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Katherine Mansfield and Artistic Synaesthesia: Weaving Colour, Rhythm and Mood

By

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Abstract

Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) often displayed a tendency to cross boundaries between the arts and the senses in her professional as well as personal writings. The central aim of this thesis is to examine the inter-art quality of her work in the contexts of Modernist inter-disciplinary studies. My interest in Mansfield's artistic synaesthesia extends to the circle of modernist writers and artists active in London and Paris in the second decade of the 20th century, particularly the Rhythmists, a group deriving their name from the literary magazine—*Rhythm*—to which they all contributed.

Free exchange of ideas and liberal crossing of artistic borders were the norm during the time which Mansfield wrote. Mansfield created under her intuitive understanding of the translatable emotional aspects that are embedded in all art forms. Together with her contemporaries—second wave Fauvist painters J. D. Fergusson and Anne Estelle Rice—Mansfield was an enthusiastic advocate for weaving painterly, musical, as well as other artistic elements into fiction. Her search for maximum expression begins with colour—from a tentative to a confident, 'rhythmical' use of Fauvist pigments. Preoccupation with visual impact raises a question of vision, especially in relation to the 'innocent eye' and childlike play-acting, both on the borders of crossing from one form of perception to another, to continuously renewed seeing, and inviting trans-sensuous artistic effects. Her mature works also demonstrate a musical concern as Mansfield incorporates rhythm in her narrative through choreographed movements, reiterated images, and atmospheric descriptions. In this sense, her stories are also reminiscent of Debussy's nocturnes, which reinvent conventional rhythmic and melodic structures. All these lead up to the specified mood and atmosphere of her stories. Mansfield desired a 'covering atmosphere' or 'charm' for her work. Such features are reminiscent of both Keatsian and Chinese aesthetic ideas.

Mansfield's artistic synaesthesia has not received the scholastic attention it warrants. Viewing her method and her ability to absorb artistic influences in the trans-sensory, trans-border and trans-national contexts of Modernism opens up dynamic connections between her writing and the arts.

Key words: Katherine Mansfield; Modernism; interdisciplinary studies; artistic synaesthesia

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List of Abbreviations and Textual Note

CFKM	<i>The Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield</i> , edited by Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan, 2 vols, Edinburgh Edition of the four-volume <i>Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield</i> (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2013)
CLKM	<i>The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield</i> , ed. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984-2008)
JKM	<i>The Journal of Katherine Mansfield 1904-1922</i> , ed. John Middleton Murry, Definitive Edition (London: Constable, 1962)
NN	<i>Novels and Novelists</i> , edited by John Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1930)

Mansfield used a lot of ellipses in her writings. In order to distinguish my omission from her original ones, I have used square brackets for mine, i.e, [...], and kept her ellipses and punctuation unchanged.

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Introduction: the questions behind the image

I came to Auckland in 2011 to begin my PhD. My first Saturday here I took a stroll down the Viaduct, and saw and took photos of three teenage girls in white cotton dresses taking selfies and two young people sitting on the wharf, playing guitar and singing into the late summer sunset. Everything was enveloped in a warm orange light, and the reflections of the sun upon moving water gradually turned into the colour of fish scales—from a sparkle to a subdued sheen. These were part of my first impressions of Auckland as I described them to a friend in China. Ten months later I returned to China for a short holiday, and showed the photos to this friend for the first time. Her response was, ‘This is *exactly* what I saw in my mind as you described them to me!’ I believe I am not the only one who has had such an experience. We paint a scene with words, the words convey an atmosphere, and the impression can seem as accurately transmitted as if it were a framed picture. But this process entails more than impression and description. Often when we feel so strongly about an experience—visual, musical, or combined—we wish to record and communicate it so that we can make the others see, hear, and feel as well. In such cases words are granted powers that go beyond the descriptive, gain access to the senses, and eventually re-construct the image or music hidden beneath the written or spoken form.

The seaside episode is a summary of both my personal and academic interests. I came to New Zealand for Katherine Mansfield, whose writings have led me to several questions. The first is the question of the presence or absence of visual descriptions, especially the positioning and effects of colour in fiction writing. More specifically I wanted to know why it matters to writers, particularly a Modernist writer like Mansfield, to incorporate painterly images in their writings, why these images become organic growths within the text, and what happens if such descriptions and their colourations are taken away. The second question is how the transmission of a singular experience to another person happens via words and other descriptive or recording media, while still maintaining the impressionistic details harvested firsthand. This process is analogous to transporting a painting from one gallery to another for exhibition: the painting is framed, and arrives unaltered, yet re-inhabits its new setting comfortably. The third and final question is about the inadequacy we sense when we are limited by ourselves or disciplinary conventions to use one discourse only when addressing a given artistic form, for instance, using colour, shape, construction, and not rhythm, melody, or choreographed movement to analyze a painting. This limitation produces a discontent, and a desire to communicate the impression created in one realm of art via the metaphors and expressions of another. For example, we tend to relate architecture with music, and when describing a painting or a sculpture, we often wish to use vocabulary outside of the visual parameters. Substituting one dimension of sensuous expression with another and hybridisation of senses seem to be more intriguing and conducive to the creative mind than the quarantining or compartmentalisation of artistic forms.¹

¹ I am much indebted to Maurizio Ascari for the terms ‘hybridisation’ and ‘cross-fertilisation’, which he uses in *Cinema and the Imagination in Katherine Mansfield’s Writing* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 2 and 7.

As I read Katherine Mansfield, I notice that these three questions are also echoed in both her fictional and personal writings, indicating some of her major creative concerns. Mansfield worked in the milieu of Modernism, where subjectivity and exchange between the arts (and by extension, between the senses) reigned supreme, and she demonstrates in her writing a trait that resembles synesthesia. Synaesthesia is defined as 'syn=union or together, *aisthesis*=sensation: two or more sensations happening together.'² While there is no medical record to confirm that Mansfield was synaesthetic, her works seem to provide sufficient suggestive evidence. According to Simon Shaw-Miller, whose works focus on the trans-artistic effects produced by treating music, sound and vision as components of one organism of senses, synaesthesia affects one-in-2000 people, and is more likely to affect women than men.³ Statistically speaking, it would not be surprising if Mansfield was a synaesthete.

This supposition about Mansfield's clinical sensory abilities aside, I am more interested in Shaw-Miller's concept 'artistic synaesthesia'. Shaw-Miller further defines artistic synaesthesia as a 'special case of a general condition: major art forms stimulate, either directly or indirectly, more than one sense.'⁴ And in the 'most common form' of synaesthesia, 'a sound stimulus will immediately trigger a palpable and unavoidable visual experience. ... Sounds carry vision, and vision, or more specifically looking, is not a purely sense-limited activity'.⁵ This 'triggering', interactive, even infectious relationship between the senses calls for a more connected, organic examination of inter-artistic realms and exchanges. Shaw-Miller's 'synaesthetic approach' is a proposal against purist segregation of disciplines and forms. But transcending borders of senses and the arts is not a fresh notion, for the arts never seem to leave each other alone, especially in a movement like Modernism where all manner of aesthetic trespassing, cross- and multi-generic forms were applauded. Mansfield does not have to have had clinical synaesthesia to be able to understand and use artistic synaesthesia, since it was a trend emulated, encouraged, and admired during her time.

Various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers and critics commented on the communion of visual art and music, or the trans-sensuous nature of such arts.⁶ These writers include but are not limited to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Charles Baudelaire and Walter Pater. To this number can be added contemporary critics such as W. J. T. Mitchell and Shaw-Miller. All these writers' and critics' comments and theories are informative, and Mitchell's picture theory and discussion of the unstable nature of image are particularly helpful, especially in terms of reading pictures as texts, and then treating images within written texts as an organic part of the writing. Mitchell, like his predecessors, is an advocate of artistic crossing. I will not use Goethe's colour theories because I find they are more relevant to physics than Mansfield's trans-sensuous writing, even though Goethe's observations also touch upon such effects. Instead, I find the work of Mansfield's contemporary, Wassily Kandinsky, specifically his *Effects of Color* more relevant. Mansfield's time was after all a time

² Simon Shaw-Miller, *Eye hEar the Visual in Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 12.

³ Shaw-Miller, 2.

⁴ Shaw-Miller, 7.

⁵ Shaw-Miller, 8.

⁶ I use 'trans-sensuous' rather than 'trans-sensual' because both Pater and Ascarri use the first term to indicate art's ability to create response across the senses, whereas 'sensual' has the implication of stimulation which I do not wish to include in my discussion, though Shaw-Miller seems to use 'sensual' and 'sensualism' in reference to artistic synaesthesia.

when almost no one was restricted to making observations and analysis within their set disciplinary parameter.

As I note above, artistic synaesthesia is therefore not a fresh concept. But Shaw-Miller argues that 'the best-known manifestation of what has been called synaesthesia is within the Symbolist movement.'⁷ Jean Moreas published 'Le Symbolisme' 1886 and this manifesto soon caught fire among many artists at the time.⁸ This is because, writes Shaw-Miller,

[a]mong other things Symbolism represented a stratagem for reclaiming the irrational. For most of the movement's thinkers, the notion of an art of ideas was personal and subjective, and drawn to myth. 'Idea' in the context refers to a sensual rather than an intellectual manifestation, and sensualism tended to be synaesthetic.⁹

Baudelaire is a forerunner of the Symbolists' aesthetic synaesthesia. He describes in his poem *Correspondances* an organic relationship between man and Nature in which all senses are awakened and correspond to a network of trans-sensuous linkages where everything '[reverberates] in a profound unity', and '[p]erfume, colours and sounds correspond'.¹⁰ Baudelaire's poetic analogy affirms first sensuous and then artistic transgressions; the movements of one sense trigger movements in other senses, as all sensuous experience exists within an invisible net interwoven with perceived and perceptible reality.

There were, of course, opposing voices that pronounced artistic synaesthesia as regressive. Max Nordau is most vehement in his protest:

[Synaesthesia] is a retrogression to the very beginning of organic development. It is a descent from the height of human perfection to the low level of the mollusk. To raise the combination, transposition and confusion of the perceptions of sound and sight to the rank of a principle of art, to see futurity in this principle, is to designate as progress the return from the consciousness of man to that of oyster.¹¹

Nordau's opposition towards artistic mixings is based on the belief that such mixing is a counter-evolutionary step back to a mono-cellular notion of art that is yet to split into complex organisms in cultural and artistic history. But Nordau has in fact clarified synaesthesia and almost argued for the opposition. One of the greatest missions of Modernism, and most noticeably Fauvism, is to call for a return to the 'organic', the original and barbaric, the intuitive and not analytical faculties of an artist's

⁷ Shaw-Miller, 22.

⁸ See Henri Dorrea, *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 151-52.

⁹ Shaw-Miller, 22.

¹⁰ Cited in Shaw-Miller, 22.

¹¹ Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, translated from the Second Edition of the German Work (New York: Hoard Fertig, 1968[1895]), 142.

mind, and an undifferentiating stage of innocent comprehension as if seeing through the eye of a child. The Symbolists and the Modernists applaud precisely what Nordau criticizes.

A counter argument to Nordau's is persuasively presented by Victor Segalen in his 1902 essay 'Les Synesthésies et l'école Symboliste' in which he defends hybridity of the arts as a defining and progressive concept. His main point is that 'synaesthesia, contrary to Nordau's belief, is the more traditional, fundamental feature of Western literature, a powerful artistic tool that has close relations with other fundamental poetic devices such as metaphor, analogy and imagery'.¹² Segalen legitimizes synaesthesia as a more natural and intuitive approach to the arts. Symbolism's approval and advocating of synaesthesia as a representational and expressive means emboldened writers, composers and painters to freely cross the borders set by aesthetic purism. As summarized by Shaw-Miller, 'Symbolist artists ... are but one example of figures who thought in terms that shift across, and between, media and disciplines'.¹³

Modernist artists thus re-invented and re-packaged artistic synaesthesia in order to initiate a return to a more traditional approach, as Segalen suggests. Artistic synaesthesia in various guises lays the foundation for trans-artistic ventures during that period. Walter Pater, another pioneering Modernist, lends the classical notion of *Ut picture poesis* new meaning in advocating trans-artistic and trans-sensuous approaches to all arts:

It is the mistake of much popular criticism to regard poetry, music, and painting—all the various products of art—as but translations into different languages of one and the same fixed quantity of imaginative thought, supplemented by certain technical qualities of colour, in painting; of sound, in music; of rhythmical words, in poetry. In this way, the sensuous element in art, and with it almost everything in art that is essentially artistic, is made a matter of indifference. ... the sensuous material of each art brings with it a special phase of quality of beauty, untranslatable into the forms of any other, an order of impressions distinct in kind. ... in this special mode of handling its given material, each art may be observed to pass into the condition of some other art, by what German critics term as *Anders-streben*—a partial alienation from its own limitations, through which the arts are able, not indeed to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces.¹⁴

Pater acknowledges each art-form's power to bring forth a unique 'quality of beauty' that is irreplaceable by other forms, yet at the same time argues that every form's limitation is a strength. The incompleteness or the 'partial alienation' is what enables one form to penetrate and adhere to another. It is through this paradoxical limitation that a freedom is unlocked as we treat all artistic expression not as compartmentalisation, but as a magnetic field where one sensuous manifestation momentarily

¹² Cited in Shaw-Miller, 23.

¹³ Shaw-Miller, 25.

¹⁴ Walter Pater, 'The School of Giorgione', in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1986), pp. 83-5.

retreats and a regrouping of electrons emerges with a new pattern. Art as a whole contains many forms of crossovers and infiltrations. Pater's idea of the individualistic as well as interactive aspects of all arts prompts a sort of trespassing by expressive means that have been assigned and permanently attached to each and every art form. But to break the mode of creating the same routes to the same destinations, the artist is urged to hybridise one form of expression with another. The ultimate passport to new, invigorating forms of art is the freedom to roam and borrow from other forms.

Pater's sensuous and artistic freedom, together with Baudelaire's 'correspondence', and Segalen's 'organic' form, was a pivotal concept that initiated a wave of artistic dialogues, borrowings, and hybridisations in Modernism. Henri Bergson explained to the public an intuitive and a quasi-Eastern mystical approach to time and consciousness, while Claude Debussy created musical responses to Stéphane Mallarmé's poems, and Mallarmé in turn composed prose analysis of Debussy's music. Pater's essay 'The School of Giorgione' appeared in 1877, and this kind of liberality and positive interferences between the arts continued and reverberated throughout the world of Art.

This trans-sensuous movement is also trans-national. The early Modern era embraced foreign arts; Fry writes that British artists and writers 'can no longer hide behind the Elgin marbles and refuse to look at the art of China, India, Java, and Ceylon ... [w]e have no longer any system of aesthetics that can rule out, a priori, even the most fantastic and unreal artistic form. They must be judged in themselves by their own standards.'¹⁵ Patricia Laurence argues that '[i]t has not been fully acknowledged that Chinese art and decoration in England intertwined in the development of British modernism', even though the popularity of chinoiserie and *objet d'art* were 'at the height between 1890 to 1935'.¹⁶ Collecting Chinese art and artifacts was also a trend among British intellectuals and artists including Vanessa and Julian Bell and Roger Fry. 'Han pottery, Zhou bronzes, jades, sculpture, and of course, porcelain were the more popular and studied forms in England, as documented in Vanessa Bell's letters and Roger Fry's writings.'¹⁷ The influence did not stop at popular or collectors' culture. Laurence believes that 'Chinese art, products, and ideas are marked ... aesthetically, as contributions to the construction of British culture and international modernism.'¹⁸ Modernism in its definition is inclusive and multi-national. Fry's effort in championing Eastern, not only Chinese, art in the 1910s is reflective of his attempt to find a fresh set of 'Chinese eyes' in appreciating visual art, and ultimately to transfer the new lenses to viewing and creating modern literature.¹⁹

By negating verisimilitude, the virtue that had governed Western art for centuries, Fry advocated aesthetics that are closely akin to the Chinese artistic tradition which has 'far greater constancy' as compared with British art, referring specially to the long cross-dynastic lineage of Chinese art's inheritance.²⁰ To Fry and other Modernists, realism, either in art or literature, was no longer a major concern, and its place was taken by an expression of the abstract and emotional. In a letter to Julian

¹⁵ Cited in Laurence, 347. ['Oriental Art']

¹⁶ Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2013), 327.

¹⁷ Laurence, 338.

¹⁸ Laurence, 400.

¹⁹ Laurence, 347.

²⁰ Laurence, 348.

Bell, Vanessa Bell describes the 'strangeness' of Chinese art: 'It seems to be something like music using another scale', but 'it has as much to do with actual appearances as European art'.²¹ Vanessa Bell's analogy is in itself arguably synaesthetic, since it uses a musical metaphor to explain different principles of visual art. The 'harmonies and relationships' that are unfamiliar to the English eyes are also what fascinate them.²² The entire Modernist movement, suggests Laurence, is one of moving beyond superficial resemblances and conventional composition, of reorganizing and harmonising various sounds into new melodies, and being content with visible brush strokes and unfinished paintings, with inconclusive impressions and endings. This unfinished quality, Laurence argues, is part of what Modernists valued in Chinese art; the visibility of brushstrokes in Chinese painting is a means of letting the viewer see the process, and the 'very materials the Chinese painters use—the unprocessed paper, the silk, and water-based ink—become one with the paper as the artist becomes one with nature: the ink and the paint, materials, dissolve into the paper of silk in the way that the artist's consciousness dissolves into nature.'²³ In a way this becoming one is not only an ultimate form of synaesthesia, where the subject merges with the object, but also, a neo-Romantic understanding of aesthetic experience that echoes the Keatsian 'Negative Capability'.²⁴ Another resonance the Modernists felt with Chinese art is the importance to them both of the 'line' and the related concept of rhythm as 'expressed in the spirit of the line'.²⁵

Bringing Chinese art into the discussion of artistic synaesthesia is appropriate, because the trans-sensuous power of art was the meeting ground between European Modernism and its Eastern interpreters. As European Modernists turned their attention to the synaesthetic in China's art, Chinese scholars also began to view European Modernist literature through the lines and colours of visual art. For example, Xiao Qian 'described Katherine Mansfield stories as Song [dynasty] portraits', which are known for their 'slender, graceful and delicate' quality and celebration of a harmonious existence with nature.²⁶ Mansfield's popularity in China since Xu Zhimo introduced her to a wider Chinese audience in the 1930s is indicative of a poetic quality in her works. Chinese readers, especially in the early twentieth century, seemed to be fascinated with her 'grace' and 'delicacy' in capturing minute details of life, as well as her ability to conjure up mood and atmosphere. Works like Mansfield's transcend not only generic borders, but also national borders. And these two 'transgressions' are best explained side by side.

The Modernists responded to the line and rhythm they found in the paintings of Van Gogh, Matisse, and Picasso, as well as Chinese art, and this 'preoccupation with the 'line' became part of international modernism'.²⁷ We see Modernist versions of such rhythmical lines in the works of J. D. Fergusson and Anne Estelle Rice, especially works completed in their Parisian years. The rhythm

²¹ Letter to Julian Bell, 7 December 1935. Cited in Laurence, 339.

²² Cited in Laurence, 338.

²³ Laurence, 353.

²⁴ *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. H. E. Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), I, 193-4.

²⁵ Laurence, 368-69.

²⁶ Cited in Laurence, 370.

²⁷ Laurence, 368-69.

embedded in the lines of a visual image is perhaps best epitomized by Fergusson's cover design for *Rhythm* magazine, which will be discussed in chapter four on rhythm.

The other artistic form vital to Mansfield's rhythm is music itself. Here it is useful to look to an earlier theorist, who helped shape the tradition out of which the Rhythmists emerged: Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He sums up poetically the transformative value of music: '[music] paints all, even the objects which are not visible; by a transformation almost inconceivable, it seems to place the eye in the ear.'²⁸ If music puts 'the eye in the ear', then painting, or in Mansfield's case 'word painting' (see Chapter one), puts the ear in the eye. Rousseau relates 'seeing' to music in his 'Dissertation on Modern Music' while recognizing musical notes—a written representation's limitation upon imagination; he writes in trans-generic language by undistinguishing the property of hearing—'harmony'—from the function of the 'eyes'.²⁹

Rousseau also suggests the notion of a 'unity of melody', which applies to both language and music; during a dialogue the speakers interact and exchange various forms of language without altering the overall thematic flow, and similarly music is able to afford a sense of 'unity' in the active interchange of expression while maintaining consistency of theme.³⁰ In a related discussion, Rousseau argues that variations of instrumental sound movements occur, for example in Italian opera, to either subdue or intensify effects, and supplement what 'the voice would not be able to produce'; both timing and proportional arrangements of music to words contribute to the seamless, harmonised effects produced on stage.³¹ In the harmonious dialogue between vocal and instrumental sounds, a 'perfect correspondence between' the two occurs,

... which makes it so that all the features admired in the one are only developments of the other, so that it is in the vocal part that one must always seek the source of all the beauties of the accompaniment. This accompaniment goes so well with the song and is so exactly proportioned to the words that it often seems to determine the action and to dictate to the Actor the gesture he should make, and someone who would not play the role from the words alone in order to adorn the song or make it more expressive, whether by embellishing the principal subject or by adding another to it that remains subordinate to it.³²

Drawing on Rousseau's analogy, corresponding sections in Mansfield's stories such as words, gestures, descriptions and musical sounds also form an interactive unity. Through the lens of Rousseau's theory, we can see a story such as 'Miss Brill' as a structured melodic composition,

²⁸ See the first entry, on 'Imitation', in Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Dictionnaire de musique*, trans. William Waring, Second edition (London: 1779), 189-199. Eighteenth Century Collections Online: Range 11723, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-7966>. Accessed: 10 June, 2013.

²⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Dissertation on Modern Music' in *Collected Writings of Rousseau Vol. 7: Essay of the Origin of Language and Writings Related to Music*, trans. John T. Scott (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1998), 28-32. URL:<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/auckland/Doc?id=10696031&pg=74>. Accessed: 10 June, 2013.

³⁰ Rousseau, 'Letters on French Music', 158-59.

³¹ Rousseau, 'Letters on French Music', 158-59.

³² Rousseau, 'Letters on French Music', pp. 155-56.

not with complementing instrumental and vocal parts as in an opera, but rather possessing a similar proportional construction that coordinates sounds with movements and images. Each means of expression initiates movement in a different section of the composition, each alternatively strengthening or supplementing the other. Where movements pause, a moment of corresponding supplementation rises. Rousseau's analysis outlines a principle that also applies to appreciating the structure of 'Miss Brill'.

Rousseau's theory paved way for later scholars' arguments regarding crossing not only boundaries between music and language, but also other artistic borders. W. J. T. Mitchell famously argues that 'there is no *essential* difference between poetry and painting, no difference, that is, that is given for all time by the inherent nature of the media, the objects they represent, or the laws of the human mind'.³³ Mitchell emphasizes the flexible borders between arts, while still acknowledging the 'distinctions' between not only artistic representations such as poetry and painting, but also how differently these representations can be treated in various cultural contexts. Although here Mitchell mainly focuses on the representational values of poetry and painting, the principles may be equally applicable to writing and music. For if there is no '*essential* difference' between the governing human emotions and motivations that foster the creativity and effect of the written and the visual media, then there should not be a fundamental difference between the same principles from which spring the creation of music. Mitchell writes that 'the dialogue between poetry and painting has tended to dominate general discussions of the arts,' while music seems to have been treated in such conversations as 'an outsider'.³⁴ The metaphorical connections between painting and poetry seem to engage in a more entertaining (and seemingly more plausible/tangible) tug-of-war in the critical discourse, but music, occupying an entirely different dimension of hearing and ephemeral imagination, poses an intimidating challenge to be contained, analyzed and aligned with images and poetry which can be more or less encompassed by written words. But where the critics fear to tread, the writer has already claimed her right. We will see that in a number of Mansfield's stories, she liberally transgresses all three territories: music, image, and writing.

