*. No date. Available from:
< https://modjourn.org/essay/the-evolution-of-t-e-hulmes-thought/> n.p. [accessed 23 June 2016]. Hulme had a point, as Bergson became of increasing interest to left-wing thinkers. Mark Antliff has explored how Eden and Cedar Paul (prominent intellectuals affiliated to the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Plebs' League), assimilated Bergsonism to Marxist-Leninist communism in their writings, such as *Creative Revolution: A Study of Communist Ergotocracy* (1921); Mark Antliff, 'From Class War to Creative Revolution: Bergson's Communist Legacy in Britain', in *Annales bergsoniennes VII. Bergson, l'Allemagne, la guerre de 1914*, ed. by Arnaud François (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2014), pp. 235-58.
[8] Bergson, *Two Sources*, p. 96.
[9] Lawlor and Moulard-Leonard.
[10] Frédéric Worms, 'The Closed and the Open in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*: A Distinction That Changes Everything', in *Bergson, Politics, and Religion*, ed. by Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 25-39.
[11] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* trans. by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Bolt, 1911), p. 98. Original publication: Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution créatrice* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907).
[12] Bergson, *Two Sources*, p. 38.
[13] Alexandre Lefebvre, Melanie White, 'Bergson and Social Theory', in *Interpreting Bergson: Critical Essays*, ed. by Alexandre Lefebvre and Nils F. Schott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 139-54.
[14] Kalu Singh, *Sublimation* (*Ideas in Psychoanalysis*) (London: Icon Books, 2001).
[15] Lefebvre and White, p. 150.
[16] Stéphane Madelrieux, 'Bergson and Naturalism', in *Interpreting Bergson*, ed. by Lefebvre and Schott, pp. 48-66 (p. 60).
[17] Michael P. Levine, *Pantheism: A Non-Theistic Concept of Deity* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[18] Lefebvre and White, p.151.
[19] Bergson, *Two Sources*, p. 235.
[20] Bergson, *Two Sources*, p. 212.
[21] Bergson, *Two Sources*, p. 95.
[22] James H. Justus, 'Katherine Mansfield: The triumph of egoism', *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal,* 6 (1973), 13-22 (p. 13).
[23] Isobel Maddison, *Elizabeth von Arnim: Beyond the German Garden* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 88; p. 90.
[24] Katherine Mansfield, 'A Cup of Tea', in *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), II, pp. 141-52 (p. 461). Further references to this story are given after quotations in the text. Richard Cappuccio argues that this depiction is based on Mansfield's discomfort at Lady Ottoline Morrell's 'salon' at Garsington Manor and that Rosemary and Lady Ottoline are both 'collectors' of artists (in the same way that Rosemary collects antiques and

experiences in the story). Compared to a serious *salonnière,* Rosemary chooses artists to disorientate 'really important people', thinking of her gatherings as 'parties [which] were the most delicious mixture'. Rosemary's view of the social function of these gatherings is superficial and patronising. Richard Cappuccio, 'An Invitation to the Table: Katherine Mansfield's "A Cup of Tea" and Literary London', in *Katherine Mansfield and Bloomsbury Group*, ed. by Todd Martin, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp. 219-34, (pp. 221-23).

[25] Terence Patrick Murphy and Kelly S. Walsh, 'Unreliable Third Person Narration? The Case of Katherine Mansfield', *Journal of Literary Semantics*, 46 (2017), 67–85 (p. 68).

[26] Murphy and Walsh, p. 67.

[27] Murphy and Walsh, pp. 69-72. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), pp. 158-59.

[28] Murphy and Walsh, p. 74.

[29] Murphy's and Walsh's model of omniscient, third-person narration derives from the realist novel and while focalisation (the narrator taking on a particular character's point of view) and free indirect discourse or speech (the narrator sounding like a particular character) do exist in this genre, it is usually clearly demarcated. Pam Morris has analysed in detail how this process occurs in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Pam Morris, 'Reading *Pride and Prejudice*', in *The Realist Novel (Approaching Literature)* ed. by Dennis Walder (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 31-60.

[30] Murphy and Walsh, p. 75.

[31] Nick Hubble, ''The Freedom of the City': Mansfield and Woolf', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, 7 (March 2009) < http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2009/hubble.html> [accessed on 14th December 2020].

[32] Maddison, pp. 88-90.

[33] 'Introduction: Networking Modernism–Katherine Mansfield and the Garsington Connection', in *Katherine Mansfield and Bloomsbury Group*, ed. by Todd Martin (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017) pp. 1-14.

[34] Miranda Seymour, *Ottoline Morrell: Life on the Grand Scale* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), p. 305

[35] Cappuccio, 'Table', p. 221. Cherry Hankin, as well as Lady Ottoline's biographer, Miranda Seymour, have detailed the ambivalence of Mansfield's attitude to Lady Ottoline. C. A. Hankin, 'Garsington as Fiction', in *Katherine Mansfield's Confessional Stories* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983), pp. 136-53; Seymour, *Ottoline*, pp. 269-70; p. 281; pp. 289-90.

[36] In a frequently cited notebook entry Mansfield remarked: 'if one was true to oneself . . . True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many – well, really, that's what it looks like coming to – hundreds of selves'. Katherine Mansfield, *The Diaries of Katherine Mansfield, Including Miscellaneous Works* in *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Gerri Kimber and Claire Davison, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), IV, pp. 9-458 (p. 349).

[37] See Joanna Woods, *Katerina: The Russian World of Katherine Mansfield* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 2004); *Katherine Mansfield and Russia*, ed. by Galya Diment, Gerri Kimber and W. Todd Martin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

[38] Rohan McWilliam, *London's West End: Creating the Pleasure District, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). Bronwen Edwards, 'West End Shopping with *Vogue*: 1930s Geographies of Metropolitan Consumption', in *Cultures of Selling: Perspectives on Consumption and Society since 1700*, ed. by John Benson and Laura Ugolini (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 29-50.

[39] This alludes to Torvald's equally affectionate and infantilising term for his wife Nora, 'my little spendthrift', in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879). Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House* (Mineola, NY: Dover Press, 2000), p. 2.

[40] Josiane Paccaud-Huguet, 'A Trickle of Voice: Katherine Mansfield and the Modernist Moment of Being', in *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 131-43.

[41] As Peter Kaye argues, Constance Garnett's translations (1910-20) first made Dostoevsky's work available for English language readers and led to a fashionable vogue for the Russian author. Peter Kaye, *Dostoevsky and English Modernism 1900-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[42] Lyudmila Parts, 'Christianity as Active Pity in *Crime and Punishment'*, *Dostoevsky Studies*, XIII (2009), pp. 61-76.

[43] F. K. Prochaska *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

[44] Sheila C. Blackburn, '"Princesses and Sweated-Wage Slaves Go Well Together": Images of British Sweated Workers, 1843-1914', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 61 (2002), pp. 24-44. Whether Philip is correct, or not, consider Beatrice Webb's (née Potter) response to the century-old, national scandal that was the appalling treatment and frequent destitution of 'sweated' workers in such trades as millinery and dressmaking. Webb, who also co-founded the London School of Economics, produced two landmark minority reports to Parliament. The minority report (Poor Law), 1909, first advocated Britain's need for a welfare state to replace the Poor Laws, while a second minority report to Parliament (1919), provided the foundational arguments for equal pay between men and women to alleviate the

perniciousness of casual, female labour. Beatrice Webb, Sidney Webb, *The Break-up of the Poor law; Being Parts 1-2 of the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission, With Introduction* (St. Albans, Herts: Wentworth Press, 2019); Beatrice Webb, *Wages of Men and Women: Should they be equal?* (London: Fabian Society, 1919). Lady Ottoline's husband, the leading radical Liberal MP, Mr. Philip Morrell was an admirer and political ally of Beatrice and Sidney Webb. See Seymour, *Ottoline* p. 56.