Bryan Wolf builds upon Mitchell's argument and expresses a similar notion of freedom. Traditionally, crossing generic borders has been taboo according to Wolf, since 'Western culture over the past two millennia has been deeply suspicious of the power of visual objects'.³⁵ Wolf explains the source of this anxiety by differentiating 'temporality', which often associates with literature, and 'spatiality', which is associated with painting, but with the Modernist movement, the central question raised is whether there should be a clear line between various forms of art.³⁶ Wolf believes that literature and visual art abide in the same 'representational space', but he carries his

³³ Mitchell, *Iconology*, 49.

³⁴ Mitchell, *Iconology*, 47.

³⁵ 'Confessions of a Closet Ekphrastic: Literature, Painting and Other Unnatural Relations,' *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3, no. 2 (1990): 182.

³⁶ Wolf, 184.

observation a step further by saying that this space is largely rhetorical, and is framed by language.³⁷ Only within this rhetorical space can a multi-generic product function and make sense.

Siglind Bruhn's study on music ekphrasis uses the term 'interartistic transformation', arguing that it is only when an existing art form, for example visual or verbal, is transformed into the reality of another—musical—that true ekphrasis takes place.³⁸ Thus Bruhn expands Mitchell's argument to the legitimacy of musical ekphrasis, opening up a new territory for critical discourse. For Bruhn, it is not only possible for a good dialogue to take place between three bodies—poetry, music, and painting—to use Mitchell's analogy, but also inevitable.³⁹

The early years of the twentieth century saw the birth of Post-Impressionism. Roger Fry, committed and passionate about foreign and emerging art that subverted the nineteenth-century approaches to visual art, organised two Post-Impressionist exhibitions respectively in 1910 and 1912 in London. Virginia Woolf had the first exhibition in mind when she claimed that '[o]n or about December 1910, human character changed'.⁴⁰ The significance of Woolf's exaggerated statement arises as much from its indication of the timing of the change as from the change itself. The paradigm shift in 'human character' is directly reflective of and reflected in the arts. Katherine Mansfield recorded experiencing something similar to Woolf; even ten years after seeing a Van Gogh painting, Mansfield still recalled 'the shaking free' that she felt at the first sight of the artist's sunflowers.⁴¹ She wrote that the painting taught her something about 'writing, which was queer', and that she can still '*smell* the flowers 'as [she writes]'.⁴² The trans-artistic nature of this experience is apparent. Mansfield did not specialize in art, though she was an acutely visual writer and cellist in her youth. She was able to see beyond the medium of visual art and embrace the same kind of liberty in Van Gogh's painting that Fry valued in foreign as well as Post-Impressionist art, for its ability to break down established borders of artistic representation.

It was also not unusual for artists, especially the Fauve artists, of the early twentieth century to emulate children. Seeing in a new way is central to Fauvism, as Marcel Giry states in his summary of the movement's defining features: '[the] essence of Fauvism lay in a novel way of conceiving the world, of regarding nature not as the subject of art but as a realm in which the painter's own impulses, his emotional and mental tensions, his imagination could find release.'⁴³ This general principle can with remarkable aptness be applied to Mansfield. Two aspects of this 'novel way of conceiving the world' can also be found in Mansfield's ideal for her writings. The first is an essential feature of her art as she tries to capture it in one of her reviews published in *The Athenaeum*:

³⁷ Wolf, 184.

³⁸ Bruhn, xix.

³⁹ See Mitchell, *Iconology*, 47. Mitchell refers to Emerson who 'once noted that the most fruitful conversations are always between two persons, not three', and compares the three disciplines as three persons in dialogue.

⁴⁰ Virginia Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (London: Hogarth, 1924), 4.

⁴¹ Mansfield to Dorothy Brett, 1921, in *The CLKM of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Margaret Scott and Vincent O'Sullivan, 5 vols, Edinburgh Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), vol. IV, 333.

⁴² Mansfield to Dorothy Brett, 1921, *CLKM*, IV, 333.

⁴³ Marcel Giry, *Fauvism: Origins and Development* (New York: Alpine Fine Arts Collection, 1981), 10.

I am neither a short story, nor a sketch, nor an impression, nor a tale. I am written in prose.[...] I have a special quality—a something, a something which is immediately, perfectly recognizable. It belongs to me; it is of 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. Those who know me feel: 'Yes, that is it.'⁴⁴

The first 'novel' Fauvist aspect of the new type of writing Mansfield wants to develop is a certain fluid quality; it is very difficult to nail down what 'it' really is, but the description clearly speaks of a type of freedom which is akin to what Mansfield felt after viewing Van Gogh's painting. Her description of this experience comes from a letter to Dorothy Brett, another painter with whom Mansfield freely discussed visual art and its relation to writing. The passage in full reads like this:

Wasn't that Van Gogh shown at the Goupil ten years ago? Yellow flowers, brimming with sun, in a pot? I wonder if it is the same. That picture seemed to reveal something that I hadn't realized before I saw it. It lived with me afterwards. It still does. That and another of a sea captain in a flat cap. They taught me something about writing, which was queer, a kind of freedom—or rather, a shaking free. [...] I can *smell* them as I write.⁴⁵

Mansfield seems to have experienced some sort of ekphrastic epiphany in which Van Gogh's painting taught her what can be called artistic synaesthesia. The vagueness of Mansfield's description—'a shaking free'—indicates that the revelation was a crossing of creative boundaries, namely from visual art to literature, and by extension to all creative actions. It could also mean that she recognized something plastic in Van Gogh's painting—colour, for instance—which can be pliable and expressive in other forms of art, such as writing. This realization of her freedom to eliminate the line between painting and writing may have served as a key momentum for Mansfield to break loose of contemporary conventions in short story writing.

The letter continues to explain the kind of insight a writer gains when she can expand her vision with the aid of visual art, which adds refreshing dimension to her writing: 'When one has been working for a long stretch one begins to narrow ones vision a bit, to fine things down too much. And its [sic] only when something else breaks through, a picture, or something seen out of doors that one realizes it.'⁴⁶ Narrowed vision results from 'working for a long stretch', which in this context means focusing primarily on the purely literary aspect of writing. When Mansfield sees a picture as revelational as the painting by Van Gogh, she begins to realise that there are in fact multiple coloured views of reality that she can adapt in her own 'word painting'.⁴⁷ This is why Kezia's window is so pivotal in my discussion of visioning, image-making and writing. It is the significant moment that unites the writerly with the

⁴⁴ Katherine Mansfield, *NN*, ed. John Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1930), 211.

⁴⁵ Mansfield to Dorothy Brett, 1921, *CLKM*, IV, 333.

⁴⁶ *CLKM*, IV, 333.

⁴⁷ Baker, 23.

painterly, and the natural world. Only through Kezia's window can we obtain a better view of Mansfield's new prose that aims to produce the impression of being in-between the two realms of writing and visual art. This aspect of Mansfield's work fits the description of the fresh ways of knowing the world that the Fauvists strove for. This Van Gogh-inspired freedom impels Mansfield to depart from existing frameworks of literary writing; it gives her license to roam free between the visual and the literary, and her writing shows an immediacy and a defining new-ness that sets her art apart.

In this milieu of free exchanges and openness to foreign influences, the British modern magazine *Rhythm* was created. Sheila McGregor writes that *Rhythm* 'was the first magazine of the pre-war years to identify itself with the spirit of change intimated in Fry's Post-Impressionist exhibition; with its bold layout and numerous illustrations, it constituted in itself an artistic statement [...] and it stressed—unusually among contemporary journals of its type—the interdependence of the arts, their common ideals and organizational principles.'⁴⁸ *Rhythm* defines art as relational and 'interdependent', and fosters liberal crossings between artistic borders traditionally policed by ideas closely akin to Nordau's 'retrogression'. One of *Rhythm*'s greatest contributions is its encompassing definition of a 'rhythm'—resembling Bergson's *élan vital*—embedded in all art. The magazine's philosophy of art is an echo of Pater's famous dictum that '[a]ll art constantly aspires towards the condition of music', except that *Rhythm* wishes to locate this kinship between the arts via a universal application and understanding of rhythm as priority in every form of art. Angela Smith comments that *Rhythm*, 'in both its content and form, reflects the contributors' desire to transcend artistic boundaries, and as a whole the magazine rebels against 'conventional gender, social and academic identities.'⁴⁹ This rebellion or rejection simultaneously invites innovation in artistic expression, and calls for a return to the original, artistic emulation of the barbaric. John Middleton Murry, editor of *Rhythm*, comments that Modernism's mission is to unlock the 'strange' and 'primitive harmonies of the world'.⁵⁰

Rhythm was a forum where experimental ideas of art gathered and flourished in an environment that facilitated artistic synaesthesia. The magazine published works that responded to happenings in the contemporary art scene, including the Ballets Russes and Fauvist art. In the pages of *Rhythm* John D. Fergusson and Anne Estelle Rice, amongst other Rhythmists, continued the first wave of Fauve art championed by Matisse, Derain and Vlaminck. Among the Fauve artists, Henri Matisse in particular had a strong influence on Fergusson's works, especially the treatment of colour, line and the female form.⁵¹ Mansfield was recruited to *Rhythm* because her story 'The Woman at the Store' demonstrated the same kind of aesthetic concern and expression as Murry had articulated in the first issue, and she quickly embraced the magazine's intense interest in hybridisation. The story, together with her other characteristically Fauvist creations, highlights Mansfield's Post-Impressionist ways of rendering objects and characters in expressive, foregrounded lines, and strong emphasis on colour. Smith's reading of

⁴⁸ Sheila McGregor, 'J D Fergusson and the Periodical "Rhythm"' in *Colour, Rhythm and Dance: Paintings and Drawings by J. D. Fergusson and his Circle in Paris* (Edinburgh: Scottish Art Council, 1985), 13-17, p. 17.

⁴⁹ Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 81.

⁵⁰ *Rhythm: Art, Music, Literature Quarterly*, 1, no. 1(1911): 12 (Brown University and the University of Tulsa, The Modernist Journals Project, 1995),

http://www.modjournal.org/render.php?view=mjp_object&id=1159905483482363.

⁵¹ Smith, *Literary Life*, 7, 12, 77.

Mansfield's Fauvist stories differentiates between Impressionist and Post-Impressionist means of expression as they are used in literature. The heterogeneous nature of Post-Impressionism inspires Modern literature, and explains Mansfield's tendency to assume different personal and creative voices and angles, and her capability to adapt artistic colours to suit a particular narrative palette. Rhythmist visual art was particularly fascinating to Mansfield; she delighted in Fergusson's paintings, which are highly expressive in their use of refreshing and rhythmical colours. He in turn responded quite positively to 'The Woman at the Store', a story that employs a Fauve-like colour palette. A love for colour and rhythm is demonstrated in their mutual appreciation of each other's works. Mansfield also began trans-artistic dialogues with Anne Estelle Rice, who painted her portrait. She silently analysed and emulated Rice's method, and later dedicated to the artist the story 'Ole Underwood', which engages in rhythmical representations of colour. These dialogues are but a few examples or close-ups of what was most revolutionary and transformational about Modernist synaesthesia in both visual and verbal arts. Although Laurence depicts Mansfield as a minor figure in the Modernist movement, she was in fact one of the most avant-guard of its experimentalists.

Mansfield's trans-artistic and trans-sensuous creative journey may have been consolidated by her membership of *Rhythm*, but she must have been an intuitively synaesthetic artist before she became a Rhythmist. Her personal writings often display an ease in transferring from one mode of sensual perception to another; this liberty and comfort in sensuous crossing is manifested for example in a letter to S. S. Koteliansky in which she describes a rainy evening in France. She talks of 'the myriad little voices of the rain', and how 'delicious that is! It is not only leaves you smell when you stand under the trees today; you smell the black wet boughs and stems—the 'forest' smell.'⁵² Mansfield's description is multi-sensuous, and although not entirely innovative, suggests a kind of specificity in the way Mansfield colours scent: it is the 'black wet boughs' that she chooses to represent the particular scents of the trees. Another example comes from a letter to musician Garnet Trowell, where Mansfield also wraps scent and vision into a quasi-musical composition, which she compares to a 'Debussy thème'.⁵³

In an early notebook entry, Mansfield paints a picture of an artists' collective that sets off her own tentative artistic synaesthesia where she blends multiple sensuous effects. The entry exemplifies Mansfield's ability to communicate the abstract and the imagined in painterly and atmospheric terms. She describes one afternoon of reading 'almost a little wildly', yet mentions no particular book. She paints mental images of what she has read: young people and 'the sunshine that turned their processions into a river of colour—and the songs that, mellow and sweet, rose in their round throats'; young painters sitting 'round a fire', in whose 'glowing coals was shadowed the beautiful flame-like body of Art'; young musicians who sing 'a Scarlet Song that had no ending and no beginning'.⁵⁴ Reading obviously triggers all sensory associations, and the young writer herself, under such stimulating impressions, runs out to see how behind the city, like a 'beautiful Pre-Raphaelite picture, lay the sea and the violet mountains. The sky all a riot of rose and yellow, amethyst and purple. At the foot of the

⁵² *CLKM*, I, 191.

⁵³ *CLKM*, I, 66.

⁵⁴ *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, 2 vols, ed. Margaret Scott, Complete Edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), vol. I, 195-6.

hill—the city—but all curtained by a blue mist that hung over it in pale wreaths of Beauty. No sound at all—and yet—the Silence of that Prophetic [sic] Atmosphere—that is created by the Twilight only.⁵⁵ There is no audible sound, yet Mansfield felt a strong presence in ‘the Silence of that Prophetic Atmosphere’, and in her mind, ‘thoughts were clashing with the sound of cymbals’: ‘I felt Myself—by the power of my Youth—alone—God of it all.’⁵⁶ Though written in her youth, this entry prefigures Mansfield’s later aesthetic. Her frame of mind from the outset seems to have favoured intuitive blending of generic forms and means. From the opening of the scene, colours react with light, and these hues becoming a ‘river’ of experience of moving colours—she turns her gaze to a tribal image of ‘young Painters’, enveloped in a cloak of ‘mystical, ethereal’ smoke. The thought of her Youth is particularly empowering: she is conscious of her omnipotence as a creator to take possession and create her own artistic world. Music is described in visual and coloured terms, and scenic description resembles a chromatic symphony. The vignette is multidirectional in its point of view; it signifies an effortlessness that later matures into a hallmark of Mansfield’s multi-sensuous creations. Artistic synaesthesia seems to have been an intuitive approach for Mansfield to exult in subjectivity as she creates.

Mansfield’s tendency to infuse her writing with multi-sensuous and artistic elements demands thorough examination in relation to the Modernist art scene. Angela Smith’s much-cited book *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life* is the first bold study that explores Mansfield within this inter-artistic context and finds strong connections between Mansfield and Fauvism as well as Post-Impressionist art. Reading Mansfield in a trans-art context is not completely without precedence, though it needs to be done with further close reading of her stories, bearing in mind that Mansfield wrote in a cultural and artistic environment that exalted hybridisation and design. Also we need to expand the trans-sensuous readings to a point where such an approach bridges with Modernism’s trans-national nature.

Previous work has opened promising avenues and developed suggestive methods for investigating Mansfield’s sense of the visual embedded in her literary narratives. Among these previous studies can be found useful tools for my exploration of Mansfield’s artistic synaesthesia. Julia von Gunsteren’s *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism* is devoted solely to reading Mansfield’s works in the context of Impressionism, treating stylistic features of Impressionism as counterparts of Mansfield’s techniques.⁵⁷ More specifically, Gunsteren introduces ways of experiencing Mansfield’s writing in terms of Impressionist treatments of colour, light, glimpses, and *Stimmung*—a German word for ‘mood and atmosphere’—and categorizes Mansfield as a literary Impressionist. Transplanting a visual art style to the analysis of literature is not an easy task, for one can easily fall into the trap of relying on superficial resemblances between the two modalities, especially if the literary analysis fails to engage in close reading of the literary text. Gunsteren avoids this problem by evolving a literary equivalent to Impressionism’s techniques, which she then relates to distinctive elements from Mansfield’s writings. However, the focus on only one strand of Mansfield’s trans-artistic borrowing cannot explain the full range of her tendency to re-shape and apply ingredients from other art forms. For example, the strongly felt Fauvist and musical influences in her writing fall outside of Gunsteren’s approach.

⁵⁵ *Notebooks*, I, 195-6.

⁵⁶ *Notebooks*, I, 196.

⁵⁷ Julia von Gunsteren, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), 9-10.

This is why Maurizio Ascari's book *Cinema and the Imagination in Katherine Mansfield's Writing* is more suggestive as a methodology for approaching Mansfield. Cinema is in itself an inclusive and expandable form that continuously invites fresh means of representation. Like literature, it is an absorbent medium for artistic forms; it is a hybridisation of movement, imagery, sound, and sequential and/or overlapping narratives. As Ascari remarks, '[i]nnovation in literature often results from hybridisation'.⁵⁸ Film is both subjective and objective, expressive and observatory. It is fluid because it possesses a stabilizing structural frame that contains moving pictures. Instead of removing one branch from an organic form and re-planting it onto another, Ascari chooses to examine Mansfield's writing through the lens of cinematic art, and through 'cross-fertilization' between the art of film and that of literature.⁵⁹ My argument is in the same vein as Ascari's, but instead of using one particular art form to map Mansfield's creative impetus, I look into her absorption and re-invention of chromatic, visual, musical, rhythmical, dramatic, abstract and atmospheric elements, as she creates her own artistic synaesthesia.

Following the paths gestured towards by these previous studies, I will use 'colour', 'the innocent eye', 'childlike play', 'rhythm' and '*Stimmung* and *Yijing*' as entry points or tools to open and explore the aspects of Mansfield's inter-sensuous and inter-artistic transformations. Chapter one of this thesis focuses on how Mansfield uses colour-related techniques, particularly chromatic contrast, foregrounding, and Fauvist-influenced, rhythmical colour schemes in the pulsation of her stories' own heartbeats. Drawing on J. D. Fergusson's and Anne Estelle Rice's use of colours and their colour philosophy, which is closely intertwined into their understanding of rhythm, I wish to place Mansfield's synaesthetic writing in a highly visual and expressive context. Mansfield's writing is a natural blending and affirmative merging of Modernist literary and Post-Impressionist visual texts. Lack of colour is indicative of the artist's creative anxiety, especially in Mansfield's creating process. Mansfield struggled in her early career to effectively use chromatic elements to highlight the structural and narrative centre-pieces of each story. Colour comes to matter much more in Mansfield's works once she has tasted what subtlety, brutality and delicacy colour can achieve in illuminating meaning and characters, in setting off plots and emotional movements, and she does not wish to remain in the black-and-white space of storytelling anymore. Her weaving of colour into the fabric of writing is a literary parallel to the Fauvist liberation of painterly colours.

Colour, immediately connected to vision, often relates in Mansfield's writing to childlike seeing, or, to use John Ruskin's term, 'the eye of innocence'.⁶⁰ This is another overlap between the Fauves and Mansfield's artistic synaesthesia. Her use of the innocent eye begins with her fascination with childhood and depiction of children. Cherry Hankin argues that Mansfield and Murry liked to enact a Peter Pan

⁵⁸ Maurizio Ascari, *Cinema and the Imagination in Katherine Mansfield's Writing* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2.

⁵⁹ Ascari, 7.

⁶⁰ John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing in Three Letters to Beginners*, Sixth Edition (London: George Allen, Sunnyside, Orpington, 1898), 5. I have discussed Ruskin's 'eye of innocence' and Mansfield's application of it in 'Children as Artists: Katherine Mansfield's "Innocent Eye" in *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, Special Issue: *Katherine Mansfield Masked and Unmasked* 32:2 (2014):143-166.

fantasy in their letters and other writings.⁶¹ Chapters two and three of this thesis take a look from the other side of the lens: instead of viewing the creative product, I wish to examine prototypes of Mansfield's little Fauve artists in her stories, and explore their vision and creative process and how these actions reflect a Fauve preoccupation with original and organic seeing. In a sense this method is also a crossing over to the other side—a reverse of normative vision—in an attempt to gain fresh insight into Mansfield's practice. Mansfield's Fauve-like creative concerns spread, as artistic synaesthesia does, into neighbouring territories of childlike playacting and quasi-fairytale creations. Instead of arguing that Mansfield always knew what would and what would not work, or that 'cross-fertilisation' always brings clarity, I wish to show that Mansfield's artistic synaesthesia, not unlike clinical synaesthesia, may cause momentary confusion and lead the mind into murkier territories.⁶² Mansfield's venture into the dramatic, or sometimes even the melodramatic, often causes a loss of creative and expressive clarity. The stories that represent or echo her playacting with Murry often sink into sentimentality, or remain trapped between gesture and meaning. Synaesthesia requires a constant balancing of subjectivity with simplification: subjectivity is a method of compiling and addition, whereas simplification is an abbreviating process—the trimming of all redundant embellishments. Mansfield's artistic vision and blending of generic expressions demand demarcations, which these two chapters will supply.

Chapter four then discusses a Mansfieldian 'rhythm', in which controlled lines of simplicity strengthen Mansfield's narrative crossovers of movement, imagery and sound, particularly musical and rhythmical sound. Rhythm at first appears to be a musical concept, but music extends to all art forms because of its power to stimulate the imagination. Mansfield's contemporary Modernist Ezra Pound wrote extensively on the kinship between rhythm and verse, and music and literature. Pound argues for a 'natural symbiosis of the arts'.⁶³ 'It is not intelligent to ignore the fact', writes Pound, 'that both in Greece and in Provence the poetry attained its highest rhythmic and metrical brilliance at times when the arts of verse and music were most closely knit together, when each thing done by the poet had some definite musical urge or necessity bound up within it.'⁶⁴ Music, or more specifically, rhythm, is inseparable from good verse as well as from Mansfield's 'special prose' that occupies the demarcation line between verse and prose. Pound also advocates the idea of an 'absolute rhythm': 'I believe that every emotion and phase of emotion has some toneless phrase, some rhythm-phrase to express it'.⁶⁵ What Pound describes can be extended and applied to visual art as well as literature, for if rhythm is as multi-faceted and nuanced as emotion, then all artistic representation of human emotions can be expressed via rhythmical manifestations. Rhythm thus is not an exclusively lyrical right, but the 'golden thread', to use Murry's metaphor, that runs through the fabric of Modern symbiosis of the arts.⁶⁶ It is only appropriate that Murry chose *Rhythm* as the title for his Modernist magazine. The pliable concept adheres readily to the Rhythm group's aesthetics, which are dynamically interpreted by the magazine's

⁶¹ Cherry Hankin, 'Katherine Mansfield and the Cult of Childhood' in *Katherine Mansfield: In from the Margin*, ed. Roger Robinson (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 25-35, p.29.

⁶² Ascari, 7.

⁶³ Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism*, ed. R. Murray Schafer (New York: New Directions, 1977), 4.

⁶⁴ Pound, 4.

⁶⁵ Pound, 15.

⁶⁶ *Rhythm, Rhythm*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1911): 9.

contributors and illustrators in corresponding interpretations of other art-forms, demonstrating Pater's reciprocal lending.⁶⁷

Bergson's discussion of rhythm in art must have been one of the sources that inspired the name of the magazine.⁶⁸ The magazine seeks to express both form and design in art. Smith argues that the 'central way in which *Rhythm* expresses its Bergsonian principles is in its form', that is, its preference for 'heterogeneity', and that the best way the magazine manifests Bergson's idea of duration 'is to explore one art in terms of another, with an emphasis on internationalism, both in the range of its contributors and in the material it covers'.⁶⁹ In this sense both the magazine and the abstract idea championed by Murry are fecund grounds for inter-artistic and international dialogues and grafting. Smith takes note of how painters capture in a deliberately abbreviated and 'crude' way the movements of performing art, and how they are more concerned with what dance makes them feel than the degree to which they can depict a lifelike appearance of the dancer.⁷⁰ Rhythm then becomes a technique, an expression, and a means to reach stranger domains where artistic hybridisations have not trodden before.

Mansfield was no doubt familiar with this encompassing concept, even though she is more the experimentalist than the theorist. She had read *Rhythm* before submitting and meeting Murry and Fergusson, and must have shared an affinity with the magazine's aesthetics. Mansfield was also, as her lifelong friend Ida Baker describes, 'a born actress and mimic'.⁷¹ But this mimetic nature permeates more than her personality; it infiltrates her art, too. She was always good at impersonating, or donning the cloak of another creative vision or voice, as is evident in her adolescent obsession with Oscar Wilde, or her early re-versioning of Chekhov in the story called 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired'. Impersonation extends into her mature days as a writer who not only understands, but also practices artistic synaesthesia in short-story writing. With *Rhythm* and the aesthetic interactions that came with it, Mansfield was ready to adopt 'rhythm' into her art and creative persona as if it was a mimetic process.

Rhythm is a catalyst in many artistic forms. Schafer argues that '[m]ost arts attain their effects by using a fixed element and variable'.⁷² Any artistic medium—painting, music, drama—can represent this 'fixed element', while rhythm performs the catalytic function of the 'variable' which infuses life into a specific form. Schafer's reading of Pound's 'absolute rhythm' is built upon music's two relationships to poetry: one as 'an accompaniment to words, a means of giving them delineation and vitality'; and the other as providing 'an extension of communication, an attempt to get beyond or under verbal language. Its service is then mood painting, suggestive propaganda for the poetic idea'.⁷³ The first relationship is mechanical, a fitting of notes to syllables, while the second offers a suppressed yet potentially more powerful expressive means. In Mansfield's works both relationships manifest, superficially and/or subtly

⁶⁷ See note 11.

⁶⁸ Henri Bergson, *Time and Freewill: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1910), 16.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Literary Life*, 79.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Literary Life*, 79.

⁷¹ Ida Baker, *Katherine Mansfield: The Memories of LM* (London: Michael Joseph, 1971), 233.

⁷² R. Murray Schafer, 'Introduction' to *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism*, ed. R. Murray Schafer, 3-22 (New York: New Directions, 1977), 472.

⁷³ Schafer, 4.

interwoven. 'Miss Brill', for instance, is an example of the 'accompaniment' method, since a band is literally playing next to the character. 'At the Bay' demonstrates the 'suggestive propaganda' or 'mood painting' method, as its carefully laid-out rhythmical structure synchronizes with the sounds of the sea, the movement of the characters, and the mood changes of the day.

Rhythm is also a relational concept. James Joyce, another contemporary of Mansfield, defines rhythm as a sort of binding agent between parts to form an aesthetic whole: 'Rhythm [...] is the formal esthetic relation of any part to part in any esthetic whole or of any esthetic whole to its part or parts of any part to the esthetic whole of which it is a part.'⁷⁴ The tongue twisting definition highlights rhythm's pervasive quality and its indispensable nature in relation to all art forms. As discussed above, Murry's comparison of rhythm to a 'golden thread' that runs through all Modernist art expresses the fundamentally inter-artistic nature of Modernist aesthetics, linking the various modalities. Schafer points out, however, that this linking is not complete. An important conflict remains between music and literature. Music is 'an abstract art, turns inward, seeking its precise definition through self-exploration; its ideas are rotated, super-imposed, and extended in an attempt to balance them convincingly.'⁷⁵ But in 'literature all abstract ideas must be externalised'; though, repetition, which strengthens music's rhythmical nature, is 'both necessary as a mnemonic aid and desirable as a method of achieving balance' in literature, repetitiveness is viewed as a vice in literary narration and characterization.⁷⁶ Thus the two forms pull toward opposite directions, and the need for a unifying effect arises.

To reconcile such tension, Mansfield seeks harmonic equilibrium through creating a 'mysterious covering'.⁷⁷ Chapter five of this thesis is 'Mood', and focuses on this final component of Mansfield's artistic synaesthesia by bringing the German term *Stimmung* together with the Chinese aesthetic idea of *Yijing*. *Yijing* closely resembles John Keats' poetic 'negative capability,' which Murry and Mansfield must have discussed in their shared admiration of the Romantic poet. If rhythm is more of an internal link—blood veins that carry prosaic and poetic energy throughout the expressive ends of an artistic 'body'—then *Stimmung/Yijing* is an external atmosphere that wraps this 'body' in its aura of harmonic existence. Gunsteren relates *Stimmung* to Mansfield's creation of 'light', but there is much more to Mansfield's 'mood and atmosphere' than a literary Impressionist 'light'.⁷⁸ Mansfield interprets *Stimmung* in terms of a poetic or prosaic 'weather' which forms an atmospheric umbrella covering a story. In her journals and letters Mansfield constantly balances a sentimental and a critical or ironic self. This balancing reflects her anxiety over two states of creativity that can be best summarized by the two tension-filled yet unified states contained in the term *Yijing*: the personal and impersonal states. *Stimmung* is not limited to the explanation of Mansfield's atmospheric recreations of nature as in 'At the Bay', nor the building-up of essential descriptive details that ultimately aim to illuminate the central image of a story. Rather, the term is deeply reflective of Mansfield's impersonation of her subjects, of occasionally smudging the lines between the observer and the observed. Reading *Stimmung* and *Yijing*

⁷⁴ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: CRW, 2005), 238.

⁷⁵ Schafer, 15.

⁷⁶ Schafer, 15.

⁷⁷ *NN*, 289-90.

⁷⁸ Gunsteren, 56 and 83.

together with Mansfield's own explanation of her process of 'becoming' the subject is most illuminating of Mansfield's creative concerns for her stories of artistic synaesthesia.

Mansfield's synaesthetic creations are investigated via her engagement with colour, the innocent eye, childlike role-play, rhythm, and *Yijing*. Colour enriches the dynamic of fictional expression and visual interest that preoccupies many Modernist writers, and the short-story form shares methodical and spatial materials with both visual art and drama. Mood and atmosphere form the higher-level, balance-seeking dimension of Mansfield's hybridisation of forms, while rhythm forges links between the artistic territories in which she practices. Each element under discussion can be either very specific or malleable, as the contextual and interpretative situation demands. I have not included film as a medium for discussion because it is a form already intact with its frames and components with fixed form and variables; the modeling and adaptation of other forms take place within the framework of cinematic art, and these forms do not necessarily expand and readily adhere, like the concepts I use, to other artistic material. And for the same reason I have not specifically focused on dance even though performing art forms part of my discussion.

Katherine Mansfield's artistic synaesthesia is most commonly discussed in terms of music and visual art, but as this thesis will show, is not limited to musical, visual, haptic or aromatic Modernism. I hope my study contributes to inter-artistic criticism, and opens a path into a place where art is not clearly demarcated or segmented into disciplines, where it is not only acceptable but also praiseworthy to place and misplace the eye in the ear and vice versa. Synaesthesia is reflective of both a return to art's original state of existence and an exaltation of a subjective Modernist idea of which Mansfield's writings are ground-breaking representatives.

Chapter One

Colour

1. The Search for Colour: Beginnings of 'Word Painting'

In a fond memoir of her friendship with Mansfield which began at Queen's College in 1903, Ida Baker (also known as LM) recalls Mansfield's many and rich artistic gifts.⁷⁹ Baker remembers that Mansfield 'was intensely musical. Yet from earliest days she was practising the art of word painting, looking and *seeing* to make her true and perfect picture'.⁸⁰ But of all Mansfield's creative ventures, writing took supremacy over all others— 'It was her life', Baker concludes.⁸¹ LM, though often described as inferior to Mansfield intellectually, is in fact a sharp observer, for in the phrase 'word painting' she captures an essential feature of Mansfield's method. To treat writing as painting so aptly defines the pictorial aspect of Mansfield's works that even the writer herself could hardly have summarised her own approach better.

This love for visual expression permeates not only Mansfield's writing, but also her entire person. LM records that 'Katherine [Mansfield] had a great love of order, and by striving for just the right material of colour or arrangement she could impart a little of her own personality to the simplest and most modest surrounding'.⁸² Mansfield's early journal entries, letters and vignettes are intensely visual, filled with the youthful confidence of a writer who seeks new angles and lights to reveal ordinary subjects. It is strange, then, that her earliest collection of satirical sketches *In a German Pension and Other Stories* is so obviously colourless. LM raises an important question for the investigation of Mansfield's 'word painting', which is the role colour plays in rendering a 'true and perfect picture'.⁸³ If a narrative space can be compared to a visual space which is filled with lines and images, then the expressiveness and effectiveness of that space is determined by how strongly the lines and images are presented. And if that narrative space is only filled with demarcation lines and shapes without colour, the aesthetic value and efficiency of communicative imagery will usually be greatly reduced. Granted there are powerful monochromatic images (if we do not count black and white as colours) that sometimes work better than colour images, yet in the Modernist movement of which Mansfield is a significant part the emphasis on colour, and on the repetition of colours in masses in painting, stage design, and even metaphorically in music, is tremendous. My interest is in the consequences of the absence, the presence and even the prominence of colour in some of Mansfield's most representative pieces. Like any artist-in-training, mastering a new medium is a process: first line and shape, then expression and personal style. Mansfield's intuitive and personalised use of coloured images is present in her early writings,

⁷⁹ Baker, 22. LM was impressed with Mansfield's varied ventures into the artistic world, especially her verse and prose writing, and her cello playing. She writes: 'I would sometimes watch Katherine lean out of the window, breathing, listening, absorbed and dreaming; I was beginning to see her.'

⁸⁰ Baker, 23.

⁸¹ Baker, 23.

⁸² Baker, 233.

⁸³ Baker, 23.

setting the foundation for later experimentation of painting with words, yet the juxtaposition of her *In a German Pension* stories with her *Rhythm* stories indicates a trajectory from a dominantly black-and-white palette to a subjective, Fauvist, and rhythmical use of colours. Modernism, and particularly the artists and writers in the Rhythm group, liberated or rather affirmed Mansfield's application of strong and highly patterned colours onto the more abstract canvas in forming her 'word painting'.

As far as influence goes, it is hard to pin-point one specific writer or artist who was instrumental in the formation of Mansfield's personalised *ut pictura poesis*. Oscar Wilde was one of her favourite writers. Certainly in her 'Vignettes', published in *The Native Companion* among other juvenilia works, traces of a Wildean touch are manifest in lines such as 'Prove yourself, permeate your senses with the heavy sweetness of the night. Let nothing remain hidden. Who knows that in the exploration of your mysteries you may find the answer to your questionings'.⁸⁴ But there is also a singular expression or vision that is Mansfield's own invention: 'In the crude white moonlight a field of blue cabbages on my right shimmers like a cold sea'.⁸⁵ Retracing our investigation back a few years (the 'Vignettes' in *The Native Companion* were first published in 1907) to a story Mansfield wrote when she was only twelve—'His Ideal'—we see the predominant presence of the colour white associated with a woman figure, who turns out to be Death. Vincent O'Sullivan and Gerri Kimber believe that Oscar Wilde and possibly Ernest Dowson may have inspired 'His Ideal', or the later version of the story named 'She'.⁸⁶ It is likely that these *fin de siècle* writers, especially with their emphasis on sensuous experience and representations, encouraged Mansfield to appeal to the senses of her readers, and the most obvious channel of such sensuous expression is visual via the highly memorable colourisation of select objects and images.

Mansfield often seems frustrated by being unable to capture the essence and impact of a vibrantly coloured visual image. 'Seeing', as Ida Baker frequently emphasizes in her book, is a quality that sets Mansfield's personality and art apart. But this does not mean the process is easy. Mansfield analyses the difficulty in her journal: 'The reason why you find it so hard to write is because you are learning nothing. I mean the things that count—like the sight of this tree with its purple cones against the blue'.⁸⁷ Mansfield then tries to render the striking image in descriptive terms, but finds it difficult to pin down: "'Gemed?" No. "Beaded?" No. "They are like crystals." Must I? I am afraid so....'⁸⁸ These descriptions slip right off the surface of what she truly wants to express. What she does not realise is that her straightforward depiction of the 'purple cones against the blue', in an Imagist snapshot, has already encapsulated the freshness of the painterly effect. Her anxiety over image and colour compares with the confidence of Ezra Pound, who directly relates the faces of the women and children he sees in the metro to the pictorial

⁸⁴ Katherine Mansfield, *Katherine Mansfield: Publications in Australia 1907-09*, ed. Jane E. Stone (Sydney: Wentworth Press, 1977), 26.

⁸⁵ *Publications in Australia*, 27.

⁸⁶ *CFKM*, I:15.

⁸⁷ *JKM*, 321.

⁸⁸ *JKM*, 321.

comparison of petals on a wet bough.⁸⁹ Mansfield's journal entries as well as her letters often include images that are richly coloured and almost breathing, as revelations or messages in themselves. But a direct and pure representation of images—coloured or monochromatic—is not quite enough to initiate movement in fiction writing; her intuitive encapsulation of imagery and especially colour as expression will need to adhere to the narrative in order to produce organic structures. Mansfield's later heightened use of colour may be a combination of conscious emulation of other writers and artists and an instinctive, perhaps even synaesthetic intuition.

As argued in my introductory chapter, Mansfield wrote at a time when philosophers wrote about art, poets referenced music, and painters elaborated on the logic behind their works, so her crossing multiple generic boundaries is not an anomaly. Mansfield always identified herself with 'artists', obviously allying with them rather than with writers and critics. She calls artists her 'own people'.⁹⁰ Her longest and strongest friendships were with artists, especially John D. Fergusson, Anne Estelle Rice, and Dorothy Brett. From her letters to these painters we glean confident and creative words conveying pictorial impressions that are rich in colour and movement. Not every artist during the early Modernist era explicitly theorised about colour, for most of them discussed visual art as the more tangible parameter of an analysis of the abstract discourse of images. However, Mansfield's artist friends, notably Rice, amongst other Rhythmists, paid close attention to colour in stage design and in painting. Rice advocates, along with Fergusson, the concept of rhythmical colours.⁹¹

Even though I choose to focus my reading of Mansfield on perhaps the most pliable component of the image—colour—I cannot discuss colour without briefly addressing the image first. Colour certainly can exist without an image, and in this sense become more abstract and akin to musical associations. Music is known to trigger chromatic sensations within us, but image provides a contouring effect for colour which then becomes malleable but not out of control. Aristotle famously declares in his *De Anima* that 'the soul never thinks without a mental image'.⁹² This is because 'for the thinking soul images take the place of direct perception', and when the thinking soul determines the virtue of these images, it decides to either avoid or pursue them.⁹³ Image then is portrayed as an expression that is as precise and abstract as language can be. Writers throughout history have always used images to communicate impressions that they desire to impart to their readers, and Mansfield is not exempt from this tradition. W. J. T. Mitchell places

⁸⁹ Ezra Pound's famous imagist poem 'In a Station of the Metro': 'The apparition of these faces in the crowd;/ Petals on a wet, black bough.' Cited in Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 184.

⁹⁰ *CLKM*, III, 250. The letter is addressed to Anne Estelle Rice: 'I am lying here with 'relations' the dearest people *only* they are not artists. You know what that means? I love them and they've just been too good & dear to me but they are not in the same world that we are & I pine for *my own people* my own 'wandering tribe'.

⁹¹ Rice, "Les Ballets Russes" in *Rhythm* vol. 2, no. 3, 107.

⁹² Cited in W. J. T. Mitchell, 'What is an Image?' *New Literary History* 15, no. 3 (1984): 507. Accessed: 13 May, 2011. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0028-6087%28198421%2915%3A3%3C503%3AWIA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>.

⁹³ Cited in Mitchell, 'What is an image?', 507.

graphic images and verbal images at the two ends of his 'images family tree'.⁹⁴ It is helpful to think of images in categories, but in practice, the conceptual borders between these groupings are often blurred. As Mitchell notes, within a literary text, the writer can mesh together optical images ('mirrors, projections') with verbal ('metaphors, descriptions, writings') or graphic images ('pictures, statues, designs') by using descriptions of lights, metaphors and colours, thus aiming to produce a trans-sensuous effect.⁹⁵ The most relevant aspect of Mitchell's discussion to my analysis is what he writes of mental images, especially the mobile and multi-sensory nature of such images:

And mental images don't seem to be exclusively visual the way real pictures are; they involve all the senses. ... contrary to common belief, images 'proper' are not stable, static, or permanent in any metaphysical sense; they are not perceived in the same way by viewers any more than are dream images; and they are not exclusively visual in any important way but involve multisensory apprehension and interpretation.⁹⁶

Mitchell touches upon two significant characteristics of images that were especially celebrated in the Modernist era: that an image is mobile, and that processing images requires access to multiple sensory territories.⁹⁷ The innately fluid nature of the image encourages access to more than one sense, but this is particularly true for those who think in terms of imagery, or who replace 'direct perception' with images. What then contributes further to this trans-sensuous tendency is the more pliable, permeating effect of colour, which can entice and enhance our sensual perception whether this perception is visual, haptic, or audible.

Mansfield's contemporary, Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), specifically addresses the effects of colour in his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. His interpretation of the functions of colour is closely associated with the state of the 'soul', which must be welcoming to the sensations that colour creates. Kandinsky's argument is in the same vein as both Aristotle's and Mitchell's. His observations about colour form a theoretical resting point for discussing trans-sensuous works like Mansfield's, since they demonstrate the ease of crossing generic boundaries that is characteristic of Modernism. Kandinsky distinguishes the first effect of colour as sensational: a superficial and 'purely physical effect'.⁹⁸ Yet such 'physical sensations', though lasting a short time, can also trigger deeper associations, and 'set off a whole chain of psychic experiences' provided 'the "soul" is open and receptive to such "chain reactions"'.⁹⁹ Colour provides stimulus, which then leads to sensations; the effects colour creates are ephemeral, comparable to Baudelaire's definition of

⁹⁴ Mitchell, 'What is an image?' 504-5. Mitchell categorizes images into five branches: graphic, optical, perceptual, mental, and verbal.

⁹⁵ Mitchell, 'What is an image?', 505.

⁹⁶ Mitchell, 'What is an image?', 507.

⁹⁷ Mitchell's comment on the non-sensory effect of verbal images may be helpful in understanding the abstract creation of mood and atmosphere, which will be discussed in details in Chapter five.

⁹⁸ Wassily Kandinsky, 'Effects of Color,' in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, 87-89 (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 87.

⁹⁹ Kandinsky, 87.

modernity as transient.¹⁰⁰ But as soon as the stimulus ceases, the sensation also disappears. The other effect, writes Kandinsky, is 'psychological'—deeper emotional reactions—that stay within memory, or 'soul'; one emotional response then triggers off other psychological reactions.¹⁰¹ Kandinsky gives the examples of colour's emotive solicitation that first lingers upon the retina and then, because the receptive nerves and channels within us are open or we are particularly responsive to a colour (perhaps because the associative meaning that colour contains), diverges into the more intricate workings of perception and memory. For instance,

the color red may cause a spiritual vibration like flame, since red is the color of flame. A warm red has a stimulating effect and can increase in intensity until it induces a painful sensation, perhaps also because of its resemblance to flowing blood. This color can thus conjure up the memory of another physical agent, which necessarily exerts a painful effect upon the soul.¹⁰²

Therefore the first effect is direct and momentary, while the second is associative and extensive. Kandinsky then describes the unusual case of a patient who describes a 'blue' taste, arguing that colour as a stimulus is capable of demolishing set sensory borders.¹⁰³ What he describes is a case of synaesthesia—a taste or 'scent of colors'—which can also penetrate other sensory channels such as hearing. Kandinsky's analysis seeks to express, however abstractly, the sensations that colour can induce in people. 'In general', he concludes, 'color is a means of exerting a direct influence upon the soul. Color is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano, with its many strings.'¹⁰⁴ Colour initiates harmonies of the soul; it is a means to an end, forming a sensitive, interactive field of multiple trigger points that are tightly knit into the infinite web of sensations, memories, and feelings.

The effective as well as affective nature of colour is picked up by many other writers, including Mansfield. Her personal writings often demonstrate an effortless crossing between sensory borders, in the shape of coloured verbal images or a painterly attentiveness to the effects of light, which aims to communicate and produce similar sensations in the reader. In a journal entry Mansfield voices her creative frustration by using a musical metaphor—the famous 'middle of the note' analogy—and yet the visual description which concludes the entry anchors it in a powerful sense of tranquillity.

Now the day was divine—warm soft sunshine lay upon her arms and breast like sunshine—tiny clouds, silver ones shone upon the dazzling blue—the garden

¹⁰⁰ Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays by Charles Baudelaire*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), 13: 'By "modernity" I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable'.

¹⁰¹ Kandinsky, 88.

¹⁰² Kandinsky, 88.

¹⁰³ Kandinsky, 88-9.

¹⁰⁴ Kandinsky, 89.

trees were full of gold light—and a strange brightness came from the houses—
from the open windows with their fairy curtains and flower pots ... the white steps
and the narrow spiked railings.¹⁰⁵

In a number of her mature stories, Mansfield uses a similar technique of intersecting images, often separated by dashes, to bring in a narrative rhythm that best suits the pictorial descriptions. But she also uses other devices including colour and punctuation to further enhance this established rhythm. Music will become a submerged element that at the right moment is recalled to hit a stronger note. Mansfield's emphasis on colours is careful yet economical in her writing. In her search for the right image and pigments for the best 'word painting', Mansfield's use of colour suggests a conscious selection and deletion associated with the 'physical' as well as the 'psychological' effects of colour as Kandinsky's definitions indicate.

The presence of images, and especially colour, are indispensable in Mansfield's writings. Like all good students of art or literature, she started with borrowing and emulation. Mansfield was familiar with the Realist tradition, and her taste in literature was strikingly conservative: she liked Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. She must have first moulded her method along the giants of the nineteenth-century short story tradition before breaking from them and making her own path. This is perhaps why her early stories such as 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' and 'The Woman at the Store' resemble so closely Chekhov's 'Sleepy' in its use of image and repetition. Chekhov's tale employs an ending that is conventional of short stories of the nineteenth century: the unexpected twist and curt stop. 'The Woman at the Store' also has that sudden curtail of narrative, though 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' attempts to depart from this type of ending. It is not unlikely that from at least some of the writers she admired Mansfield acquired not only the placement of pigments, but also insight into how to illuminate them to heightened effect. Of all the writers she admired, Eliot's and Hawthorne's works were perhaps most important in her education in using colour, Eliot in her deletion of colour, with an effect that is almost photographic, and Hawthorne in his method that resembles foregrounding of colour. Mansfield's early stories demonstrate that she has borrowed from the Realist traditions of colourism, but also simultaneously the attempt to move away from such traditions.

In the interest of inquiring into Mansfield's use of colour in writing, I wish to begin by briefly discussing Eliot's and Hawthorne's exemplary realist methods in the use of colour, and contrast their methods with Mansfield's own initial anxiety and then evolving sense of and confidence in colour. 'The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton' was Eliot's first story, published anonymously in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Charles Dickens, another of Mansfield's favourites, commented that this was the best writing he had seen since his career started.¹⁰⁶ Katherine Sorenson argues that Eliot's use of black-and-white contrast arises from the technological

¹⁰⁵ JKM, 144.