[45] Katherine Mansfield, *The Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield: A Selection*, ed. by C. K. Stead, (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 36.

[46] Hubble.

[47] Murphy and Walsh, pp. 74-9.

[48] Maddison, p. 89.

[49] Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 16-17.

[50] Kathleen Wheeler, *Modernist Women Writers and Narrative Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1994), p. 133.

[51] Herring.

[52] No Author. 'Compulsory Service: A Forecast of the Influence of Woman in Complete Control at Home', *The Bystander*, 7 July 1915, British Newspaper Archive <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> [accessed, 12 December 2020]; original emphasis.

PROFESSOR AILSA COX

Katherine Mansfield and Short-Story Writing

Abstract: Few writers have influenced the development of the short-story genre as profoundly as Katherine Mansfield. Although Mansfield herself did not formulate a specific formal definition, the template for the lyric short story as it is still practiced today, can be defined through her texts, and traced through literary successors including Yiyun Li, Kirsty Gunn, Ali Smith, Tessa Hadley, Helen Simpson and Alice Munro. This type of story is marked by temporal fluidity, heightened ambiguity, resistance to closure, imagery and linguistic play, along with a strong awareness of the rhythmic potential of prose. A fragile balance between formal containment and linguistic dissolution, and between the inner world and external reality, is key to the appeal of Mansfield's writing for women writers especially. This article examines Mansfield's contribution to the poetics of short fiction, concluding with a short account of the author's own practice.

Keywords: Katherine Mansfield; lyric short story; creative writing; Yiyun Li; Helen Simpson; Kirsty Gunn; Alice Munro; Tessa Hadley; Ali Smith; Jackie Kay

Very few figures in the literary canon have arrived there on the basis of short fiction; and few writers have influenced the ongoing development of the short story as profoundly as Katherine Mansfield. The short story, in all it many incarnations, including both so-called literary and popular sub-genres, is, of course, infinitely varied. But the template for what Eileen Baldeshwiler has called 'the lyric short story', as it is widely practiced today, can still be defined through Mansfield, and traced through her literary successors.[1] This type of story is marked by temporal fluidity, heightened ambiguity and a resistance to closure – all of this contained within a tight poetic structure. Linguistic play is foregrounded; this might be evident through the interplay of imagery or sense impressions, or through patterns of repetition or through the connotations of a simple phrase within the context of the story as a whole. Baldeshwiler's account of the lyric short story calls attention to its visual symbolism, but aural qualities are also integral to the effect of the short story

on the reader and the sensibility of its writer, as may be seen in Mansfield's account of the drafting of 'Miss Brill' (1920):

> I chose not only the length of every sentence, but even the sound of every sentence – I chose the rise and fall of every paragraph to fit her – and to fit her on that day at that very moment. After Id [sic] written it I read it aloud – numbers of times – just as one would *play over* a musical composition, trying to get in nearer and nearer to the expression of Miss Brill – until it fitted her.[2]

Many short-story writers, myself included, routinely edit by reading aloud. Novice short-story writers are often advised to cut ruthlessly, but finding the precise rhythm of a story might sometimes involve repetition, for instance in the passage in 'Miss Brill' when the band begins to play for a second time:

> And what they played was warm, sunny, yet there was just a faint chill—a something, what was it?—not sadness—no, not sadness—a something that made you want to sing. The tune lifted, lifted, the light shone; and it seemed to Miss Brill that in another moment all of them, the whole company, would begin singing.[3]

Mansfield's significance for her successors, from Elizabeth Bowen and Daphne du Maurier to Angela Carter and the Nobel laureate Alice Munro, has been widely acknowledged. Munro's story 'Jakarta' (1998), featuring two young women reading Mansfield and D.H. Lawrence on a beach, has an explicit intertextual relationship with Mansfield's 'At the Bay' (1922).[4] In this story, as in so much of Munro's work, the shifting time-frame, the exploration of liminal states of consciousness and the fluctuating viewpoints, are all reminiscent of Mansfield. Both writers typically use free indirect discourse to heighten ambiguity, implicating multiple perspectives within the authorial voice.

Mansfield's final years provided some of the most frequently anthologised stories ever written, and for that reason alone is likely to serve as a model for new writers for the indefinite future. Aleix Tura Vecino has shown how 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1921) became a cornerstone for Hermione Lee's widely circulated volumes, *The Secret Self,* a title that itself is a quotation from one of Mansfield's letters.[5]

Yet the critics' appreciation of her work has not always been wholehearted. The Irish writer Frank O'Connor included Mansfield amongst the pantheon of short-story writers in his influential study, *The Lonely Voice,* only to claim that her work was marred by personal and moral inadequacies.[6] Baldeshwiler herself is hardly fulsome in her brief survey of the lyric short story, originally published in 1969, noting that Mansfield's 'signature', her mingling of external detail with heightened interior states of consciousness, is 'an occasionally successful and even eloquent combination'.[7] A subsequent article, looking more closely at Mansfield's poetics of fiction, alludes to a 'tone of adolescent pique or enthusiasm' in her observations on writing that may have put her at a disadvantage amongst serious critics.[8] Nonetheless, she argues, Mansfield's frequent appeals to intuitive processes masked a high degree of technical control within her fiction; indeed she is 'one of the most scrupulous craftsmen in the language'.[9]

In this re-assessment, Baldeshwiler has identified one of the factors behind this ambivalence towards Mansfield's writing: an aversion to what might be perceived,

consciously or otherwise, as feminine self-indulgence, equating passionate self-expression with a lack of discipline. As Chris Mourant and others have observed, John Middleton Murry's cultivation of a posthumous romantic myth around the figure of his wife, provoked an unsympathetic reaction amongst some critics.[10] Another element overshadowing Mansfield's reputation as a formal innovator is the misapprehension that Mansfield was ultimately a slavish imitator of Chekhov. This view has been corrected in recent scholarship, for instance in Melinda Harvey's '"God forgive me, Tchehov, for my impertinence": Katherine Mansfield and the Art of Copying'.[11] The British writer Helen Simpson has reversed the order of precedence, revealing that it is her long-held enthusiasm for Mansfield that has led her to read Chekhov, intrigued by Mansfield's complex emotional and aesthetic response to both the fiction and the biographical author.[12]

In my book chapter, '"Slippery British": Katherine Mansfield's Legacy in the UK', I traced Mansfield's legacy in the work of a range of other contemporary British women writers, including Ali Smith and Tessa Hadley, both of whom have written about Mansfield and acknowledged her as a primary influence.[13] The current patron of the Katherine Mansfield Society, Kirsty Gunn, whose *My Katherine Mansfield Project* [14]explores themes of home, identity and authorship, might be added to the list of, along with Jackie Kay, who chose 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' as an exemplar attached to her essay in celebration of short-story writing and reading.[15] The Chinese short-story writer and novelist Yiyun Li takes the title of her memoir, *Dear Friend, from My Life I Write to You in Your Life,* from Mansfield's journal.[16] Sarah Laing's *Mansfield and Me: a Graphic Memoir* (Victoria University Press, 2016) is yet more testimony to Mansfield's enduring presence in the collective consciousness of contemporary fiction writers.[17]

As the examples of Gunn, Laing and Yiyun Li testify, the formal or technical lessons to be learnt from Mansfield's texts are intertwined with a more personal response to the figure of Mansfield. This response is itself connected with questions of gendered identity. While there are some exceptions, notably the New Zealander, C.K. Stead, I have found that male practitioners working within in the lyrical tradition are more likely to look to Chekhov as their literary forebear, sometimes even – like the British author and critic, Chris Power – retaining that degree of ambivalence that clouded Mansfield's early reputation.[18]