¹⁰⁶ Claire Tomalin, *Charles Dickens: A Life* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 280.

developments of the nineteenth century, especially photography.¹⁰⁷ To a culture deeply concerned with striving for truth, the photographic representation of images seemed the most honest possible approach; photographic technology of the day meant that the image was stripped of colours, and reality was captured in black and white chiaroscuro and the gradation hues of grey in between¹⁰⁸. Eliot's technique, particularly in 'The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton', conforms to this convention of realism by delineating scenes and narrating the story in a remarkably colour-free way. 'Eliot's use of black, white, and chiaroscuro in "Amos Barton"', argues Sorenson, 'records a moment in the development of realism, as though the short story were itself a photograph, a frozen frame, reflecting one moment in the process of aesthetic change.' Sorenson points out that George Eliot's realism in 'Amos Barton' is 'achieved ... partly through an emphasis on shades of light and the tonalities of gray because at that time she accepted photography as the most realistic medium of all'. The absence of colour in Eliot's short story suggests a deliberate emulation of photographic effect. Eliot also believed that realism in art is ultimately achieved through clearly defined shapes arrived at through the 'humble and faithful study of nature' instead of 'vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling'.¹⁰⁹ Therefore colour and blurred demarcation lines are to be abjured rigidly, to fulfil the expectations of normative realism. However, Eliot later found photographic chiaroscuro restricting in that it could render her story 'ordinary all too quickly', and she 'turned from the reproduction of primarily physical reality, associated with photography, toward the creation of primarily imaginative reality, suggestive of painting,' as her later writings indicate.¹¹⁰ The trajectory of Eliot's approach remarkably resembles that of Mansfield's, particularly in the treatment of colour—an initially awkward yet inescapable element in any word painting.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is often regarded a hallmark of colour symbolism. Not only does he use a colour theme throughout this novel, but also the success of his choice of scarlet is ensured by its rich symbolic meanings and at the same time, its ambiguity. Throughout the novel, the colour red alternates its meaning as the plot develops, being closely allied with the changing meaning of the letter 'A', which indicates the complex social and psychological functions the coloured symbol bears. Mansfield once confessed her admiration for Hawthorne, saying that she had at one time 'quite a mania' for him.¹¹¹ She does not specifically say that her admiration of Hawthorne arises from his use of colour symbolism, but I wonder if Hawthorne's use of a single dominant colour throughout a story had some influence in Mansfield's writings at the time. Her first collection of stories *In a German Pension* manifests a predominant use of the colour white. As with Hawthorne's scarlet, the meaning of Mansfield's white also alters in each story it appears, whether for satirical or caricaturing purposes, within a colour palette that as mentioned above is

¹⁰⁷ Katherine Sorenson, 'Conventions of Realism and the Absence of Color in George Eliot's 'The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton,' *Victorians Institute Journal* 22 (1994): 17.

¹⁰⁸ Sorensen, 16: 'The union of mechanical and natural verisimilitude, furthermore, dovetailed with the philosophical movement of Positivism and the aesthetic doctrine of realism, both efforts to represent life as it is and to demonstrate its value and meaning without idealism.'

¹⁰⁹ Sorenson, 22-3.

¹¹⁰ Sorensen, 26.

¹¹¹ *CLKM*, I, 46.

noticeably monotonous and controlled. Most of the *German Pension* stories are best characterised as monochromatic, with a tonal grey which lies in between the two extremes and only the occasional appearance of any colour. Before Mansfield's first 'serious' publication—*In the German Pension*—her writings demonstrate a liberal, if sometimes overt, application of colours, which can be called emotive. Yet the *German Pension* stories display a noticeable exclusion of colour, unless used for satirical purposes. And even so, the appearance of colours is best described as timid, tentative, and in small blotches framed to just touch up a character or situation, while the surroundings of the character or situation remain largely sketch-like and unpainted. The confidence of strange comparisons and associations of colour, atmosphere, and imagery from her early vignettes are gone. Instead, stark contrasts of black and white dominate much of the narrative space of the *German Pension* stories. This kind of suppression of colours in Mansfield's narrative continued until she was introduced to the Rhythmists.

Both Hawthorne's and Mansfield's colours are bordered by their symbolic or satirical implications. Hawthorne's colour, though dynamic, is not fluid, for it has no trans-sensuous associations. The emphasis is more on the symbol 'A' than what paints its narrative borders. Therefore Hawthorne's red in itself is still more akin to the realist tradition of colour as descriptive or symbolic rather than emotional or psychologically expressive, in Kandinsky's sense of the term. Yet Mansfield arguably learnt invaluable lessons from Hawthorne, among them the alluring power of colour-suggestion that can work seamlessly within a symbolic narrative to demand interpretation and unravelling. Whether Mansfield's monochrome palette in these early stories is the result of an intentional photographic lack of colour, or of the dominance of one major colour cautiously outlined so as not to smudge—for even Symbolism's images gesture in rather specific interpretative directions—her use of white shows she has learned to incorporate colours into her writing with confidence.

2. Dabs and Blotches: the Satirical Colours of *In a German Pension and Other Stories*

Compared with Mansfield's juvenilia, the *German Pension* stories are more complete and consistent in their use of colour. The stories provide a look into Mansfield's prototypical relationship with colour that paves the way for her later more intuitive and Fauvist chromatic expressions. One noticeable difference between the *German Pension* stories and Mansfield's early writings, such as the ones published in *The Native Companion*, is that the predominantly satirical sketches in the later collection lack the spontaneous colouring of the early stories. This spontaneous colouring is the result of the eye's sensitivity to changes in light, and its receptivity to what could be called unnatural colouring. By unnatural I mean that the objects described, or painted with words, are subject to the effects of light, for example the blue cabbages glowing under cold moonlight in the example cited earlier. In contrast, the *German Pension* stories focus on satire to the extent that they neglect, or purposefully trim, colour into conventional expressive frames, and thus everything, from food to nature, clothing and facial features, never appears in

colours other than the natural. Sporadically coloured spots exist seemingly out of necessity or perhaps even as an afterthought. The residue of Eliot's 'truthful' and photographic representation of subjects finds its way into the *Pension* stories, and often serves the purpose of caricature.

It can be argued that the static colours are appropriate for most of the stories because they do not take attention away from Mansfield's sarcastic and humorous tone. The reason why colours, when they do appear, look like dabs and blotches in a number of the *German Pension* stories is that they are like comical highlights, excessive rouge on the face of a comedian whose aim is to exaggerate and ridicule pretension and vanity, but not without a touch of sympathy. These colours have a certain rigidity in that they are not very associative or provocative of emotions. We can treat this use of colour as the work of an anxious young writer who, under A. R. Orage's influence, begins to write serious stories in the highly political milieu of *The New Age*.

At the other end of Mansfield's colour spectrum is the dominance and repetition of monochromatic colour schemes. The colours in these stories usually carry a more sinister connotation, such as the colour white in 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' and 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding'. Both stories use colour in a way that harkens back to Eliot or Hawthorne, where a single colour or minimal colour is more symbolic than atmospheric or emotive. Yet Mansfield's white seeks to subvert the meaning of innocence, and points to violence in both stories. Her repetitive use of white, particularly in 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', is suggestive and picturesque, reaching for psychological depth, and progresses towards a more ambiguous and Modernist method. As later analysis will show, her use of white in 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', though its imagist refrain reminds us of Hawthorne's scarlet, acquires a more expansive nature since the colour is suggested in multiple objects and surroundings, and its meaning is never as explicit as that of the letter 'A'. The colour in Hawthorne's novel is contoured and controlled even though the meaning of 'A' changes, whereas the colours in Mansfield's stories are loosely sketched within images and their suggestions, reaching for atmospheric expression.

The more rigid type of colour is best illustrated in stories such as 'Germans at Meat' and 'The Baron'. The first time that any colour is mentioned in 'Germans at Meat' is when Herr Rat 'fixed his cold blue eyes upon' the narrator, an English woman, 'with an expression which suggested a thousand premeditated invasions.'¹¹² The story, together with the other *German Pension* sketches, caters to the then prevalent pre-war English stereotypical criticism of the German character, and gained Mansfield much popularity.¹¹³ Besides the blue of Herr Rat's eyes, the only colours Mansfield uses are for the food, explicit and implied: 'red currants and spinach', '[t]hey wiped their forks upon black bread and started again', 'glass dish of stewed apricots was placed on the table'. Four out of these five colours (blue, red, green, black, yellow, and red again) used in 'Germans at Meat' have to do with food, and yet almost nothing else is coloured. What is more, to an English

¹¹² *The CFKM*, I, 165.

¹¹³ According to Kimber and O'Sullivan, only four of the *New Age* stories were clearly labelled 'Pension Sketches', and these are 'The Baron', 'The Sister of the Baroness', 'Faru Fischer', and 'The Modern Soul' (See *CFKM*, I, 164, Note 2). But given the subject matter and closeness of theme and tone in 'Germans at Meat', this story can be easily grouped with the other four as a satirical sketch as well.

palate, the colours emphasise that these are unappetising foods. Black bread is coded as 'unnatural'—it should be white—and the *stewed* apricots turn the pleasant orange of the fruit into something that has been interfered with and made possibly nauseating. Satirical realism dominates the colour palette of the story, and colour itself becomes secondary to the broader purpose of exaggeration and caricature.

'The Baron' belongs to the same category in its use of colour. It does not have a predominant colour, but only a few dabs to highlight the main character. The little black leather bag is seen wherever the Baron goes. Mansfield associates this little bag as well as the colour black with the Baron, contrasting the smallness of the bag with the immensity of his appetite. The contrasts, first between size and appetite, and then between expectation and reality, begin with minimal highlights: 'Small and slight, with scanty black hair and beard and yellow-toned complexion, he invariably wore black stage clothes, a rough linen shirt, black sandals, and the largest black-rimmed spectacles that I have ever seen.'¹¹⁴ An imbalance of sizes is clearly intended to characterize the Baron. Black and yellow together form the caricature of the Baron, and these two colours repeat themselves whenever he appears or is ready for more food. Mansfield's depiction of the Baron, who 'look[s] like a little yellow silkworm', is fascinating and repulsive.¹¹⁵

But the narrator is confused as to why this unimpressive man appears so mysterious and important to the other German guests. No one knows what the Baron is up to all day, or how to approach him. His aloofness, further signified by the little black bag, suggests mystery. The opportunity to finally have all the narrator's questions answered comes as the Baron offers to share his umbrella with her when it rains heavily. It turns out that there is no mystery at all. Even the enigmatic black bag is explained away in the most banal terms: it never leaves the Baron's side because he fears losing his valuables, and its function in the dining room is to occupy the seat next to him so that he can eat undisturbed. When the narrator asks what the Baron does all day, he replies, "I imbibe nourishment in my room," [...] in a voice that closed the conversation and almost repented of the umbrella'.¹¹⁶ The Baron really is a sort of 'yellow silk worm' who does nothing but consume food, and Mansfield uses this to construct an ironic structure that ends with a satirical 'Sic transit gloria Germani mundi'.¹¹⁷

Both 'Germans at Meat' and 'The Baron' are preoccupied with eating as a means to exaggerate and satirise. As a result, the spotlight falls upon food and illuminates those that are closest to it. As I have shown, food and its consumers are coloured very distinctly, whereas the extended narrative space is either highly abbreviated or monochromatic in its colouring. These stories are appropriately named 'Pension *Sketches*' because of their economical use of colour, as highlights for caricature and not as elements that permeate the entire narrative to produce mood, or to evoke imaginative association. The abrupt conclusions of both stories also augment this

¹¹⁴ *CFKM*, I, 172-3.

¹¹⁵ *CFKM*, I, 172-3.

¹¹⁶ *CFKM*, vol. 1, 175.

¹¹⁷ *CFKM*, vol. 1, 175.

sense of finality, further contouring and guiding our focus to the brief satirical sparks created towards the end. The absence of colour can be seen as a nod to the normative realism tradition, which, though it uses symbolism, still relies heavily on irony, caricature and satire to co-create meaning. These samples of Mansfield's early stories demonstrate a static and conventional use and interpretation of colour.

3. Repetitions and Parallels: Monochromatic Colours and Doubling Whites in 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' and 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding'

Not all the stories in the *German Pension* collection are satirical. Two of them, through their reiteration of a negative space and preoccupation with black-and-white contrast, reflect Mansfield's growing preoccupation with colour. This kind of anxiety is artistic in essence, for it resembles the same kind of apprehension a painter has when faced with a blank canvas; it is inconceivable for the painter to start without preliminary study or emulation, or simply allow the brush to run wild. Often the most apparently effortless, childlike images have undergone the most serious planning. The paintings of the Fauve artists, for example, often impress us at first glance with a sense of directness, or even thoughtlessness, because they seem rather too simplistic in their lines, too pure in their colours, and too fearless in their subject. But behind this abbreviated aesthetics is the departure from a nineteenth-century preoccupation with filling out every inch of the canvas with symbolism and design. Instead, the Fauves sought to take up the overtly embellished frame and shake it until all excessive ornaments fell off, and only the essential features and colours of the subject remained. Their call, as I will discuss in more detail in following chapters, is for a return to origins—to the 'barbaric', for lack of a better word—and allow imagination to preside over the decluttered space. By the time 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired' and 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' were published, the Fauves had already exhibited in Europe. Mansfield must have been aware of their refreshing approach, but might not yet have allowed full infiltration of Fauvist notions of colour into her writing. She was drawing inspiration from elsewhere, yet at the same time developing an increasing sensitivity to colour.

'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' is a story that tests a reader's allegiance. Jenney McDonnell argues that the short story form was 'relatively young' when Mansfield published in the *New Age*, and 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' 'reflects this novelty, as well as providing an oblique portrait of the writer at the beginning of her career, seeking to claim a place within a tradition of short story writers while simultaneously experimenting with new prose forms and practices'.¹¹⁸ But 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' invites another reading, revealing its significance to Mansfield both as a storyteller in training and a colourist beginning to consider the impact of colour repetition. The story needs to be read for both its similarities and differences to Chekhov's 'Sleepy', particularly in terms of recurrent images and the representation of fatigue via these images. It is likely that 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' is a prototype study, developing methods that eventually lead to

¹¹⁸ Jenny McDonnell, *Katherine Mansfield and the Modernist marketplace: At the Mercy of the Public* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2010), 18.

Mansfield's rhythmical repetition of colour in her more overtly Fauvist stories such as 'Ole Underwood'.

According to McDonnell, at the publication of 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' Mansfield was struggling 'to establish a new mode of writing', and the story 'provides an allegory of authorial uncertainty'.¹¹⁹ She points out that the Child's illegitimate identity indicates 'an anxiety of origins that reflects Mansfield's awareness of the newness and cultural marginality of the short story form, as well as her own tentative location within the genre', and the Child's 'illegitimacy may be read as an indirect allusion to the story's reliance upon the work of Anton Chekhov'.¹²⁰ McDonnell places Mansfield's formative years as a writer in the environment of the avant-garde magazine the *New Age*, which makes sense considering the way that Mansfield's use of colour at this stage of her career reflects the same kind of authorial anxiety. The central question about 'The-Child' is not how much the story resembles 'Sleepy', but how and why it is different from Chekhov's tale. I believe that a close look at Mansfield's use of repeated images and how she introduces her own colours gives a sense of her contending impulses—first the desire to pay homage and second the need to establish independence. Especially telling is her monochromatic reiteration of images as a way of departing from the narrative line of 'Sleepy'. I am not making excuses for Mansfield's so-called plagiarism, but am merely interested in how she, like so many others of her trade, learns to transform her master's knowledge into her own expression. If the narrative is overtly indebted to 'Sleepy', the way she introduces colour certainly departs from Chekhov.

The central, haunting image in 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' is painted in black and white: 'a little white road with tall black trees on each side'¹²¹. This little white road represents the Child's recurring fantasy of rest. Here Mansfield relates black and white with the world of sleep, or death. The road to eternal slumber is not painted with ecstatic colors, but abbreviated lines and monotonous shades—as simple as black and white, the Child's only desire is to sleep. The road 'that led to nowhere, and where nobody walked at all', like a vertical line, separates the atmosphere of the story into two spheres of existence: dream and reality.¹²² Chekhov's 'Sleepy', on the other hand, presents a less static image. Whenever the point of view focuses on Varka's sleep-deprived hallucinatory state, her sensory perceptions are meshed together. She sees 'dark clouds chasing' each other and 'crying like the child'.

And then a wind blows, the clouds vanish, and Varka sees a wide road covered with liquid mud; along the road stretch wagons, men with satchels on their backs crawl along, and shadows move backward and forward; on either side through the chilly, thick mist are visible hills. And suddenly the men with the satchels and

¹¹⁹ McDonnell, 18-9.

¹²⁰ McDonnell, 19.

¹²¹ *CFKM*, I, 158.

¹²² *CFKM*, I, 158.

the shadows collapse in the liquid mud. 'Why is this?' asks Varka. 'To sleep, to sleep!' comes the answer.¹²³

Both Mansfield's *Child* and Chekhov's *Varka* seem to be going not to sleep but to purgatory, except Chekhov's version, with its motion-picture-like description, creates an imaginative melting-away of these figures into darkness. The omission or insufficiency of details in Mansfield's version when compared with Chekhov's may also arise because of the Russian writer's profession; being a physician, Chekhov is more accurate, or more confident when describing the symptomatic aspects of sleep deprivation, while Mansfield's concern lies with presenting a memorable picture that is imbedded in the narrative. Mansfield chooses to be vague where Chekhov makes things clear. Mansfield's little black-and-white road is more like a photographic shot from memory than Chekhov's dissolving vortex of both horror and relief. 'Sleepy', though a succinct narrative, is quite detailed in laying out the recurrent scene of 'liquid mud'. Chekhov's descriptive accuracy also allows for other characters and movement to occupy Varka's fantasy place whereas Mansfield's little road, like a negative space, remains unpopulated by imagination, and waits to be developed into a real and memorable image. Mansfield had yet to learn that colour or colour contrast alone will not bring movement, but she is trying to invent her own picturesque reiteration that propels the plot.

'The Child' is predominantly lacking in colour. It starts and ends with the clear image in chiaroscuro of the road, which repeats itself six times throughout the narrative. The frequent appearance of this road emphasizes the intensity of the image. The little black and white road has a sense of in-betweenness, of needing to be developed from mental picture into reality; the road's alluring invitation is eventually achieved by an act of murder when the Child smothers the baby that is the cause for her chronically sleep-deprived state. The image of the road, according to Elena Glotova, 'reflects the textual and cognitive aspects of the protagonist's characterization', and 'gives an access to the child's mental world and accounts for her inability to sustain the sense of reality and distinguish between the fantasy-reality boundaries'.¹²⁴ Glotova also points out the difference between Varka's and the Child's motives in killing the baby: 'Varka's perception of the baby is based on acoustic connections', for Varka initially aims at 'terminating the noise, but not killing the baby'.¹²⁵ But the Child's distorted understanding of her situation comes from first, a 'false impression' of the baby's knowledge of her fatigue, and deep resentment of the baby's constant need for care as if this were a deliberate and malevolent act; and second, the Frau's pregnancy which gives the Child a 'sense of doubling her burden, and pushes her to eliminate such a possibility'.¹²⁶ From an authorial perspective, another acoustic reiteration also intensifies

¹²³ Anton Chekhov, 'Sleepy', from the on-line version at the University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center. First prepared by Judy Boss, ed. Thomas P. Lukas and David Seaman. <http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/ac/sleep.htm>. Accessed: 12 Feb, 2015.

¹²⁴ Elena Glotova, 'The Suffering Minds: Cognitive Stylistic Approach to Characterization in 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired' by Katherine Mansfield and 'Sleepy' by Anton Chekhov,' *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 4, no. 12 (2014): 2450.

¹²⁵ Glotova, 2452.

¹²⁶ Glotova, 2452.

Varka's exhausted state. Chekhov uses a nursery rhyme to connect the narrative frames, whereas Mansfield relies on a monotonous image. Mansfield's use of this black-and-white image can be interpreted as a more modern technique of abbreviation as opposed to Chekhov's complete picture.

There are other brief appearances of colours besides the strongly silhouetted road. Conspicuous interruptions of colour occur when the Child pegs the washing outside for the Frau. A contrast between reality and fantasy or longing springs up, with pungent odor and brighter colours: 'There was a bad smell coming from the duck's coop, which was half full of manure water, but away in the meadow she saw the grass blowing like *little green hairs*.'¹²⁷ These brief appearances of colour could be remembered or imagined images of a halcyon past, or indications of the final destination where the little white road leads. In 'Sleepy', Varka re-traces the outline of her memory and of her parents, yet the Child struggles to remember where she has heard the story 'of a child who had once played for a whole day in just such a meadow with real sausages and beer for her dinner—and not a little bit of tiredness. ... She could not remember, and yet it was so plain'.¹²⁸ This suggests again the ambiguous line between memory and imagination, for either the Child, supposedly silly from birth, cannot remember what her childhood looked like at all and thus is unable to picture such a time, or else that one bright spot of the past has been blotched and written over by the cruelty of her current and seemingly endless existence. Next, she sees a man passing by, wearing 'a long queer feather in his hat', and '[t]wo girls with bundles on their shoulders', 'one [of whom] wore a red handkerchief about her head and one a blue'¹²⁹. The complementary colours of red and blue leave a vibrant and lasting impression: the girls are 'laughing and holding each other by the hand. Then the sun pushed by a heavy fold of grey cloud and spread a warm yellow light over everything'.¹³⁰ Red, blue, and yellow, the three primary colours that constitute all other colours perceptible to the human eye, are completely presented to the Child for the first time in the story. These brightly dressed people, going past the Child, seem to head towards a happy destination that lies at the end of her own semi-structured little white road, and to an ultimate escape.

As the day goes on, the Child can no longer fight off her sleepiness, nor does she see bright colours anymore. Instead, she starts to hallucinate:

As she sat at supper the Man and the Frau seemed to swell to an immense size as she watched them, and then become smaller than dolls, with little voices that seemed to come from outside the window. Looking at the baby, it suddenly had two heads, and then no head.¹³¹

¹²⁷ CFKM, I, 161. Italics mine.

¹²⁸ CFKM, I, 162.

¹²⁹ CFKM, I, 162.

¹³⁰ CFKM, I, 162.

¹³¹ CFKM, I 163.

Soon the little white road with big black trees reappears, and the Child is struck with 'a beautiful, marvellous idea'.¹³² After she suffocates the baby, the sleep-deprived Child 'heave[s] a long sigh, then f[alls] back on to the floor,' and instead of imagining, she is 'walking along a little white road with tall black trees on either side, a little road that led to nowhere, and where nobody walked at all—nobody at all'.¹³³ The Child is finally able to embark on the journey to rest, and leaves the monochromatic fantasy world of solitude and fatigue behind.

'The Child-Who-Was-Tired' differs from 'The Baron' and 'Germans at Meat' in that colours now carry less of a satirical association, and communicate more of a symbolic and impressionistic tone. Mansfield does not completely abandon the technique of chiaroscuro and image repetition, and this is one of the techniques that differentiate her version from Chekhov's. Therefore in dealing with the authorial anxiety McDonnell mentions, Mansfield appears to have simultaneously begun a search for her own unique means of expression while emulating a writer she admired. For a similar reason, critics are particularly lenient in their verdict on the similarities between 'Sleepy' and 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired'. Elisabeth Schneider argues that it is 'an unconscious imitation',¹³⁴ while Glotova writes that in spite of resemblances of plot, Mansfield 'created a completely unique mental set with individually specific conceptualizations of similar events, subjective motives and reasoning'.¹³⁵ Another way to express the relationship between the two stories is to say that 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired' is as an art student's study of a master's established work; the phenomenon is comparable to the closeness of paintings by Italian Renaissance masters and those by their best pupils, which even the most professional scrutiny can hardly distinguish. Mansfield's early debut is obviously not completely her own invention, and is still much indebted to the realist tradition of using colour, apart from Chekhov's story line.

'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', written a few months after 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired', reflects a similar authorial anxiety in its permeating use of white throughout the story, but 'Frau Brechenmacher' is different from 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired' because of the meaning implied by colour changes. Mansfield presents one colour with its conventional associations and meaning, yet twists that meaning into something more vague and suggestive. The story does not start with the colour white, but several selected colours that readers are invited to connect with gender roles. The colours mentioned in the beginning of the story all have to do with clothes, such as 'Herr Brechenmacher's 'black satin necktie', Frau Brechenmacher's 'blue silk handkerchief', or Rosa wearing her mother's 'black shawl'.¹³⁶ Herr Brechenmacher is a postman, and he will wear 'his blue uniform' with shiny buttons to the wedding, and his wife, Frau Brechenmacher chooses a 'blue silk handkerchief' to match him. The dominant-submissive relationship between husband

¹³² *CFKM*, I 163.

¹³³ *CFKM*, I 164.

¹³⁴ Elisabeth Schneider, 'Katherine Mansfield and Chekhov,' *Modern Language Notes* 50, no. 6 (1935): 397.

¹³⁵ Glotova, 2452.

¹³⁶ *CFKM*, I, 184.

and wife is further enhanced when Herr Brechenmacher tells his wife to go dress in the dark passage, saying 'I want the light', and that there is not enough room to turn¹³⁷.

The contrast of dark and light, like that of night and day which signify masculinity and femininity, once again constructs a kind of chiaroscuro in the plot. The assignment of space by the husband is significant because Frau Brechenmacher functions better in the dark than in the light. 'Dressing in the dark was nothing to Frau Brechenmacher' indicates that the Frau is more familiar, or even at ease with the dark. But when she comes to the wedding, and finds no dark corners in which to conceal herself, a series of unpleasant events occurs.¹³⁸ The final scene of her '[lying] down on the bed and put[ting] her arm across her face like a child who expected to be hurt as Herr Brechenmacher lurched in' is particularly revealing. By shutting the light out of her face, a feeble act of denial, Frau Brechenmacher braces herself for her husband—a gesture recalling their wedding night. It is possible that marital violence is initiated in the dark, or that the Frau has ever since retreated into a dark psychological territory as opposed to the brutal light whose representative is her husband. At the wedding, the Frau thinks that she 'want[s] to go home and never come out again', and imagines that everyone is laughing at her because she is so much weaker than them.¹³⁹

When both the husband and wife are dressed for the wedding, the colour white becomes more conspicuous. The time of the wedding is '[a]fter supper', when the natural sunlight has gone out, and everything the Frau encounters, from the hurried instructions she leaves her daughter Rosa to the steamy, noisy atmosphere at the wedding, happens in an illuminated blur: 'Oil lamps, hanging from the ceiling, shed a warm, bright light on the walls decorated with paper flowers and garlands; shed a warmer, brighter light on the red faces of the guests in their best clothes'¹⁴⁰. A profusion of bright light creates an illusion that the wedding is taking place during daytime. Frau Brechenmacher's willingness to accept her role as submissive wife and mother is ironically presented by her giving up the well-lit kitchen for her husband.¹⁴¹ Dark and light form a juxtaposition of gender roles and submission. More is revealed as the story progresses. According to Smith, what happens at the wedding the Frau attends releases the suppressed memory of her own wedding night.¹⁴²

In Angela Smith's reading of this story, she points out that '[c]lothes are used in the Bavarian stories in a more obvious, overtly satirical way, to attack patriarchy.'¹⁴³ Smith's reading helps to make sense of another minor incident. The idea of women being taught and trained to be bride, wife, mother and servant is hereditary and connected, which is why Frau Brechenmacher and the bride are both highlighted by the clothes they wear, and connected by the wedding scene.

¹³⁷ CFKM, I, 185.

¹³⁸ CFKM, I, 185.

¹³⁹ CFKM, I, 188.

¹⁴⁰ CFKM, I, 186.

¹⁴¹ Smith, *A Literary Life*, 63.

¹⁴² Smith, *A Literary Life*, 63: 'The bleakness of his wife's situation, and by implication of all the dutiful women in her society, is made clear in the closing lines of the story, as she re-enacts her wedding night... The image of the bride as a cake ready to be cut up and served to her husband is explained by this repressed memory.'

¹⁴³ *A Literary Life*, 64.

However, before the wedding, there is another significant assignment of a piece of clothes from Frau Brechenmacher to her nine-year-old daughter Rosa, the only child who is still up. In the negotiation over whether Rosa can stay up until after half-past eight, which Rosa begs for and her mother refuses, the Frau threatens to have Rosa's father deliver the same message, which almost stops Rosa completely. As if to reinforce the matriarchal command disguised as a patriarchal one, Frau Brechenmacher clothes Rosa with her 'black shawl'. Not only is Rosa now temporarily taking on her mother's role, but also, the meaningful nature of a black shawl, reminding us of the aforementioned light-and-dark contrast, transfers to the daughter almost as an heirloom. Rosa accepts the shawl with full contentment, and decides that if she has to go to bed earlier than half-past eight, she will keep the shawl on. Clothes, foregrounded by colour, are tools to reinforce gender roles assigned to women from an early age. The three stages of girlhood, young wife, and Frau are represented by the clothes the three female characters wear, and two are immediately connected by the colour white.

Two sentences of scenic description also include white, with the second one as a variation of the little white road in 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired'. The first scene occurs at the time before the Frau enters the wedding feast: 'Snow had not fallen all day; the frozen ground was slippery as an icepond'.¹⁴⁴ The second occurs after the wedding: 'White and forsaken lay the road from the railway station to their house'¹⁴⁵. White, with its culturally legitimate presence at a wedding, starts to become the predominant colour of the story:

At the head of the centre table sat the bride and bridegroom, she in a white dress trimmed with stripes and bows of coloured ribbon, giving her the appearance of an iced cake all ready to be cut and served in neat little pieces to the bridegroom beside her, who wore a suit of white clothes much too large for him and a white silk tie that rose half-way up his collar.¹⁴⁶

This description is cannibalistic: the hollowness of the groom implies an appetite to be fulfilled by consuming the bride as cake. Where white in popular culture is usually associated with purity and cleanliness, here it bears a rather sinister connotation. The bride's white dress speaks of the frightful analogy drawn between her appearance of 'an iced cake' ready to be served to not only the groom, but also the wedding guests. The dress is likened to the delicious coat of cream icing on the cake which only makes the inside more tempting to consume.

A parallel is drawn between the Frau and the bride through the colour white. Frau Brechenmacher is informed that the back of her dress is open, and everyone 'could not help laughing as [she] walked up the room with the *white* tape of [her] petticoat showing'.¹⁴⁷ It is almost as if the wedding guests are tearing Frau Brechenmacher apart with shrill laughter, sporting with

¹⁴⁴ *CFKM*, I, 185.

¹⁴⁵ *CFKM*, I, 188.

¹⁴⁶ *CFKM*, I, 186.

¹⁴⁷ *CFKM*, I, 186.

her embarrassment and ready to satisfy their own appetite at her expense—in the same way as they do to the bride. Both the Frau and the bride share a common colour white, but instead of all the conventional meanings that this colour bears, white became a synonym for an animalistic cruelty, at the site of which a brutal hunger emerges and has to be satisfied.

The white tape of Frau Brechenmacher's underwear is embarrassing for her, but an amusing incident for the others. That the glimpse of Frau's white petticoat matches the white dress of the bride is not a coincidence. In a way this story is about how newlywed brides are introduced crudely and brutally to their husband's carnal appetite: Frau Brechenmacher's past is the bride's future. The meaning of white has already been altered into a menacing facade of the lurking threat of marital rape. Frau Brechenmacher's initial reaction to showing her petticoat to everyone present is not '[h]ow embarrassing!', but 'how *frightful!*'¹⁴⁸ Frau Rupp's casual dismissal of Frau Brechenmacher has the undertone of warning: 'but one must be careful, especially at a wedding'¹⁴⁹.

The Frau initially matches her husband's blue uniform, but her connection with the bride possibly hints at her own past, and raises suspicion as to whether the two women share more than just a common colour. Mansfield does not draw connecting coloured lines between her characters by accident. Frau Rupp, the butcher's wife and Frau Ledermann reveal in their conversation that Theresa, the bride, has borne a child with another man before marrying her current husband. Theresa brings the child to the wedding, to the disbelief of the women guests. The child's father apparently abandoned Theresa and his child, and Frau Brechenmacher reacts to this by evasively 'look[ing] down at her beer and bl[owing] a little hole in the froth' as if she were the woman in question. 'That's not how a wedding should be' she says mechanically, 'it's not religion to love two men', which sounds more like defence than judgment. Unlike the other women, Frau Brechenmacher's ambiguous attitude implies her sympathy towards the bride and possibly of her own past.

At this point Herr Brechenmacher is giving a speech; he carries a large coffee pot over to the bride, who peeks into it, but shuts the coffee pot with a 'little scream and [sits] biting her lips'.¹⁵⁰ The coffee-pot is taken away by the groom, and he shows the content to the guests. Inside it is 'a baby's bottle and two little cradles holding china dolls.'¹⁵¹ Frau Brechenmacher's reaction is particularly solemn compared with everyone else in the room roaring with laughter. She does 'not think it funny', and staring at the laughing faces around her, she feels suddenly vulnerable as if everyone was laughing at her.¹⁵² The fact that the Frau not only sympathizes, but also identifies with the bride seems to confirm the suspicion that her experience with men has not been that different. We are told at the beginning of the story that the Frau has five babies, while Rosa, her eldest daughter is nine years old. It is not a far-fetched speculation that Rosa, like Theresa's baby,

¹⁴⁸ *CFKM*, I, 186.

¹⁴⁹ *CFKM*, I, 186.

¹⁵⁰ *CFKM*, I, 188.

¹⁵¹ *CFKM*, I, 188.

¹⁵² *CFKM*, I, 188.

might be an illegitimate child. In the highly abbreviated narrative it is hard to be certain, but this is arguably the memory that the Frau tries to suppress, and which is triggered by the atmospheric reminders at the wedding as well as the joke.

The noise of the wedding, together with its frightfulness, finally subsides, and Frau Brechenmacher 'stumble[s] after' Herr Brechenmacher in silence on the way home: 'White and forsaken lay the road from the railway station to their house—a cold rush of wind blew her hood from her face, and suddenly she remembered how they had come home together the first night.'¹⁵³ This final stroke of white brings back memories of violence and a question, 'Na, what is it all for?'¹⁵⁴ But after a while, after Herr Brechenmacher uncorks the lid to the memory of their first night together, 'even the memory of the wedding faded quite'.¹⁵⁵ White is repeated throughout the story, reflected on different surfaces, and embodies different meanings. But Mansfield's way of implying rather than stating these meanings seems to depart from her earlier approach because instead of drawing our attention to one coloured object or symbol, she scatters the predominant colour throughout the story, and in its radiation white becomes psychologically compelling and complex.

The predominance of white in this story can also be interpreted as the anxiety of Mansfield's search for a more expressive colour palette, and the occasional bursts of colours her attempt to break free of a single channel of colour expression. Roland Barthes writes that it 'is only a writer's paper which is white, which is "clean", and that is not the least of his problems'; the implication is that the white page creates the panicky question of how to corrupt it.¹⁵⁶ However, Barthes believes that a writer's true misfortune is that he is forbidden graffiti.¹⁵⁷ Graffiti suggests experimentation, a liberality to express form, line, and colour, to communicate 'bliss'. We may not be completely certain whether at this point Mansfield felt fettered by the realist framework for using colour, or she was struggling against the 'too sharply modelled' editorial outlines of the *New Age*, as Jenny McDonnell suggests.¹⁵⁸ But reading 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' and 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' closely, with Mansfield's repeated use of black and white in mind, suggests that she is stepping away from the realist tradition. Mansfield's departure from monochromatic colours or predominant colour symbolism toward a more fluid and expressive colour palette happened at around the same time when she came into contact with the *Rhythm* group, especially the group's Fauvist artists such as John D. Fergusson and Anne Estelle Rice.

4. 'The Grass was Blue': Rhythmical Colours and a Mansfieldian Colourism

As alluded to in my introductory chapter, John Middleton Murry in the summer of 1911

¹⁵³ *CFKM*, I, 188.

¹⁵⁴ *CFKM*, I, 188.

¹⁵⁵ *CFKM*, I, 189.

¹⁵⁶ Barthe, 166.

¹⁵⁷ Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms* (Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1986), 166-170.

¹⁵⁸ McDonnell, 19.

founded the quarterly magazine *Rhythm* with Michael Sadler, and became the magazine's editor. Prior to this, Murry and Sadler had approached the Scottish painter, John D. Fergusson, in Paris, asking him to design a cover for their literary magazine. One account goes that they had seen Fergusson's painting in the Salon d'Automne, perhaps his oil painting *Étude de Rhythm* (1910; see chapter four), and become convinced that his work fully embodied their ideas of literature and art. Fergusson writes of how exciting this time was in the artistic milieu of Paris, with the Russian Ballet performing *Sheherazade*, *Petruchka*, *Sacre du Printemps*— 'the greatest nights in anyone's life'.¹⁵⁹ In his initial discussions with Murry and Sadler, Fergusson wanted to call the magazine *The Quest*. He also made a number of preliminary sketches before he finally decided on the magazine's cover of the sitting nude (see images below).¹⁶⁰

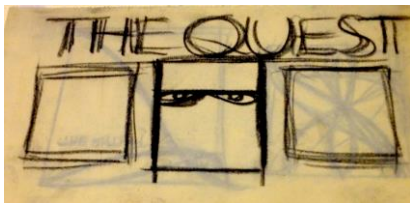


Figure 1. Sketch for *The Quest* (c. 1910), courtesy of the Fergusson Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council.



Figure 2. Sketch for *Rhythm* magazine (1910), courtesy of the Fergusson Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council.



Figure 3. Study for *Rhythm* (1910), courtesy of the Fergusson Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council.



Figure 4. Study for *Rhythm* (1910), courtesy of the Fergusson Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council.

¹⁵⁹ Margaret Morris, *The Art of J. D. Fergusson: A Biased Biography* (Glasgow and London: Blackie, 1974), 47. There are different accounts of the origins of Fergusson's painting. Fergusson produced more than one painting (to be discussed in chapter 3) involving the theme of 'rhythm'.

¹⁶⁰ Also see Chapter four's images and discussion for a more detailed account of Fergusson's own interpretation of 'rhythm'. One of Fergusson's most frequent themes is the female nude, and amongst the photos in Perth's Fergusson gallery is a nude photo of Jean Maconochie, a former girlfriend of Fergusson's, sitting in a similar pose as the figure in the studies. It is likely that Fergusson had this nude photo in mind as his depiction of 'rhythm' matured.

Rhythm became a richly illustrated magazine under Fergusson's editorship; it was the first publication in England to publish drawings by Picasso, and featured S. J. Peploe's rough outlines of scenic sketches, Anne Estelle Rice's voluptuous dancers, and Fergusson's still-life studies amongst others. The decorative designs and illustrations throughout the issues remained faithful to the ideas of both Fauvism and rhythm, and some the designs reappeared in more than one issue of the magazine, forming within the physical magazine itself a rhythmical echo of imagery. This avant-garde though short-lived magazine advocated modern art. As Murry put it in a piece titled 'Aims and Ideals' at the end of the first issue, *Rhythm* was a new magazine 'with a purpose. Its title is the ideal of a new art, to which it will endeavour to give expression in England. ... We need an art that strikes deeper, that touches a profounder reality, that passes outside the bounds of a narrow aestheticism'.¹⁶¹ Murry verbalized Fauvist ideas and wrote that *Rhythm's* 'intention is to provide art, be it drawing, literature or criticism,' which is 'vigorous, determined, which shall have its roots below the surface, and be the rhythmical echo of the life with which it is in touch. Both in its pity and its brutality it shall be real.'¹⁶² Murry's manifesto explains his later enthusiasm for Mansfield's New Zealand stories. To him, the stories represented the new art, displaying a rhythmical brutality which fitted so well with the magazine's mission statement.

While *Rhythm* was being established, Mansfield was thinking about leaving the *New Age*. On October 11, 1911, she wrote to J. B. Pinker, a literary agent, requesting an interview and wanting to send him her work. At about the same time, Mansfield sent 'The Woman at the Store' to Murry, who was quite excited and requested to meet her. In December Mansfield met Murry, who soon became her lodger and later her lover. The next May she went to Paris with Murry and was introduced to Fergusson and Anne Estelle Rice. Mansfield then was formally initiated into the Rhythmist' group, and her relationship with the artists and editors in the group would have a profound influence upon her writing, aesthetics and direction.

In this discussion I concentrate on Fergusson's and Rice's works in relation to Mansfield's since they were her closest friends among the *Rhythm* artists. One major influence the painters had on Mansfield was how she used colour for two of her New Zealand stories to convey both the message of brutality and rhythm; these Fauvist stories look quite different from her *German Pension* stories. Murry's influence, however, is more controversial; some critics believe that he brought out an overtly sentimental side of Mansfield's writing which was viciously attacked by her former editor Orage, who accused her of mediocrity and losing her sharp satirical voice. Mansfield would later confess the struggle between the two creative colourists within herself in a journal entry dated 4 April of 1914: she says she feels '[t]errribly lonely. Nothing that isn't satirical is really true for me to write just now. If I try to find things lovely, I turn pretty-pretty. And at the same time I am so frightened of writing mockery for satire that my pen hovers and won't settle.'¹⁶³ Caught between the satirical and the sentimental, Mansfield found Fauvism appealing in its direct and

¹⁶¹ John Middleton Murry, 'Aims and Ideals,' *Rhythm: Art, Music, Literature Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 1 (1911): 36.

¹⁶² 'Aim and Ideals', 36.

¹⁶³ *JKM*, 59. Entry for 4 April, 1914.

unhesitating ways of expression. This new expression eventually balances the two aspects of her chromaticism into a uniquely Mansfieldian palette.

Three of the stories Mansfield wrote during her *Rhythm* years display a clear Fauvist colour palette ('The Woman at the Store' 1912, 'Ole Underwood' 1913, and 'Millie' 1913), but only two will be discussed here. The two stories, 'The Woman at the Store' and 'Ole Underwood', when juxtaposed next to Fergusson's and Rice's paintings, form a dynamic picture of how rhythm gives pulse to colour, be it in visual art or writing. Fergusson's original painting of 'Rhythm' was a celebration of colours, lines, and harmony; it was, together with the painting he did for the magazine cover, a visual manifesto for the Rhythm group. Red, black and white form the main colour scheme of the canvas, with geometrical pieces of complementary green, blue and yellow inserted in the fine spaces created by the dominant colours and shapes. There are no shadows, no blurry, liminal gradations, but only bold decisiveness. The central figure is a nude, eccentrically portrayed with jaws that can be either feminine or masculine, rouged lips, and a red flower covering her left ear. These adornments are clearly feminine, but the muscular arm, robust upper body, and sharp vertical line of the back and buttock seem clearly masculine. The perfect round shape of the figure's bust is echoed in the round fruit she holds in her hand, and those resting upon the plate next to her. The fruit in her hand and her breasts form the centre of the picture, and everything else radiates away from her. Repetition of colours is harmonized by the repetition of shapes and lines.

The combination of oddity and honesty in this painting, with its use of colours and lines, is probably what fascinated Murry in the first place. Fergusson later adapted this painting for the cover of *Rhythm*, accentuating the shapes and lines even more. The heart-shaped lines that form the face of this 'intimidating Eve' are barely joined together at her chin, which is more pointed and produces a more feminine effect.¹⁶⁴ Every line and shape of the cover design is more concise and continuous than in the original painting, further blurring the distinction between masculinity and femininity. Whereas the oil painting uses colours to connect and supplement the embedded rhythm, in the cover design Fergusson leaves fine spaces between some of the lines for a subtler and more vibrating effect. The oil painting positions the nude figure rather rigidly in the centre, which gives the impression that she can either spring up and leave the picture frame, or partially merge into the background; the contrasting the black lines around the figure, like Matisse's paper cutouts, both define and synthesize the nude figure in her relation to the background.¹⁶⁵ The cover design, however, creates an overall effect of unity of line—as if every line and shape is drawn in one breath, with more strength and volume given to the tree, and less to the delicacy of the feminine features of the figure. Both images, one with more emphasis on colour and the other on lines, embody the rhythm idea.

Murry introduced Mansfield to Fergusson, yet the relationship between the three in the

¹⁶⁴ Smith, *A Literary Life*, 78.

¹⁶⁵ Cited in Smith, 7: 'Fergusson was the first to adopt Matisse's rich colours which, with an abbreviated method of drawing, came to distinguish their art.'

Rhythm context is more than Murry wanting 'Katherine to meet [his] hero F—'.¹⁶⁶ Mansfield's first story in *Rhythm* 'The Woman at the Store' delighted Fergusson, and Murry had the editorial sensitivity to see the echoes of both colour and rhythm between Fergusson's painting and Mansfield's story. Since rhythm will be comprehensively discussed in another chapter, I will focus here on the relationship between the colour schemes used in the painting and the story.

'The Woman at the Store' first establishes what resembles a framed white canvas in the beginning paragraph: 'The wind blew close to the ground; it rooted among the tussock grass, slithered along the road, so that the white pumice dust swirled in our face'.¹⁶⁷ The movement of the wind forms straight lines 'close to the ground' and 'along the road' while the white dust rises up to form the picture frame. From this point on, the story relies on its frame-by-frame structure until the narrative reveals the central image: the sketch of the murder scene.

Next we see more colours: 'Jo [...] wore a blue galatea shirt, corduroy trousers and [...] [a] white handkerchief, spotted with red—it looked as though his nose had been bleeding on it [...] Wisps of white hair straggled from under his wideawake'.¹⁶⁸ Another fellow traveller Hin 'rode beside me, white as a clown; his black eyes glittered and he kept shooting out his tongue and moistening his lips'.¹⁶⁹ Hin 'was dressed in a Jaeger vest and a pair of blue duck trousers, fastened round the waist with a plaited leather belt'.¹⁷⁰ The colours, though not dominating the frame, echo the 'Rhythm' painting palette; white and blue repeat themselves in this description, and blue is re-emphasized when Hin mentions a woman 'with blue eyes and yellow hair'. Presently they arrive at the store, and the scene is delineated as a frame with geometrical shapes and strong lines within the picture:

We were on the brow of the hill, and below us there was a whare roofed in with corrugated iron. It stood in a garden, rather far back from the road—a big paddock opposite, and a creek and a clump of young willow trees. A thin line of blue smoke stood up straight from the chimney of the whare, and as I looked, a woman came out, followed by a child and a sheep dog—the woman carrying what appeared to me a black stick. She made frantic gestures at us. The horses put on a final spurt, Jo took off his wideawake, shouted, threw out his chest, and began singing, 'I don't care, for don't you see' The sun pushed through the pale clouds and shed a vivid light over the scene. It gleamed on the woman's yellow hair, over her flapping pinafore and the rifle she was carrying. The child hid behind her, and the yellow dog, a mangy beast, scuttled back into the whare, his tail between his legs. We drew rein and dismounted.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ John Middleton Murry, *Between Two Worlds: An Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), 216.

¹⁶⁷ *CFKM*, I, 268.

¹⁶⁸ *CFKM*, I, 268.

¹⁶⁹ *CFKM*, I, 268.

¹⁷⁰ *CFKM*, I, 26.

¹⁷¹ *CFKM*, I, 269.

All the colours from the previous descriptions are reinforced, and as the story's framework expands, colours are projected upon more objects, people and the surroundings. The narrator's point of view places the store at a distance, looking down and beyond; the scene of the store, the woman, her child and the dog are consciously arranged to be picturesque. The picture is outlined with the 'big paddock opposite' and 'a creek and a clump of young willow trees', yet segmented in the middle by a 'thin line of blue smoke [standing] up straight from the chimney'.¹⁷² As the woman comes out of the store, another black line is added, which the narrator soon understands to be a rifle. Light is also used to enhance the colour of the woman's yellow hair, reflected in the yellowness of the dog next to her, but there is no shadow. As the travelers draw closer, the impression of the yellow of the 'mangy beast' seems to be no different from the woman's 'ugly' yellow hair.