In the UK, and perhaps globally, the literary short story has become a largely female genre. Over the fifteen years of the highly prestigious BBC National Short Story Prize, there have been six all-female shortlists; collections from women have also come to dominate the shortlist for the Edge Hill Prize, which I founded in 2006. The appeal of the short-story form for women writers is often linked to the concept of 'submerged population groups', formulated by Frank O'Connor to explain the form's affinity with marginalised cultures and fractured identities.[19] But perhaps there is something more, and perhaps that extra something can be determined through the peculiar affect created by Mansfield's stories, a type of affect that can also be found in the work of her successors. Speaking of that perennial favourite, 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', the British-Canadian writer, Alison MacLeod, has commented that: 'in Mansfield the physical world is endlessly plastic. A head may also be a candle. A blancmange may exhibit fear. A dead father may be in a top drawer'.[20]

What stands out from Mansfield's stories, uncomfortably for some and compellingly for others, is a rawness and urgency – a seemingly unmediated awareness of the body and of the tides of consciousness washing through the mind – a sensibility that is best represented within fragmented literary forms. Mansfield's

prose, with its broken syntax and jagged punctuation, its temporal disruptions and abrupt changes of viewpoint, seems to all appearances spontaneous, even improvised. This fragile balance between formal containment and linguistic dissolution, and between the inner world and external reality, is key to the appeal of Mansfield's writing. These same elements are at play in a great deal of contemporary short-story writing, not least the work of women writers.

Short fiction was the perfect outlet for Mansfield's aesthetic sensibility but, unlike some of its practitioners, she was not especially interested in formal definition. The nearest she came was in a review written for *The Athenaeum:*

> Suppose we put it in the form of a riddle: 'I am neither a short story, nor a sketch, nor an impression, nor a tale. I am written in prose. I am a great deal shorter than a novel; I may be only one page long, but, on the other hand, there is no reason why I should not be thirty. I have a special quality – a something, a something, which is immediately, perfectly, recognizable. It belongs to me; it is my essence. In fact I am often given away in the first sentence. I seem almost to stand or fall by it. It is to me what the first phrase of the song is to the singer.[21]

Mansfield's poetics are speculative, rather than prescriptive. In her notebooks, letters and reviews, she is looking for an 'essence' and vitality in everything she reads, whether it is a story by Chekhov or a novel by Dickens. In the course of his analysis of how Mansfield transformed her novel-in-progress, *The Aloe* , into 'Prelude', the critic Alex Moffatt confesses that he has smuggled 'Prelude' onto the undergraduate syllabus for the Twentieth Century British Novel.[22] Combining some of the properties of the conventional novel within the short story's drive to tighten and condense, 'Prelude' is, indeed, 'a work that stands *sui generis*'.[23] Those of us who have made it our business to champion the short story have often argued for a sharp distinction between its generic properties and those of the novel; yet increasingly, generic categories are dissolving, as can be seen in the increasing prominence of the short-story cycle or the novel-in-stories (for example, Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge* or David Szalay's *Turbulence*).[24] Mansfield's resistance to strict definition is a reminder of the flexibility of fragmented prose forms, and their intrinsic multiplicity.

In the summer of 2020, I was commissioned to write a story as part of a digital residency for the Liverpool writing development agency, *Writing on the Wall.* I had nothing underway, nothing that urgently needed to be told. But I had been thinking about Mansfield, having recently completed my contribution to *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Katherine Mansfield.*[25] I decided to use 'At the Bay' as a map for a story about a family in Liverpool, set a few months back in Spring 2020. Mansfield's throwaway first line, 'Very early morning', introducing a description of a seascape, focalised through a seemingly extradiegetic, impersonal narrator, is like the opening of a film, the notional camera shifting gradually inland, and slowly introducing animal life, human traces and finally the characters themselves.[26] It is an opening paragraph that contradicts conventional creative writing advice; it doesn't attempt to draw the reader in with a startling first line, and I can imagine my former students at Edge Hill University suggesting she cut the entire paragraph. I myself had never written a short-story opening with as much leisurely description as this one until I attempted to follow in her footsteps.

I put Mansfield's story aside, only consulting it again when I was writing the ending. The title I gave the story, 'How Loud the Birds', alludes to Linda Burnell's

hypnotic thoughts in ‘Prelude’; my memories of the two stories were mixed up. Because the birdsong was so noticeable during the first lockdown in the UK that Spring, and because the vivid dreams of that period connected with Linda’s dreams, this was a connection I wanted to make between my fiction and Mansfield’s even if I misremembered its origins.

Once I could visualise my characters and place them within that multi-strand structure that Mansfield uses so well, a story began to emerge – or rather, many stories folding into one another as I wrote. Trying to emulate a great writer is a foolhardy step, but one thing I have learnt from Mansfield is that there are no rules about writing short stories. That in itself is a freedom, and permission granted to follow your instincts wherever they may lead.

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Notes

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[24] Elizabeth Strout, *Olive Kitteridge* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2008); David Szalay, *Turbulence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018*).*
[25] Ailsa Cox, 'Katherine Mansfield and the Short Story', in *The Bloomsbury Handbook*, ed. by Martin, pp. 181-98.
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Interview with Dr Gerri Kimber

Dr Kimber is a visiting professor at the University of Northampton, UK, and is the author/editor of over 30 books on Katherine Mansfield.

INTERVIEWER

As a leading scholar for Katherine Mansfield studies, when did you first encounter the writer?

GERRI KIMBER

This is an easy question to answer because I've been asked it several times! I've always loved books, even as a child. In my local town centre there was nearly always a large second-hand charity bookstall every Saturday morning. I would go armed with empty carrier bags and buy as many interesting-looking books as I could physically carry back home! One Saturday I found a war-years copy of *The Garden Party and Other Stories*, with thin paper and a cheap dust-jacket. I knew absolutely nothing about the author, but her photo on the front cover intrigued me. I was probably about 14 or 15. I read the stories and was absolutely entranced. Gradually over the next few years I read everything I could find by Mansfield and became somewhat of an addict. The addiction has never diminished!

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INTERVIEWER

What was it particularly about the writer and her craft that drew you to pursue and develop your interest with such passion and enthusiasm?

GERRI KIMBER

Initially I was drawn to the stories – their outward simplicity – but even early on, I sensed that Mansfield was trying to get a deeper message across. When Antony Alpers's biography appeared in 1980 – still to this day my favourite biography of her – I found myself so entranced by this writer from the other side of the world, who died so young, and who led such an incredible life, that she almost haunted me. I found I was unable to get her out of my system!

INTERVIEWER

Why Katherine Mansfield and not Virginia Woolf?

GERRI KIMBER

I absolutely love Virginia Woolf and *Mrs Dalloway* would be my Desert Island book choice if I wasn't allowed to take the Collected Works of Mansfield. In fact, I find myself drawn to Woolf more and more now. But at the time I started focusing my studies on Mansfield, my other favourite author was actually E. M. Forster. Woolf wasn't really in the running at that stage! I had a more general passion for *all* members of the Bloomsbury group, and that, too, has never waned!

INTERVIEWER

Mansfield's relationship with France is a particular interest of yours – can you say a little more about this.

GERRI KIMBER

My first degree was in French and Italian. When I decided I wanted to undertake PhD studies, it seemed natural to want to combine Katherine Mansfield with some sort of French aspect, which is how I ended up doing a reception studies thesis, focusing on the reception of Mansfield in France.

INTERVIEWER

In what ways did your scholarly response to Mansfield develop over time?

GERRI KIMBER

It's broadened hugely since my early focus on Mansfield and France. I've now written on pretty much every aspect of Mansfield's oeuvre and life, as well as writing a biography of her early years (*Katherine Mansfield: The Early Years*, EUP, 2016). To date I have written or edited over 30 books on Mansfield, which must be something of a record…

INTERVIEWER

What was your most interesting Mansfield pilgrimage?