The woman is 'a figure of fun', and '[l]ooking at her, you felt there was nothing but sticks and wires under that pinafore', giving the impression that her gender is just sufficiently blurred that she could almost be either male or female.¹⁷³ Her front teeth are gone, and 'she ha[s] red, pulpy hands and she w[ears] on her feet a pair of dirty "Bluchers"'.¹⁷⁴ Once the travellers are let in, the narrator sees a room with 'walls plastered with old pages of English periodicals', a 'table with an ironing board and wash-tub on it, some wooden forms, a black horsehair sofa and some broken chairs pushed against the walls. The mantelpiece above the stove [i]s draped in pink paper, further ornamented with dried grasses and ferns and a coloured print of Richard Seddon'.¹⁷⁵ The next and final time the main colours of the story are reunited is at dinner. In the glow of the oil lamp, the woman starts to look artificial and grotesque. Her 'hair was tumbled—two red spots burned in her cheeks—her eyes shone', and 'She had changed the blue pinafore for a white calico dressing-jacket and a black skirt—the kid was decorated to the extent of a blue sateen hair ribbon'.¹⁷⁶ Up to this point the colours are patterned into an almost perfect Fauvist repetition, but then the climactic scene is done in curiously stark abbreviation. The murder sketch, drawn by the child, is summed up in one sentence: 'The kid had drawn the picture of the woman shooting at a man with a rook rifle and then digging a hole to bury him in'.¹⁷⁷ This could be the trace of realism's use of chiaroscuro. Everything has been building up to the central frame of the story, yet Mansfield gives us an understated, terse description to finish. The contrast is striking, between the carefully structured colours and shapes of the story's body and the fast closing sketch of murder; it is a juxtaposition of planned pattern and spontaneous revelation. The central figure of the woman, similar to the nude in Fergusson's painting for *Rhythm*, is simply done in black lines, the focus of our gaze. Thus Mansfield simultaneously maintains and departs from the realist tradition, and salutes the Fauvist use of colour.

Fergusson's painting and Mansfield's 'The Woman at the Store' came out at around the time

¹⁷² CFKM, I, 269.

¹⁷³ CFKM, I, 270.

¹⁷⁴ CFKM, I, 270.

¹⁷⁵ CFKM, I, 270.

¹⁷⁶ CFKM, I, 273.

¹⁷⁷ CFKM, I, 276.

of the second French Post-Impressionist Exhibition in London in 1912. Roger Fry, in the preface he wrote for the catalogue, elaborates on the rationale behind the Post-Impressionists' use of 'eccentric' forms and colour, and 'clumsy' lines: the painters feel art should be 'completely subordinated to the direct expression of feeling', and pursue a desire 'not to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life'.¹⁷⁸ Fry's analysis can be applied to Fergusson's 'Rhythm' images as well as Mansfield's story.¹⁷⁹ The world that Mansfield created in 'The Woman at the Store' is obviously not to be taken as the original form of life, but an equivalent of it. She highlights her story with clear, strong colours and draws our attention to the oddest places where we would not normally look, all for the effect of bringing out an impression entirely new and shocking. The final sentence of the story—'A bend in the road, and the whole place disappeared'—like a Fergussonian curve, finishes the picture with a decisive clean stroke.¹⁸⁰

Angela Smith also explores the parallels between Fergusson and Mansfield in terms of their marginalized colonial identities, and their love of cleanliness, colour and design, 'indicat[ing] another significant link between them which is more than just a question of personal taste'.¹⁸¹ In her journals, Mansfield also expresses her affinity with Fergusson as a person and artist:

this man is in many ways extraordinarily like me. I like him so much; I feel so *honest* with him that it's simply one of my real joys, one of the real joys of my life, to have him come and talk and be with me. I did not realise, until he was here and we ate together; how much I cared for him—and how much I was really at home with him. A real understanding. We might have spoken a different language—returned from a far country.¹⁸²

What Mansfield feels about Fergusson is that he belongs to her own 'wandering tribe' of artists, and that he is one of her 'own people'. Mansfield suggests that both she and Fergusson use the same artist's language, treating painting and word painting as belonging to one domain of expression. According to Smith, Mansfield began to mimic Fergusson's language after their meeting. Mansfield 'copies his phrase "this art business" and imitates the "Cheer-oh" with which he ends his letter, possibly a written version of a colloquial Scottish pronunciation of "cheerio"'.¹⁸³

Although Fergusson and Mansfield never officially critiqued each other's work in reviews, their synergy was more than a mutual appreciation of the other's work. Mansfield's description of Fergusson's studio in 1918 sheds more light on their shared sense of order and beauty:

The sun came full through the two windows, dividing the studio into four—

¹⁷⁸ Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920), 237.

¹⁷⁹ Smith, *A Literary Life*, 113: 'the graphic phrase "find an equivalent for life" describes an artistic process that can be applied to Fergusson's paintings, although Fry excluded them from his exhibition'.

¹⁸⁰ *CFKM*, I, 276.

¹⁸¹ Smith, *A Literary Life*, 73-74.

¹⁸² Cited in Smith's ' "As fastidious as though I wrote with acid": Katherine Mansfield, J. D. Fergusson and the *Rhythm* Group in Paris', *Katherine Mansfield Studies* 3 (2011): 10.

¹⁸³ Smith, *A Literary Life*, 73.

two quarters of light and two of shadow, but all those things which the light touched seemed to float in it, to bathe and to sparkle in it as if they belonged not to land, but to water; they even seemed, in some strange way, to be moving. [...]

Very beautiful, O God! is a blue tea-pot with two white cups attending; a red apple among oranges addeth fire to flame—in the white book-cases the books fly up and down in scales of colour, with pink and lilac notes recurring, until nothing remains but them, sounding over and over.

There are a number of frames, some painted and some plain, leaning against the wall, and the picture of a naked woman with her arms raised, languid, as though her heavy flowering beauty were almost too great to bear. There are two sticks and an umbrella in one corner, and in the fireplace, a kettle, curiously like a bird.¹⁸⁴

Such attention to the curious effects of light on the surfaces of objects, and such sensitivity to colour, design, and the rhythmical arrangement of recurrent 'pink and lilac notes', as if in a musical composition, speak not only of Mansfield's fastidiousness in her care for details, but also her appreciation of Fergusson's similar sense of beauty. Mansfield evidently appreciates Fergusson's art, and everything she describes in his studio as a whole reflects Fergusson as a fastidious artist just like her. The painting Mansfield described could be *At my Studio Window* (1910), which features a nude figure lifting a multi-coloured curtain with one hand; the woman seems to enter into the studio from the sunny abstract landscape outside. The Fauve artists are known for their unaffected depiction of interiors as well as of the female body; Mansfield's word painting of Fergusson's studio, together with his female nude, also suggest these favoured themes.

The enthusiasm and child-like wonder that both Mansfield and Fergusson possess shine through in their other writings, echoing each other's aesthetics. Fergusson wrote about his friendship with S. J. Peplow, an artist who also contributed to *Rhythm*, and one section is worth quoting in full:

The Peplows went back to Scotland and very soon, the 1914 war drove me back to London. [...] We laughed a great deal and got a lot of fun out of everything. One summer afternoon we went to the Zoo and laughed with the seals, but were suddenly checked when an eagle looked at us as though we were mud. We were depressed to see the elephant in his loose box. That's how it was with us. We enjoyed simple things—a good meal, a good picture, the light on a cloud.¹⁸⁵

This cheerful observation of his surroundings and then involuntary immersion into them is an unconscious slipping into a quasi-fantastic world. Although Fergusson's language is more

¹⁸⁴ *JKM*, 132.

¹⁸⁵ Morris, 49.

abbreviated compared with Mansfield's description, he also has an apparent delight in visual as well as imaginative stimuli. There is also a sense of becoming one with the surroundings, which is the type of aesthetic guideline that Mansfield adopted in her writing as well.

Mansfield talked about the irresistible desire to become her subjects in a letter to Dorothy Brett: 'When I write about ducks I swear that I am a white duck with a round eye, floating in a pond fringed with yellow blobs and taking an occasional dart at the other duck with the round eye, which floats upside down beneath me.'¹⁸⁶ The most obvious reason for Mansfield to become her subjects is so that she can recreate them. The mentality Mansfield and Fergusson share of being immersed in the subject they observe, taking on animalistic identities to the extent that the human observer can no longer tell that he or she is apart from the animal world, speaks of a Fauvist sentiment. The Rhythm group is a network of writers, critics and artists who drew creative impetus from each other, as in any of the literary/artistic groups at the time. The dialogue formed, however serendipitously, between Mansfield and Fergusson, also confirms that artist and writer both embraced the Post-Impressionist, border-crossing creative milieu of the early twentieth century discussed in my opening chapter.

If the parallels of colour between 'The Woman at the Store' and Fergusson's *Rhythm* are arguably coincidental, in contrast 'Old Underwood' demonstrates a much clearer and intentional Fauvist influence. The latter's deliberate incorporation of colours with rhythm and animalistic descriptions indicate a more conscious awareness of Fauvist themes. The story was dedicated to Anne Estelle Rice, a painter like Fergusson, who became a life-long friend to Mansfield. The story's use of both colour and rhythm resembles a Rice painting.

When Mansfield first met Rice in Paris, the artist's paintings 'momentarily overwhelm[ed]' her.¹⁸⁷ Mansfield wrote to Murry about Rice in 1918, saying that '[s]he IS an exceptional woman—so gay, so abundant—in full flower just now and really beautiful to watch.'¹⁸⁸ Rice painted Mansfield's portrait which is dated 1918 although the painter may have temporarily turned from the portrait to work on other paintings, and Mansfield was probably too ill at this point to sit for long hours. The portrait, which is still considered Rice's most accomplished work, is a significant connecting point between Rice's and Mansfield's aesthetics. More significantly, Mansfield recognised the reciprocal nature of portrait painting: the observer becomes the observed as she sits for Rice, yet still continues with her internal and silent delineation. Antony Alpers notes Mansfield's 'trick': 'she is constantly inhabiting one space while observing another, and has her characters doing the same'.¹⁸⁹ As Mansfield sits for her artist friend, she is as aware of the observing artist subject as she is of herself, the observed object, to the extent that she nearly gets behind Rice's lens as a painter and observes herself immersed in colour and patterns:

Anne came early & began the great painting — me in that red, brick red frock with

¹⁸⁶ CLKM, I 330.

¹⁸⁷ Roger Norburn, *A Katherine Mansfield Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 25.

¹⁸⁸ Mansfield, CLKM, II, 188.

¹⁸⁹ Antony Alpers, *Life* (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 53.

flowers everywhere. It's awfully interesting, even now. [...] I *Painted* her in my way as she *Painted* me in hers. Her eyes ... 'little blue flowers plucked this morning' - - -¹⁹⁰ (Italics added)

Mansfield apparently is fascinated by this fluctuation of the painters and the sitter's perspectives, as well as by a point of commonality between their respective forms of art. A crossing of not sensuous, but disciplinary and identity borders occurs in Mansfield's description, and this is what she refers to as 'awfully interesting'. Such a point of contact between the two artists is formulated as an ekphrastic exchange between painting and writing. That Mansfield takes note of the colours, especially red and blue, also indicates her knowledge and appreciation of Rice's Fauve palette. As Rice translates the lines around the figure of Mansfield and the colours that surround the writer onto canvas, she also becomes an object in Mansfield's painting, with contours and hues complete.¹⁹¹

Both Mansfield and Rice seem to understand the concept of using rhythmical colours in their works. Rice's essay '*Les Ballets Russes*' in *Rhythm* summarizes this kind of colourism when she writes about Léon Bakst, the stage decorator and designer, and his incorporation of colours and lines. Rice calls Bakst 'a painter in line, a painter in movement, a painter in forms', who knows that the virtue of line is in its power to create 'energy and force', and that the merit of 'a dominant colour and shape' and of 'daring juxtapositions' lies in their ability to communicate life and movement 'in masses of colour'.¹⁹² Rice also renders her impression of the ballet in coloured terms— 'vibrating blues, reds, greens, yellows, lines of severity and voluptuousness, angles relieved by curves'—and this description expresses how colours merge into lines and by interacting with each other, create a rhythmical effect.¹⁹³

In Rice's portrait of Mansfield, colours and lines are harmonized and yet still maintain the integrity of their sharpness. Red, one of the dominant colours on the canvas, is executed in relation to the background, the outlines of the flowers, and the neckline of Mansfield's dress and the creases of her clothes. The colour is dominant but not overpowering, because its repetition varies in mass and shade; it occupies the centre of the picture and crawls over the background, it bounces off the circular coronas of the flowers, finds its reflection in a light hue on Mansfield's left

¹⁹⁰ *CLKM*, II, 245.

¹⁹¹ Seeing the 'great painting', as Mansfield called the portrait, was a transfixing moment. Unfortunately the portrait is not currently on display at Te Papa Museum in Wellington. In 2013 I was able to see it in storage with the kind help of the museum's curator Vickie Robson. The painting provided so much more detail that is missing in a print or a digital image, and thus helped me to correct my own memory of the portrait. Mansfield's face is exquisitely done. The scarlet upper lip with a darker shade of red for the cupid's bow and the fuller and brighter lower lip formed by Rice's brush strokes delicately echo the shapes that surround Mansfield. Her hair is painted in gradations of darker to lighter brown. There is also a measure of ambiguity in Rice's rendering of objects because the vase of flowers next to the sitter melts into the background. Looking into Mansfield's eyes, one can almost fancy a miniature portrait of Rice in the reflection in her pupils. The canvas is quite thinly covered. I could discern the pencil sketch of Mansfield's fingers that are barely filled with any paint. Light comes through, achieving an effect that is characteristically more modern because the artist is not concerned with occupying every inch of the canvas with details, but rather an abbreviated, loose composition that highlights the essential lines and colours.

¹⁹² *Rhythm* 2, no.3 (1912): 107.

¹⁹³ Rice, 107.

cheek, and finally fills her lips with a deep crimson. Black, another colour which engages our attention, centres and balances the red on the canvas by means of the mass of Mansfield's straight-fringed hair, her dark brows and eyes, and is reiterated in the outlines of her body, the flowers and the chair. The floral patterns in the background, reappearing both in line and colour, bring variations of the colour rhythm into the picture plane: red, pink, orange, white, blue, and black are gathered together and defined by continuous half-circle lines which are reminiscent of Rice's *'Spectre de la Rose'*.¹⁹⁴ The portrait manifests how '[line] and colour became important things in themselves and in relation to each other', and demonstrates that they can be 'used with an unlimited range of simplicity or complexity, strength or delicacy.'¹⁹⁵ Exemplary in its use of colour and lines of Rice's adaptation of Fauvism, 'The Portrait of Katherine Mansfield' is reminiscent of both Matisse's 'Harmony in Red' and Fergusson's 'Rhythm', but in both its subject matter and its treatment of rhythmical colour is very much Rice's own colourist manifesto.¹⁹⁶

Mansfield's 'Ole Underwood', published in 1912, has a resonance with Rice's employment of rhythmical colours. In this story dedicated to Rice, Mansfield uses a similar colour palette employed in a brutal rhythm, and the colours intertwine with the lines and rhythms of the story, forming a more organic piece that focuses as much on design as on storytelling. Mansfield's writing of 'Ole Underwood' is her *painting* of a portrait not of Anne Estelle Rice the person, but of the technical chromaticism that Rice's painting embodies.

The colour palette of 'Ole Underwood' mainly consists of black and red, with brief appearances and reappearances of white, green, yellow, and grey. Mansfield is using a similar though more refined approach here to that seen in 'The Woman at the Store', by establishing clearly defined outlines that contain movement and vibrant colours. As Underwood emerges 'down the windy hill', he notices that '[on] one side of the hill grew a forest of pines from the road right down to the sea', and '[on] the other side short tufted grass and little bushes of white manuka flower'; further down is 'the sea heaving against the stone walls, and the little town just out of its

¹⁹⁴ In this illustration for *Rhythm*, Rice emphasizes the outlines of the beautiful curves of the ballerina's skirt, which are echoed in the semi-circular drapery on the ceiling. In the same issue, Rice did an illustration of one ballet dancer, dressed in the same olive-shaped skirt, twirling from the right corner to the front and exiting into the left corner. See *Rhythm* 2 no.3 (1912): 93 and 84.

¹⁹⁵ Rice, 'Les Ballets Russes', 107.

¹⁹⁶ In my own attempt to recreate Rice's painting I realised how important it must have been for her to balance the colours and shapes. The construction of the painting is simple, as is the use of the main colours, but the key lies in applying colours in layers to make them more intense. Since I did not use oil but acrylic on canvas, this proved a challenge. Also acrylic dries much faster than oil, which added to the repetition of my attempt. As I worked my way through the brick red of Mansfield's dress, the background of the wall behind her and the dark, lightning-bolt-shape of her shadow on it, I found that I had to emphasize the lines together with the colours, so my brushes were constantly traveling between the masses of red and black and the strong, expressive black lines, for which I used a finer brush. The shapes of the flowers in the background and in the jar are difficult to manage since I was working with a small canvas and a tiny brush. The details in the curves add angles, and how they soften and strengthen each other, must have required Rice's particular attention as well. The contrast of the black and red is defined and reinforced by the demarcation lines around the figure. Mansfield's face, however, is where the most attention is requested because of the need for precision. I had to carefully outline the brows, eyes, nose and lips, and my final steps were to wait until the paint was dry enough, and apply red to the lips, then add yellow to her face and dress, and green to the darker side of her cheek. My version is only an experiment in exploring Rice's steps of painting Mansfield's portrait; compared with hers, mine has a more angular-faced Mansfield, and the colours are different as well, yet I think the idea of 'rhythmical colours' works quite well with the lines of the painting.

reach close packed together, the better to face the grey water. And up on the other side of the hill the prison with high red walls'.¹⁹⁷ Within this fluid frame, Mansfield carefully arranges colours and images that are reinforced as the story proceeds, until Underwood's vertical journey from the foot of the hill cuts through the town to the harbor, segmenting the entire frame into two, and concludes with the imminent violence of murder. Colours seem to accumulate and multiply as they repeat themselves throughout the story. Underwood carries a 'black umbrella' and 'a red and white spotted handkerchief', and wears a 'black peak cap' and 'gold rings in his ears'.¹⁹⁸ As he stalks through town, the 'high red walls' of prison and the 'grey sky with black web-like clouds' keep coming into view as reminder of a past that will also repeat itself.¹⁹⁹ And Underwood, like an animal trapped in a cage, cannot escape his own madness.

The story demonstrates a conscious use of Fauvist colours, and only pure colours are used as they are in Rice's painting. By pure colour in the story I mean no adjective is added to dilute or change the hue of such colours. Underwood sees the 'green mat of grass', 'yellow hens huddled out of the wind', and a woman shaking 'a red, soapy fist at him', and then the 'big red prison' is brought into the frame again.²⁰⁰ Next Underwood walks into a bar, where 'a big girl with red hair pulled beer handles'.²⁰¹ He takes money out of his 'red and white spotted handkerchief' to buy a drink, and sees a 'great big jar of red pinks' standing at the counter.²⁰² A powerful rhythm of 'Red—red—red—red!' hammers in Underwood's heart, and he crushes the flowers.²⁰³ The barmaid reaches across the counter and hits him with a tin jug, and Underwood is kicked out. He then continues his journey to the Chinamen's shop, sees their faces 'yellow as lemon', and 'close by him... there was a heap of yellow shavings', which are scattered onto the picture to temporarily ease overwhelming tension.²⁰⁴ The effect recalls Rice's light yellow brush strokes on Mansfield's red dress. The Chinamen do not mind him until he opens a door, and the wind scatters the cards with which they are playing, and Underwood once again rushes off toward the sea and picks up a cat on his way. A momentary lack of colour occurs before the end of the story. Underwood flings the cat by her tail into the sewer opening, as he continues to hear the beating sound inside him, but a confusion of time and place is implied—'He tossed his head, he was young again'.²⁰⁵ This confusion places Underwood back at the time when he committed his first murder by killing the man who killed his wife. He looks back again at the 'prison perched like a red bird, at the black webby clouds trailing' ominously, then he 'grin[s], and rolled in his walk', 'carrying high in his hand the red and white handkerchief' as if it is a flag, and walks into a room on a ship where 'a man lay sleeping [...] with fair beard and hair on the red pillow'.²⁰⁶ In his delusional mind, Underwood

¹⁹⁷ *CFKM*, I, 319.

¹⁹⁸ *CFKM*, I, 319.

¹⁹⁹ *CFKM*, I, 319.

²⁰⁰ *CFKM*, I, 319-20.

²⁰¹ *CFKM*, I, 320.

²⁰² *CFKM*, I, 320.

²⁰³ *CFKM*, I, 320.

²⁰⁴ *CFKM*, I, 321.

²⁰⁵ *CFKM*, I, 321.

²⁰⁶ *CFKM*, I, 322.

seems to have found the man from thirty years ago, for 'looking down upon him from the wall there shone her picture—his woman's picture—smiling and smiling at the big sleeping man'.²⁰⁷

Red is the dominant colour in 'Ole Underwood', given the frequency of its appearance; it plots the course of Underwood's journey to murder and signifies anger, passion, and insanity. Like Kandinsky's sensational colours, red in 'Ole Underwood' triggers a disorganized series of pulses or rather impulses, the psychological origins of which remain unidentifiable to Underwood. But the red in Mansfield's story also bears a deeper psychological meaning as is suggested throughout the story: it is linked intimately with memory, and in Underwood's case a painful memory that has trapped him in an inescapable loop of death and loss. Underwood's painful memory cannot be suppressed as he is surrounded by the poignant sounds and colours that are reiterated and intensified. The red colour in Underwood's spotted handkerchief, like an ink stain on absorbent paper, or like blood on a sheet, gradually expands and penetrates the entire frame of the story. The other colours form a fascinating design, and yellow and red stand out in particular. The reiteration of an odd colouration of yellow (hens), lemon yellow (faces) and yellow (shavings) correspond with the 'one-two' rhythm, whereas the repetition of red forms clusters of four, echoing the four-beat rhythm. These repetitions of colours emphasizes a rhythmical pattern, and they are in tune with the interchanging rhythm that beats inside Underwood's chest— 'One, two—one, two—never stopping, never changing'.²⁰⁸ The capitalized and indented colours are the dominant pigments in 'Ole Underwood'. The four highlighted uses of red form an exact parallel to the beat that Underwood constantly hears, and are combined with an explicit suggestion of time or rhythm: 'Red—red—red—red! Beat the hammer', recalling the initial suppression of this beastly rhythm at the beginning of the story: 'Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop!'²⁰⁹ This exploration of colour pattern and repetition indicates that Mansfield's story is designed and intended to incorporate colours with rhythm. The story is an appropriate accompanying piece to Rice's portrait of Mansfield, for what Rice does with the materials of her trade Mansfield echoes in the lines and colour repetitions of her own invention.

Although red is the dominant colour, the repetition of a single colour alone will not build, contrast, or create the inter-chromatic echoes and strong emotive effects desired by the Fauves. Among the carefully patterned rhythmical colours a second coloured image seems the most unusual in Mansfield's 'painting' of 'Old Underwood': the Chinamen's faces yellow as lemons as if a florescent yellow light is cast upon them. This unusual effect recalls an equivalent technique seen in Matisse's *La Raie Verte* (1905), where a green vertical line divides Madame Matisse's face into contrasting warm and cool colours. The green stripe, controversial and oddly out of place, signifies the Fauve's bold expressionism that advances towards more subjective use of colour and rejects conventional frames of colour application. In Fergusson's early painting *The White Dress: Portrait of Jean* (1904), Alice Strang notes, the colour green in Jean Maconochie's shawl is subtly echoed in the leaves of her hat and the glass vase holding a rose branch, balanced and repeated

²⁰⁷ CFKM, I, 322.

²⁰⁸ CFKM, I, 319.