GERRI KIMBER

That was definitely my first visit to her grave in Avon, near Fontainebleau, in 1984, when writing my PhD. It was a poignant moment for me to feel so physically close to her. And then meeting her youngest sister Jeanne, also in 1984 – that was another moment I shall never forget. I've written in much more detail about both visits in an article for the Katherine Mansfield Society newsletter, Issue 37, December 2020.

INTERVIEWER

Which literary figure runs a close second to your enthusiasm for Mansfield?

GERRI KIMBER

I think that would have to be Virginia Woolf! She could not have been more different to Mansfield, but their interconnections fascinate me, as does Woolf's life and work in general.

INTERVIEWER

If you could ask Mansfield one direct question, what would it be?

GERRI KIMBER

What *really* happened in Bavaria in 1909?!

INTERVIEWER

How do you see Mansfield studies continuing to develop in the future?

GERRI KIMBER

I think the future looks very bright, thanks to the Katherine Mansfield Society's myriad publications and events, which keep the name Katherine Mansfield firmly at the forefront of modernist studies. Every year new discoveries are made about her, which feed into the work scholars are producing. I genuinely see no end to that, and still find it as exciting as I always I did! In particular, the new 4-volume letters edition, arranged by correspondent, which Claire Davison and I are co-editing for EUP has seen us uncover some wonderful new letters already. Volume 1, correspondents A–J was published last year, and we have just (June 2021) submitted volume 2 – correspondents K–Z. Both volumes contain numerous new letters which really do add to our knowledge and understanding of Mansfield's life and connections. All her many hundreds of letters to Murry will comprise vols 3 and 4.

INTERVIEWER

What advice would you have for young scholars interested in studying Mansfield?

GERRI KIMBER

I honestly can’t think of a more exciting or rewarding author to study. There is still much that is left to be understood and avenues to explore. The future of Mansfield Studies is bright indeed!

INTERVIEWER

Thank you so much again for providing an insightful interview for *Tinakori*.

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ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Kym Brindle is Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill University, England. Her publications include *Epistolary Encounters in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Diaries and Letters* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and various essays on women's writing, historical fiction, and literary theory, including, 'Mysterious Epistles': Letters Home in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories' in *JNZL: Journal of New Zealand Literature* (2020). Her recent research interests include mid-twentieth-century women writers. She is joint editor of *Tinakori: Critical Journal of the Katherine Mansfield Society*.

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Gerri Kimber helped to found the international Katherine Mansfield Society of which she was Chair for ten years (2010–2020). She is co-editor of Katherine Mansfield Studies, the peer-reviewed yearbook of the Katherine Mansfield Society, published by Edinburgh University Press and a Visiting Professor in English at the University of Northampton, UK. She received her PhD from the University of Exeter (2007) for a thesis examining Katherine Mansfield's reception in France. She is the co-editor of 30 volumes on Mansfield and is the author of *Katherine Mansfield: The Early Years* (2016), *Katherine Mansfield and the Art of the Short Story* (2015), and *Katherine Mansfield: The View from France* (2008). She is the Series Editor of the 4 vol. *Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield* (2012-16) and is currently working on a new 4 vol. edition of Mansfield's letters with Claire Davison for Edinburgh University Press. In addition, she has contributed chapters to many volumes, in addition to numerous journal articles and reviews, notably for the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.

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Jessica Whyte has an English & Creative Writing degree from Manchester Metropolitan University and an MA from the University of Sussex. She is a second-year PhD student at the University of Sussex, working on a Creative and Critical Writing Thesis about Modernist women, illness and writing, with particular focus on Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf. She is a published poet and writer and is working on a novel on the themes of art and illness, and a collection of poetry about Katherine Mansfield. She has published several poems in the Katherine Mansfield Society Yearbook and in their creative journal *Heron*.

Annie Williams is a PhD student at Trinity College Dublin. She is interested in modernist literature, embodiment, and ecocriticism, and has recently published work in *Critical Inquiries into Irish Studies*. She is also a poet and playwright and has recently penned work for the *Berkeley Fiction Review*, *Yolk Literary Journal*, and *Bitter Pill Theatre*.

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