²⁰⁹ CFKM, I, 320, 319.

in small green touches on the pillow and the other side of the sofa, and finally concludes by reappearing at the edge of her dress.²¹⁰ Although Fergusson's use of green at this point is much less revolutionary than Matisse's, he is already beginning to develop a sense of colour repetition. His real tribute to Matisse, however, is more prominent in *Le Manteau Chinois* (1909), one of his best portraits of Anne Estelle Rice. In this painting, a rather unusual stripe of green shadow begins at Rice's hair hooded under the blue hat; it hugs her face and curves towards the front of the generous, blue-coloured robe, plunges straight down to the edges and dissolves into small amounts of paint between the thick white lines that finish the bottom seam. Similarly, in Rice's portrait of Mansfield, she also uses a shade of green to suggest the shadow above Mansfield's eyebrow, under the nose, and on her throat and shoulder. All three artists choose different shades of green to represent not only colour contrast, but also, more importantly, a deliberate departure from life-like depiction. The green, in its power to attract unwanted attention in classical painting, is embraced as a rebellious demonstration of suppressing the illuminated and noble, and highlighting the dark and peripheral. The notion of a 'green line', referencing Matisse, then becomes code for a Fauve twist of colour usage. This technique, or rather statement, translates into Mansfield's 'Ole Underwood' not in the green mat of grass, for that is an expected, life-like and therefore ordinary application of colour, but in the lemon yellow that is out of place. Mansfield's extraordinary line, 'The grass was blue', works along the same lines by subverting expectations about colour. And she, like the painters, uses the strange colours in subtle yet patterned strokes that can easily escape our eye. Therefore in both its rhythmical repetitions of colour and its odd flash of lemon yellow, 'Ole Underwood' becomes Mansfield's most Fauve-like story. The twist of colour usage is subtle, for Chinese people are conventionally thought of as 'yellow'.

As if to further reinforce the pattern of rhythmical colours in 'Ole Underwood', Mansfield adds another element to produce a more complex and engaging picture. The prison is likened to a 'red bird', and both Underwood's behavior and his appearance identify with the prison's avian presence. His black peak cap, 'little eyes [snapping] like two sparks', and his crushing of the red pinks with his 'old claw' all render him bird-like.²¹¹ After he crushes the flowers, the barmaid calls him 'ole beast' and 'ole swine', and Underwood 'scuttle[s] like a rat' when someone kicks him.²¹² Both a human reaction and a rat/bird's mentality towards the cat are manifested by Underwood when the cat 'tr[eads] delicately over to Ole Underwood and rub[s] against his sleeve', and 'the hammer in [his] heart beat[s] madly'.²¹³ A moment of fear (such as an animal—either bird or rat—would feel) and a moment of affectionate memory (as Underwood recalls his wife feeding a cat) coincide, and for a short while the gentler emotions gain an upper hand as the violent rhythm in

²¹⁰ Alice Strang, 'The Scottish Colourist: J. D. Fergusson: A Life', recorded on 11 June, 2014 as part of the 'Lunchtime Art Lecture' at Stirling University, Scotland.

http://listenagain.stir.ac.uk/scripts/upload.php?url=http://listenagain.stir.ac.uk/media/keep/sb55/Stirling_Art_Lecture_-_iPod_and_iPhone_-_20140611_02.08.28PM.mp4. Accessed: 6 August, 2014.

²¹¹ *CFKM*, I, 319.

²¹² *CFKM*, I, 320.

²¹³ *CFKM*, I, 321.

his heart recedes into something softer. But as Underwood comes closer to the sea, '[the] mad wind smelled of tar and ropes and slime and salt' and 'the ships with flags flying' suddenly trigger 'the old, old lust'.²¹⁴ The animalistic associations suit the overall chromatic tone of the story. The colours in 'Ole Underwood' are harsh and noisy, like the shrill sound of 'slate pencils scraping over its surface' in 'The Woman at the Store', but at the same time perfect for such a story with lurking violence.²¹⁵

The repetition of colours in both 'The Woman at the Store' and 'Ole Underwood' differs from the repetition of chiaroscuro in 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired' and 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', in that the two Fauvist stories harmonize colour with rhythm, one reinforcing the other. This 'rhythmical use of colours' gives the later stories greater expressive power.²¹⁶ What Mansfield uses in her *German Pension* stories can be defined as a mechanical repetition of colours, while in her Fauvist stories she begins to deliberately design a rhythmical repetition of colours. These terms are drawn from C. J. Holmes's theorizing of repetitions in *Rhythm*.²¹⁷ He believes that for rhythmical repetition to reach its full expressive capacity, it must be versatile and relevant to the subject matter. The same principle can be applied to colour repetition; colour will not have an overpowering effect if it is evenly distributed on the canvas, but rather can express more force and vitality when applied in 'larger and less equal masses.'²¹⁸ Holmes's idea applies to both Rice's and Mansfield's aesthetic ideals regarding rhythmical colour repetition in their oeuvre, and resonates with Fergusson's monumental painting of 'Rhythm'.

Mansfield, now a rightful member of the Rhythmist group by connection and merit, has clearly come to understand more about the relation between colour and her own art. This is not a static, unchanging relation, but rather her sense of colour in her 'word painting' follows a pattern of development that resembles the native New Zealand plant *kuro*, known for its climbing spiral growth pattern. Her youthful writings demonstrate an intuitive grasp of colours that are out of the ordinary range of representation, but her articulation of colour becomes temporarily muffled as she comes across 'serious' and satirical uses of colour in the Realist tradition. Here the rather colourless though patterned stories such as 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' can be placed. Once Mansfield encounters the Rhythmists, however, especially Fergusson and Rice, she finds an affinity not merely based on how well she gets along with them, but more significantly rooted in a shared aesthetic. In her early Rhythmist years, her borrowings take on a distinctly Fauvist style. Mansfield is not a lifelong Fauvist, however, because what is 'awfully interesting' to her is not Fauvism alone, but the sheer joy of hybridizing Fauvism's colour palette with her chosen form. As an artist forever challenging herself to

²¹⁴ *CFKM*, I, 321.

²¹⁵ *CFKM*, I, 268.

²¹⁶ Smith, *A Literary Life*, 94.

²¹⁷ C. J. Holmes, 'Stray Thoughts on Rhythm in Painting,' *Rhythm* 1, no. 3 (1911): 1-3.

²¹⁸ 'Stray Thoughts,' 3: 'Colour we may consider on the same footing. Repetition is necessary, and mechanical repetition, the employment of patterned stuffs and the like, may be of considerable value as a foil or an enhancement of larger rhythms. But when the same colour repetition is carried right through the picture in spots or smears, as not infrequently occurs in 'Impressionist' and 'Post-Impressionist' work, the effect is monotonous and prosaic compared with that of pictures where (as with Gauguin) expression is attained by larger and less equal masses.'

produce the newest and deepest impressions possible, Mansfield embarks on a journey that is multi-directional and transnational. Creating alongside artists such as Fergusson and Rice widens Mansfield's scope by giving her access to ideas in visual art and music, which she will weave into her own art. Among the Rhythmists she is now finally among her own clan of trespassing artists.

But colour is only one of the many channels through which Mansfield practices her artistic transgressions. If Fauvist aesthetics encourages a return to an organic, original seeing and creative state, Mansfield also works with the same set of ideals. Both the Fauve artists and Mansfield search for a subjective yet expressive method of rendering their subject matter; this is the aim of their common pursuit. What they learn from children is the unique power of the innocent eye: how it sees so immediately and empathetically, and yet at the same time refines and tunes that vision—much like Kezia in front of the Burnell dining room window, seeing novel images with unlikely colours as she alternates her views. I will argue that the expressive means Mansfield evolves depends on two important Fauvist concepts, drawing and colour. It is via these two channels that Mansfield shapes her art, identified her 'impulses' and 'emotional and mental tensions', and found 'release' for her 'imagination'.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Marcel Giry, *Fauvism: Origins and Development* (New York: Alpine Fine Arts Collection, 1981), 10.

Chapter Two

The 'Innocent Eye'

1. The 'Innocent Eye': Image-making and Memory

When Kezia Burnell stands in front of the living room window in 'Prelude', she discovers an entire new world of colour and distortion:

The dining-room window had a square of coloured glass at each corner. One was blue and one was yellow. Kezia bent down to have one more look at a blue lawn with blue arum lilies growing at the gate, and then at a yellow lawn with yellow lilies and a yellow fence. As she looked a little Chinese Lottie came out on to the lawn and began to dust the tables and chairs with a corner of her pinafore. Was that really Lottie? Kezia was not quite sure until she had looked through the ordinary window.²²⁰

The shift between the coloured squares in the window creates a momentary vortex in reality. Kezia departs from her known world, the 'ordinary window', and is invited into other imaginative possibilities. Odder still, an intruder—a Chinese Lottie—comes into the yellow view, '[dusting] the tables and chairs with a corner of her pinafore'.²²¹ Kezia then pulls herself out of the de-familiarized world triggered by two prime colours, and readjusts her vision through the ordinary window—the eye of reason, of normative order and cognition of colour, a window devoid of imagination.

This episode, brief as it is, is laden with meaning. There seems to be a juxtaposition of 'the innocent eye' and 'the experienced eye' in the process of observation.²²² The imaginative is placed next to the real, depending on which 'eye' we are seeing through, and Kezia, the exemplary child in Mansfield's New Zealand stories, represents childhood, memory, and creativity—all elements crucial to Mansfield's art. This coloured window episode brings about a marvellous alignment between Kezia's vision, Mansfield's, and ours. It is through this vision, this way of seeing, and these alternating squares of coloured glass that we truly see the world of Katherine Mansfield.

Mansfield's fascination with children permeates some of her best writings. Edith Bendall, a school friend who illustrated Mansfield's poems, sent some drawings of children to Mansfield, who thought they were 'wonderfully beautiful'; one sketch in particular, of a little girl with fringed bobbed hair, 'fascinated' Mansfield.²²³ She later adopted a similar hairstyle, which reminded Virginia Woolf of 'a Japanese doll'.²²⁴ Mansfield's fascination with children may be a longing to return to the innocent state of being and seeing associated with childhood, or of procuring an untainted source for her stories. As mentioned

²²⁰ *The Aloe with Prelude*, 34.

²²¹ Katherine Mansfield, *The Aloe with Prelude*, ed. Vincent O'Sullivan (Wellington: Port Nicholson Press, 1982), 34.

²²² John Ruskin is the source of the phrase 'the innocence of the eye', which he uses to describe an untainted vision. He defines this vision as 'a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify,—as a blind man would see the if suddenly gifted with sight'; *Elements of Drawing*, 5.

²²³ Vincent O'Sullivan, *Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand* (Auckland: Viking, 1988), 55.

²²⁴ Cited in Smith, *A Literary Life*, 47.

in Chapter one, two creative impulses can be detected battling within Mansfield's artistic impulse; she admitted to John Middleton Murry in a letter that these two sources seemed to be on the one hand a childlike bliss—a pure receptivity of the beauty of life—and on the other a cynical 'cry against corruption':

I've [sic] two 'kicks offs' in the writing game. *One* is joy—real joy—the thing that made me write when we lived at Pauline, and that sort of writing I could only do in just that state of being in some perfectly blissful way *at peace*. Then something delicate and lovely seems to open before my eyes, like a flower without thought of a frost or a cold breath—knowing that all about it is warm and tender and 'steady'. And *that* I try, ever so humbly to express.

The other 'kick off' is my old original one, and (had I not known love) it would have been my all. Not hate or destruction (both are beneath contempt as real motives) but an *extremely* deep sense of hopelessness—of everything doomed to disaster—almost willfully, stupidly—like the almond tree and '*pas de nougat pour le Noël*'—There! As I took out a cigarette paper I got it exactly—a *cry against corruption* that is *absolutely* the nail on the head. Not a protest—a *cry*, and I mean corruption in the widest sense of the word, of course—²²⁵

The two 'kick offs' play out against and balance each other throughout Mansfield's writings, and have a particular significance in my discussion in this chapter. Even in her most optimistic or fairytale-like stories such as 'Prelude' and 'Something Childish But Very Natural', the shadow of doubt looms above Mansfield's texts. Murry comments that the two impulses to joy and anguish are 'vital to any true understanding of Katherine Mansfield'; it was in the first state of mind that she wrote 'Prelude', and in the second '*Je ne parle pas Français*' and 'A Married Man's Story'. Both of these impulses are true parts of Mansfield's creative vision, which according to Murry, 'alternate incessantly'.²²⁶ But more importantly for my argument, Mansfield seems to demonstrate an understanding of 'the innocent eye' which links the child's or childlike character's vision in the stories with the author's own writerly optical illusions or imaginative play. Through seeing like a child, Mansfield's art evolves and oscillates between the two visions—one of pure joy and one of disillusionment—in a manner which is presented metaphorically in Kezia's experimentation with the dining room window.

Seeing through the innocent eye is in itself a deviation from normative vision, as we have seen in Kezia's example. Such childlike seeing is a privileged way of looking at the world with continuously refreshed vision. This, of course, refers to the element of surprise: because the new vision is different from the child's taught experience, she/he finds in the new image a familiar strangeness. The lens will shift in colour, and the seeing process is more intuitive because all previous learnt knowledge must be first abandoned. The innocent eye is synonymous to an artistic freedom that allows the artist to cross over and beyond accepted reality.

²²⁵ Mansfield to Murry, February 1918, *CLKM*, II, 52.

²²⁶ Murry, *Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Studies* (London: Constable, 1959), 86-87.

The 'innocent eye' was not an entirely new concept for the Modernists, or the generation before them. However, it was John Ruskin who first clearly defined '*the innocence of the eye*' as having two distinct characteristics: first, seeing colours without consciously assigning them meaning, and second, possessing the ability to see things new every time.²²⁷ Ruskin's idea echoes what Matisse aims to achieve in his drawings and paintings. For the Fauve artists in general, '[d]rawing and colour must obviously have the utmost freedom in the way they express reality. The Fauve picture is a lyrical explosion whose brilliant colouring is the most spectacular feature, but [...] one that must not be seen out of its context. Fauvism does not consist simply of the use of arbitrary colours but is created by the painter's realization that a harmony of colours unconnected with reality expresses the relationship between his ego and the world'.²²⁸ Colour is difficult to conceptualize. Charles A. Riley argues that two quandaries haunt the discussions of colour found in philosophy, literature and art; he names these impasses as first 'the notion of impossibility and [second] a certain nostalgia for childhood, or at least for the color sense of the child'.²²⁹ The first quandary is the difficulty of formulating a concrete theory on colour, which is closely linked with colour's fluctuating and changing nature. Colour in this sense is light, which cannot be captured in its purest physical form; it is not static. The second problem, Riley's 'nostalgia for childhood', is intimately related to the idea of 'the innocent eye'. It is not limited to the observation and study of colour but also relates to questions of perception and memory. Seeing with the 'innocent eye' means seeing the world via a child's untainted eyes; instead of participating in the adult practice of seeing colours according to internalized convention—realism—the child is free to see arbitrary colours. Riley argues that this 'liberation from mimetic copying of the world's "actual" ' colours, which is characteristic of the child's way of seeing, 'became the basis for abstraction' in art.²³⁰ To see colours with an innocent eye is to render the world as a cosmic existence of sensual colours, to project emotive colours onto the world. According to the Fauvists, realism rejects this living colour, when the very nature and essence of colour is heterogeneous and subject to alteration.

The ' "innocent eye" ' is one of the great desiderata of Modernism. It is inherently opposed to the very notion of the system, which is theoretical and analytic—by definition secondary—next to the primary, spontaneous, and antisystematic nature of the innocent eye, which invokes images of childhood seeing'.²³¹ To paint like a child was the goal of artists such as Matisse and Picasso, and Mansfield appears to be doing something similar with her writing. For the Modernists, this 'primary' nature of the child's vision implies not only notions of untouched purity and naiveté, but also great moral and artistic authority. The notion of the child as naïve, as 'an unknowing seer', is ancient, but was given prominence in nineteenth-century romanticism which 'allied the naïveté of the child with "genius"'.²³² To the romantics, the child's 'innocent eye' is doubly powerful: it is 'innocent enough of convention to see

²²⁷ I have discussed Ruskin's 'innocent eye' in relation to Mansfield in my article "Children as Artists: Katherine Mansfield's 'innocent eye'" which was published in a special issue—*Katherine Mansfield Masked and Unmasked*—of the *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 32:2 (2014): 143-166.

²²⁸ Giry, 10.

²²⁹ Charles A. Riley, *Color Codes: Modern Theories of Color in Philosophy, Painting, and Architecture, Literature, Music and Psychology*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994), 16.

²³⁰ Riley, 18-19.

²³¹ Riley, 16.

²³² Jonathan David Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye: Children's Art and the Modern Artist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 3.

through the emperor's new clothes, so to speak, and at the same time ... gifted with a privileged view into the mysteries of the divine plan.²³³ For the Modernists as inheritors of this romantic understanding, writes Jonathan Fineberg, children have 'a raw receptivity to the 'correspondences' between the visible world and the higher truths that underlie it, a clairvoyance like that of the poet or artist by lacking in the analytic skills to fashion this intuition into art.'²³⁴ The 'unknowing seer' thus also represents the ideal artist. The Modernists appealed to 'primitive' art for the same reason according to what was known as the theory of recapitulation.²³⁵ The theory associates children's art with that of primitive or tribal art by establishing an analogous relationship between the developments of an individual to that of the human race. Although it is rather dated for the current discussion, what can be speculated in Mansfield's writing in relation to such a theory, especially in her portrait of the child artist in 'The Woman at the Store', is that children's art, like that of primitive art, deserves an overall receptive, unbiased and altogether 'innocent' (in the sense of Mansfield's first 'kick off' of viewing the world with absolute joy) appraisal.²³⁶

Children, then, form another connecting point between Fauve art and Mansfield's writings. Although we cannot be sure what count as 'the higher truths' (to use Fineberg's term) of the blue and yellow lawn, or the view through the 'ordinary window', we can certainly recognize Kezia's privileged position of communicating between and existing in both realms at the same time. The 'visible world', the ordinary lawn and the everyday Lottie, is overtaken by the 'higher truth' of how a lawn and arum lilies can be blue or yellow. Kezia directly associates colour with perception—particularly how it changes reality and how a lack of colour restores the recognized world. In essence Kezia notices what Marcel Giry discerns in the Fauves' use of colour: 'Fauvism does not consist simply of the use of arbitrary colours but is created by the painter's realization that a harmony of colours unconnected with reality expresses the relationship between his ego and the world'.²³⁷ A question may be raised as to whether Kezia's experience at the window is an equally significant learning experience for Mansfield; arguably it is not a coincidence that we find the sentence 'The grass was blue' in the sequel to 'Prelude'—'At the Bay'. Mansfield's unfolding method thus perhaps resembles a child's way of learning to see and to render objects.

This connection can be further demonstrated if we take a close look at Mansfield's process of revising 'The Aloe' into 'Prelude'. An inquiry into what changes are made and why they are made in 'Prelude' will offer more insight into Mansfield's engagement with 'the innocent eye'. When juxtaposed, the two stories are starkly different in their presentation of seeing, as different as an adult trying to imagine how a child sees her colouring book on the one hand, and truly 'seeing through the innocent eye' on the other. 'The Aloe' presents images as framed bodies of colour, and is less attentive to the movement of colour and light:

The venetian blind was pulled down but not drawn close. Sunlight, piercing the green
chinks, shone once again upon the purple urns brimming over with yellow

²³³ Fineberg, 5.

²³⁴ Fineberg, 5.

²³⁵ John Willats, *Making Sense of Children's Drawings* (Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 2005), 220.

²³⁶ Willats, 220.

²³⁷ Giry, 10.

chrysanthemums that patterned the walls—the hideous box was quite bare, so was the dining room except for the side board that stood in the middle, forlorn, its shelves edged with a scallop of black leather.²³⁸

Colours and objects are delineated in a detached manner where both are segmented. Purple and yellow complement each other and bring out the other's hue more brilliantly, yet besides this the colours do not interact. The point of view is largely analytical and linear. There is no movement, no fluidity—everything is all too 'ordinary'. Our vision is guided by the narrator, and travels with the sunlight, through the green chinks, to the purple urns with yellow flowers that become a pictorial design for the wall. This lack of interaction gives the depiction a mechanical tone. It makes the scene merely descriptive, as if the colours in the room could be accurately transcribed in the manner of a 'paint by number' chart. Reality is segmentable. The effect goes against the nature of colour because such rigid use of colour limits its expressive property. Colours that do not move are stale.

The 'Prelude' version is different in terms of movement. Although Mansfield retains her complementary colour juxtaposition, the description is now more dynamic:

The venetian blind was pulled down but not drawn close. Long pencil rays of sunlight shone through and the wavy shadow of a bush outside danced on the gold lines. Now it was still, now it began to flutter again, and now it came almost as far as her feet. Zoom! Zoom! a blue-bottle knocked against the ceiling; the carpet-tacks had little bits of red fluff sticking to them.²³⁹

Mansfield now is putting more motion into the painterly description: the 'pencil rays' do not possess much colour or life until another image—a 'wavy shadow of a bush outside'—joins this almost lyrical description of dance and movement, playfully interacting with 'the gold lines'. As we are drawn into the scene, we see Kezia moving with the motion of the shadows and light. 'Zoom! Zoom!', the blue-bottle bounces on the ceiling, creating a sound dimension; Kezia's vision shifts rapidly in the meantime from her feet to the ceiling, and back to the floor again: 'the carpet-tacks had little bits of red fluff sticking to them'. Mansfield's depiction aligns Kezia's vision with ours, disturbing the analytical and linear order of visual movement, and comes closer to the natural perception of human eyes when they process the foreground first, and are distracted by sound, and then return to minor details. The 'innocent eye' sees everything of interest, but is not a steady gaze, nor does it appear to be pre-arranged; the new version is thus less processed, more spontaneous, and full of movement and childlike wonder.

Richard Wollheim distinguishes between what he calls 'seeing-in' and 'representation', and argues that this 'seeing-in is prior to representation [...] both logically and historically.'²⁴⁰ By 'representation' Wollheim means the familiar process of recognizing objects in pictures, for example photographs or

²³⁸ Katherine Mansfield, *The Aloe with Prelude*, ed. Vincent O'Sullivan (Wellington: Port Nicholson Press, 1982), 35.

²³⁹ *The Aloe with Prelude*, 35.

²⁴⁰ Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 101.

diagrams. 'Seeing-in' is more complex. Wollheim notes how we often see shapes in 'accidental formations', for example, a cloud or an ink stain, and argues that this 'seeing-in' is a process of our imaginative ability working together with our vision; our mind fills in the gaps of an abstract image with details that turn that image into a representational picture. We see a rabbit in the cloud, an exploding firework in the ink stain. This gap-filling is not the same as representation or reproduction of some meaningful object in the world, and is more akin to imagination.²⁴¹ In Kezia's case, the child's seeing or 'seeing-in' experience seems to anticipate representation, and then the narrator takes up the task of representing what the innocent eye perceives. The perception-representation sequence is as Wollheim describes it. If what Kezia first sees is more or less contained in a frame, which make it seem like the objects in a picture, the movement of her vision then clearly disturbs this logical order by noticing 'accidental formations' such as the 'bits of red fluff' on the carpet.

As 'Prelude' moves further away from 'The Aloe', the development of Mansfield's explorations into the vision of the innocent eye becomes more marked. The most significant revision is the addition of the crucial passage about the dining-room window, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The corresponding section in 'The Aloe' is about a 'funny smell', and Kezia, in a gesture that is experimental like her investigation of the alternating blue and yellow worlds in 'Prelude', is described as 'lift[ing] her head and sniff[ing] again, to remember.'²⁴² Both versions have something to do with memory. To borrow from Henri Bergson's theory on the transference of image and memory, nature (or in the case of 'Prelude' a natural phenomenon) 'confer[s] upon the living being'—Kezia— 'the power of mobility in space, gives warning to the species, by means of sensation'.²⁴³ Memory is triggered, created and re-created by sensation. The challenge for Mansfield is how to convey this subtle sense of remembrance without making Kezia sound like an adult. 'The Aloe' version states that Kezia tries to 'remember' the old residence by identifying the distinct smell. The 'Prelude' version creates an illusion of coloured images and identity; it simultaneously evokes confusion, distortion and restoration. Kezia has to 'ben[d] down to have *one more* look at a blue lawn' and 'yellow fence' [Italics mine]. '[O]ne more look' speaks of familiarity; it tells us that Kezia is the discoverer of the coloured world through the blue and yellow glass, and this episode of gazing is by no means the first time for her. At first this episode appeared to be an accidental discovery, something Kezia stumbled upon, but after a closer look Kezia is clearly re-visiting a world she knows by heart—it is a reiteration of memory, and yet something new is uncovered at the same time, all because a new character intrudes into Kezia's known picture frame. Thus a temporary overlap of memory and discovery occurs.

This appearance of a little 'Chinese Lottie', as Kezia looks through the yellow glass, creates a momentary confusion. Kezia may be familiar with the alternating blue and yellow lawns and flowers, but the introduction of a moving human figure throws her memory off balance—the ease of her gaze is interrupted. It is not difficult to imagine that Kezia's discovery of the 'blue arum lilies' and 'the yellow

²⁴¹ Willats, *Making Sense of Children's Drawings*, 149.

²⁴² *The Aloe with Prelude*, 35.

²⁴³ *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and William Scott Palmer (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1911), 2.

lawn with yellow lilies' was initially equally thrilling, and the action of re-adjusting through the 'ordinary window' has taken place at least once, at some point in memory. What we see now is most likely a second discovery and re-adjustment, which still surprises her. Kezia's gazing experience in 'Prelude' sums up the essence of seeing via 'the innocent eye', namely the ability to see things anew every time. She is an artist in training. '[F]or the artist creation begins with vision', says Fauve artist Henri Matisse.²⁴⁴ To see things anew every time, according to Matisse, is crucial to an artist. An artist must see as a child, and such power of seeing through 'the innocent eye' enables the artist to render subjects in 'an original, [...], personal way.'²⁴⁵ This in a way explicates Mansfield's method. In order to avoid a hackneyed delineation of a subject, Mansfield places Kezia in front of the seeing lens, and gives us a vision that in itself is 'a creative operation'.²⁴⁶

If painting starts with vision, then writing for Mansfield must start with imagining, which is a literary form of seeing. For Mansfield, this 'creative operation' involves being able to see as a child. Jeanne Beauchamp remembered her sister as 'a child among the children'.²⁴⁷ Mansfield has both a child's fascination with a world that can be re-imagined in her writing, and the genius to break and reassemble an image. In a journal entry, Mansfield writes that she is 'in love with rainbows & crystal glasses—the rainbow fades—and the glass is splintered into 1000 diamond fragments. Where are they scattered—in the immensity of the sky to the four winds of heaven—gone...'.²⁴⁸ The 'four winds of heaven', a more evocative phrase than the conventional four *corners* of heaven, is a more abstract and cosmic parameter for Mansfield's envisioning and imagination, whereas Kezia's window in 'Prelude' is narrowed down to a much more concrete and decipherable platform for viewing and re-visioning the world. Mansfield is fascinated with both the 'rainbows', the summation of all physical colours, and 'crystal glasses', the medium through which colours are filtered and/or intensified. Envisioning then for Mansfield is the result of the unifying of both recognizing the original colours and the act of seeing through clear crystal glass; it is a formative stage where Mansfield, like Kezia, is looking through the window, amazed and at the same time trying to process what she sees. Of course Mansfield's 'rainbows & crystal glasses' fade and scatter, but she manages to re-summon them in 'Prelude' as a highly condensed vision.

As a result 'Prelude' has an entirely different aura to 'The Aloe'. Everything starts with Kezia's coloured window. If 'The Aloe' is an adult's memoir of a lost childhood and land of remembrance, 'Prelude' then is the memory recreated by (re)discovery, by sensations and explorations channeled through a child's eye and harmonized with Mansfield's recollections about and recreation of New Zealand. From now on Mansfield will start to use 'necessary colours' instead of conventional colours or analytical colours; she will use colour to re-create a world that bears the mark of her personal style.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Henri Matisse, *Matisse on Art*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 217.

²⁴⁵ Matisse, ed. Flam, 218.

²⁴⁶ Matisse, ed. Flam, 218.

²⁴⁷ Gillian Boddy, *Katherine Mansfield: The Woman and the Writer* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988), 15.

²⁴⁸ *JKM*, 13.

²⁴⁹ Matisse, 219, 'In my *Still Life with a Magnolia* I painted a green marble table red; in another place I had to use black to suggest the reflection of the sun on the sea; all these transpositions were not in the least a matter of chance or some kind of whim, but were the culmination of my previous researches, following which

Kezia's window may be small, but the whole effect achieved is analogous to Matisse's 'Tree of Life' in the Chapel of the Rosary at Vence:

In the chapel at Vence, which is the outcome of earlier researches of mine, I have tried to achieve that balance of forces; the blues, greens and yellows of the windows compose a light within the chapel, which is not strictly speaking any of the colors used, but is the living product of their harmony, their mutual relationships; this color-light was intended to play upon the white field embroidered with black of the wall facing the stained glass windows, on which the lines are purposely set wide apart. The contrast allows me to give the light its maximum vitality, to make it the essential element, that which colors, warms, and animates the whole structure, to which it is important to give an impression of boundless space despite its small dimensions. Throughout the chapel, there is not a single line, not a single detail that doesn't contribute to that impression.²⁵⁰

Matisse talks about three colours (two of which happen to be the same colours Kezia sees through), and how they harmonize and interact with the white, which reminds us of the 'ordinary window' in 'Prelude'. Anyone who has seen Matisse's Vence Chapel and read Mansfield's 'Prelude' will not find it difficult to associate the two. Upon entering the chapel, the eyes is immediately captivated by the play of light orchestrated by the 'ultramarine blue', 'bottle green', and 'lemon yellow' glass; movement is an indispensable component of the harmonized composition.²⁵¹ If Matisse painted the windows of Vence Chapel with light, Kezia uncannily did exactly the same thing in front of the Burnell dining room window. This is an ultimate overlap of 'the innocent eye' where a child artist, though fictional, through the vision of Katherine Mansfield, anticipated a pivotal artistic creation which the artist himself confessed to be 'the culmination of a lifetime of work'.²⁵² The coloured glass window in both Matisse's and Mansfield's work is the eye through which each artist sees the world and, under its guidance, creates. Kezia's window may be limited in dimension, yet it has a similar purpose because it is through these small squares of glass that a Matisse-like 'impression of boundless space' is built and extended.

Matisse's final statement, '[t]hroughout the chapel, there is not a single line, not a single detail that doesn't contribute to that impression', explains the holistic nature of the Chapel—it aims to render one impression by allowing that one window, one vision, to pull together all the threads of representation and storytelling. For Mansfield, that vision is often of her New Zealand. She aims to create a special kind of prose; she wants to lift the fog, momentarily show her beloved home country, and then close the vision again. She harmonizes everything by using colours and lines as 'forces' and brings us a series of

these colors seemed to me to be necessary, because of their creation to the rest of the composition, in order to render the impression I wanted.'

²⁵⁰ Matisse, 219.

²⁵¹ Matisse, 198. Matisse explains in detail in this essay how simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary the three colours are, how their power lies their 'simplicity', and yet each is able to filter and interact with sunlight to a different effect.

²⁵² Matisse, 197.

balanced images in 'Prelude'. The episodic structure of 'Prelude' is more conspicuous than that of 'The Aloe', where narrative and impressions are compressed together with few separations.

In Kezia's vision objects and activities, though coloured, still retain their original shapes and normalcy: the lawn, the arum lilies, the gate, and Lottie dusting the tables and chairs with her pinafore, and yet at the same time the unexpected element of colouring adds to the suspense of a newly discovered imaginative space. However, realism is still retained, for the shapes of things are real, even though their colours are not. For Kezia and the reader, the coloured reality is not an 'imagination', but an observation, which leads her to question the original or 'ordinary' form of things.

Kezia's look through the coloured glass is a defining moment of distortion and transformation. Joanna Kokot observes that the point of view of the character and the narrator overlap precisely when the momentary confusion and wonder occurs;²⁵³ the effect is immediately transmitted to the reader. Colour plays a key role in this transmission. Without its illuminating and transforming power, Kezia's vision will not be that of the innocent eye, which encompasses both a sensation of colour distortion, and soon after, a restoration of normative vision. The positioning of the coloured panes indicates removal, however briefly, from reality. Transformation occurs when Kezia alternates between the 'blue lawn' and 'yellow Lottie', hence the question: 'Is it really Lottie?'; certainty is only obtained when Kezia looks through the 'ordinary window'.

As a result of this gazing experience, Kezia seems to be the chosen one among Mansfield's child characters, she who has seen and understood the essential colours of imagination as well as reality, and been able to recreate them in mirroring forms, which are her own imaginative recreations in a sense. Even though Kezia never draws, her ability to re-create what she sees is manifested in her understanding of reality, and in particular of the adult world. At their tea party, according to Kokot, the Burnell girls pretend to be 'sophisticated women'.²⁵⁴ Their role-playing reveals their naïve yet sharp perception of the essential lines and structures of the adult world, and how it operates. What Kezia observes through the window's distorted shades is reality, like seeing through polarized sunglasses that filter noisy colours and leave the essential hues behind. At the tea party, she is re-creating this perceived reality—in a form that in its essence is truthful to her vision. In this sense Kezia is also close to Mansfield's acting self, demonstrated in the KM & JMM (Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry) play-acting, another function of the innocent eye, to which my discussion now turns.

2. Extending the 'Innocent Eye': Mansfield's Two Types of Child Character

Mansfield can present her child characters through the lens of colour, or closely associated with colour, but also show them in visions that are deprived of colour, in a world of stark, abbreviated monochromatic patterns. This technique of hers does not however imply that only a fortunate few possess the genuine power of the 'innocent eye' while others do not, but rather opens out another

²⁵³ Kokot, 'The Elusiveness of Reality: The Limits of Cognition in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories' in Janet Wilson, Susan Reid, and Gerri Kimber, eds., *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism*, *Historicizing Modernism*, 67-77 (New York: Continuum, 2011), 67.

²⁵⁴ Kokot, 68.

avenue for exploring childlike vision. Instead of colour and distortion, this method works by abbreviation, drawing, and repetition.

A first glance at *Something Childish and Other Stories* gives the impression that there may be some inherent connection between the title and some of the stories in this posthumous volume: 'How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped', 'New Dresses', 'The Little Girl', 'Something Childish but Very Natural', and the slightly bizarre 'A Suburban Fairy Tale' all either have a central child character, or a fairy-tale quality that aims to capture an unspoiled vision, while 'The Woman at the Store' offers a darker, more complex portrait of the child. Most of the stories are earlier works, written between 1911 and 1920, and the collection has a distinctive childlike nuance. Mansfield's preoccupation with children can arguably be explicated via a closer look at these stories, at how the children or childlike characters are portrayed, and more importantly, how these characters see and depict the world. A story which uses the lens of colour will be analysed first, and then compared with two tales whose world is monochrome.

In 'How Pearl Button was Kidnapped', the central child character Pearl is both fascinated and confused by colour, and is overwhelmed by colour's changing nature in a way that reminds us of Kezia in 'Prelude'. Smith refers to Pearl Button as 'the seeing eye of the story', whose view diverges from that of the adults, or rather the *pakeha* adults, and argues that her 'kidnappers' are in fact her 'liberators'.²⁵⁵ The child's vision is the focal point through which the reader sees a world of simplistic colours in combination with Pearl's own sensory discoveries. When Pearl Button is 'kidnapped' by two Maori women, she is first impressed by their 'very white teeth'. The women promise to show Pearl some 'beautiful things'. Pearl's encounter with this new group of people, who do not seem to live and behave as those in her 'House of Boxes', is rendered in tactile terms: she experiences one finger running 'through [her] yellow curls, very gently, and one of them, a young one, lifted all Pearl's hair and kissed the back of her little white neck'. Yet the most sensory of Pearl's new experiences occurs when a woman shows her the sea:

And down at the bottom of the hill was something perfectly different—a great big piece of blue water was creeping over the land. She screamed and clutched at the big woman. 'What is it, what is it?' 'Why,' said the woman, 'it's the sea.' 'Will it hurt us—is it coming?'²⁵⁶

Pearl Button's 'Will it hurt us?' recalls Kezia's fear of what she names 'IT', and in both cases, 'it' rushes towards the frightened child. Pearl Button, however, has a newly acquired companion—the woman who is holding her in the arms—who like Mrs. Fairfield, Kezia's grandmother, gives the assuring answer that 'it' will not come at 'us'. This identification of 'us' puts Pearl Button in the sphere of those who are not afraid—Pearl's kidnappers and their people, a group of adults who seem to possess different cognitive powers together with assurance. This woman, like Kezia's grandmother, seems to understand the child's fear, and knows how to pacify her.

²⁵⁵ Smith, introduction to *Katherine Mansfield: Selected Stories*, xi-xii.

²⁵⁶ *CFKM*, I, 287.

Pearl's initial amazement at or fear of the vast blue sea does not prevent a closer encounter with it. As the point of view moves with her '[o]ver a little paddock, through a fence, and then on warm sand with brown grass in it', we witness her interaction with the sea, or more importantly, with the colour blue:

She got hot and wet, and suddenly over her feet broke a little line of foam. 'Oo, oo!' she shrieked, dabbling with her feet. 'Lovely, lovely!' She paddled in the shallow water. It was warm. She made a cup of her hands and caught some of it. But it stopped being blue in her hands.²⁵⁷

The child's ecstatic contact with the blue sea in motion is captured in both visual and tactile terms. The power of the innocent eye is now enabling Pearl to see something different from her initial apprehension of the sea, something 'lovely' which she desperately tries to touch and encapsulate. Yet the changing nature of colour does not allow for the existence of static memory. This is a moment of discovery, a moment of gazing through the colour that nature provides followed by a return to normative colour immediately after; it is an experience that mirrors or parallels Kezia's coloured window. Colour connects sensation and perception, momentarily providing something new for the children to see, but then under normative light, ceasing to be. The fleeting experience, the temporary sensation where seeing and unseeing coincide, is perhaps what Mansfield tries to capture for her reader as well—a childhood memory of New Zealand that runs through the sands of memory all too quickly. The story, however, does not conclude with this joy of discovery. In the end, the sea metamorphoses into '[I]ittle blue men in blue coats [...] running, running towards her with shouts and whistlings—a crowd of little blue men to carry her back to the House of Boxes.'²⁵⁸ 'IT' is coming after all to take Pearl away.

The vivid use of colour to depict the privileged and blissful vision Pearl experiences is in stark contrast with the monochromatic images of children in other stories from *Something Childish*. The question must be raised as to whether this is 'the innocent eye' readjusting through the ordinary window. These child characters are often associated with a lack of colour, either in the images they see or in those they produce. There is often a startling eeriness in their interactions with colour, image, and memory, especially because they are portrayed through unreliable narrators. Else in 'The Woman at the Store', and the Child in 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' seem to represent this more complex aspect of the innocent eye.

The child in 'The Woman at the Store' is not given much personality when she first appears, and it is only gradually that her voice and appearance are acknowledged, and eventually become crucial to the climax of the story. 'Else' is a suspiciously haphazard name, in stark contrast to 'Kezia', the name which becomes synonymous with Mansfield's memory and associated with the New Zealand of her childhood. Jenny McDonnell also points out that Else is 'obviously identified as 'other' within the story by her name. [...] she is excluded from authorial language and uses a different medium (her drawing) to

²⁵⁷ CFKM, I, 288.

²⁵⁸ CFKM, I, 288.

express herself.²⁵⁹ In the beginning of 'The Woman at the Store', Else is simply referred to as 'the child'; even the dog is rendered in more direct and descriptive terms than she: 'the yellow dog, a mangy beast, scuttled back into the whare, his tail between his legs.' The child's voice, too, is paraphrased indirectly by the mother: 'My kid comes runnin' in ter me. 'Mumma,' says she, 'there's three brown things comin' over the 'ill,' says she.'²⁶⁰ The child's name may indicate that she is Something Else, who does not resemble the mother even though the woman insists that '[s]he's the dead spit of me. Any fool could see that.'²⁶¹ Sickness is associated with Else from birth. This may have resulted in a similar type of 'silliness' we will find in the unnamed central character of 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired'. The mother, once again, takes up the narrative responsibility by relating the child's background: 'I 'and't any milk till a month after she was born and she sickened like a cow.'²⁶²

And yet Else survives. She seems to share a trait with Kezia in that she also prefers a voyeuristic point of view. Willats observes that '[t]he human visual system is designed to extract information about the shapes of objects from views of scenes, and picture perception works in the same way';²⁶³ arguably the observatory stance adopted by Kezia and Else explores this fundamental, almost physiological substratum of human vision. The major difference between the two characters, as we find out, lies in Else's extraordinary ability in representation, over and above her 'seeing-in'. Mansfield does not show a Kezia who reproduces her vision in 'Prelude', at least not in the traditional sense of painting, while Else is already translating her internal vision into drawings. She is able to transform what she sees into true representations.

Else appears to be Mansfield's prototype of a child artist, who, like the Fauve artist, is perhaps difficult to accept or understand in the beginning; she is the type of artist whose very intention is to overthrow conventional criteria of beauty and harmony. Mansfield's first artist then is appropriately a child who is 'mad', utterly motivated by truth, and completely identifies with her art. Else, like Matisse and his friends, is a rebel.²⁶⁴ A remarkable degree of similarity exists between Mansfield's Else and the Fauve artists. If the narrator is taken as a representative of the early 1900s public who were so bewildered and overwhelmed by the Fauvists' new way of expression, then Else and her experiences are an examination of the negative reception that the group of artists encountered. When the Fauves began to show, Giry comments, '[c]ritics hostile to avant-garde art used such words as "spineless" and "incoherent" ... when passing judgment of the friends of Matisse, who thought an unfinished form more expressive than a fully defined one.'²⁶⁵ Giry goes on to conclude that in 'such circumstances, young painters who sought to change the traditional means of artistic expression clearly could not hope for

²⁵⁹ *The Modernist Marketplace*, 50.

²⁶⁰ *CFKM*, I, 269.

²⁶¹ *CFKM*, I, 271.

²⁶² *CFKM*, I, 271.

²⁶³ Willats, *Making Sense of Children's Drawings*, 152.

²⁶⁴ Giry, 11: 'Between 1904 and 1907 the Fauves did some original thinking on the problems facing them and found innovatory artistic solutions. They had a rebellious, questing spirit, and a desire to break with the past (especially Impressionism) which has often been neglected.'

²⁶⁵ Giry, 9-10.

understanding'.²⁶⁶ Such is Else's situation. Similarly, the images Kezia would produce, if given the means or a larger audience than simply her own mind, would also be 'shocking' to such critics.

The two children form a fascinating pair. According to Willats, an internal image cannot be equated to a drawing until it materializes on paper.²⁶⁷ In this sense, because we have yet to see any physical image that Kezia creates (only that she has an artistic eye), Else becomes representative of the more sophisticated aspect of the innocent eye. Kezia only explores possibilities with colour and reenacts her understandings, but Else draws on 'butter paper' and records or re-presents images from her memory. If Kezia looks into a possible artistic future via the innocent eye, and is learning to discover new things every time, Else then is the image maker who delves into the past—a past of violence, crime and compulsive telling and retelling of events in memory. She discloses the secret of her mother, in the revelation that forms the tale's climax: the woman has murdered and buried her husband.

Else is then clearly established as the artist in the story. She preserves memory by creating images, and more importantly, she seeks to utter and express what she has remembered by repeating it in pictorial form. Drawing in this case becomes more direct and realistic than the narrator's words. Given Else's physical surroundings and disposition, it is unlikely that she reads or writes, but her most powerful tool of communication, more effective and affective than language, is her drawing. Hence when her one channel of communicative activity opens, Else can hardly suppress her excitement. The narrator observes that Else is thrown into a mad fit when her work is discovered. Such excitement, observes the narrator, is manifestation of a 'diseased mind'. Else's drawings are of events, of 'happenings', and never still life; it is as if she is acquiring the expressive and recording properties of drawing as a language. Willats explains the otherness of children's drawing in terms of language acquisition: 'As with the early rules of speech, the drawing rules young children use are different from those used by adults. This is why drawings by young children look so strange in adult's eyes'.²⁶⁸ This helps to shed light upon the narrator's depreciation of or even disgust towards Else's art, but at the same time places Else in the spectrum of 'the innocent eye', setting the child's cognitive power beside the adult's appreciative capacity.

Else also differs from other Mansfieldian children such as Pearl Button and Kezia because the latter ones discover, but Else preserves and reveals. Pearl and Kezia cannot quite distinguish reality from fantasy when the element of colour distorts or reacts with nature and their vision, while Else seems to be able to more clearly compartmentalize events and scenes—she sees reality in picture frames which are materialized in her drawings. She reproduces images, but before displaying her work, she also clearly declares her intentions in so doing, thus making the purpose of her artistic endeavour transparent—to record and reveal. This urge to create may help to explain her sketching and displaying of the murder. While the girls' respective ages are not given, Else in a way is the more sophisticated of the two because according to Willats, '[true] representation begins only when a child intends to draw something specific and has the competence, however crude, to carry out this intention'.²⁶⁹ Therefore

²⁶⁶ Giry, 9-10.

²⁶⁷ Willats, 150-51.

²⁶⁸ Willats, 1.

²⁶⁹ Willats, 150-51.

Else not only sees, but also very possibly sees from multiple views; she is a privileged viewer. Each of Else's pictures marks an event worth recording to her: the whare scene which introduces all the characters, and the final drawing, which epitomizes abbreviation—a highly valued expressive method of the Fauve artists. Neither Pearl nor Kezia is able to capture what she sees—the views from the dining room window switch from blue to yellow, and the sea ceases to be blue—but Else is capable of remembering past events and representing them as closely to the real as possible. Before the climactic revelation of the murder image, Else proudly announces to her mother that she has 'made a picture of them on the 'ill, an' you an' me an' the dog down below'. This detailed piece of information confirms from the child's perspective what the narrator describes to us in the beginning of the story, as quoted in Chapter one.²⁷⁰

From the beginning of 'The Woman at the Store', we get the sense that the narrator prides him/herself on being a sort of artist who pays particular attention to the visual aspects of the surroundings. It is possible that the narrator's later harsh, apparently involuntary judgment of Else's drawings springs from this pre-existing opinion about art. The similarities between Else's description and that of the narrator at first appear to imply an aligning of their visions, but soon we discover that although the two see the same scenes, their presentations are radically different. In fact, by eliminating unnecessary details and focusing on the defining lines, Else's version releases more power. Compared to Kezia and Pearl Button, Else possesses an evolved ability to capture essential lines and shapes, which is akin to Fauvist methods. She fulfills the role of memory collector or preserver, but at the same time her artistic expression in seeing and remembering is much more complex than this simple description suggests. Her purpose in preserving these images is so that they will be displayed to other spectators or viewers, much like in an art gallery. But there is one person—her mother—who prevents Else from exhibiting her most important work of art. To be forbidden to draw is for Else equal to being forbidden speech. When the travelers coax Else into showing her drawings, they respond by judging her art as 'extraordinary and repulsively vulgar'; the works are the 'creations of a lunatic with a lunatic's cleverness.'²⁷¹ Like the Fauve artists who challenged the conventionalized aesthetic sense of their audience, Else's work also pushes the narrator's appreciative boundary to a dangerous extent.

While Else seeks honesty by engaging with the 'essential lines' of reality, the narrator looks for charm.²⁷² But charm in art is temporary. Matisse, comparing himself with the Impressionists, says that he prefers, 'by insisting upon [a subject's] essential character, to risk losing charm in order to obtain greater stability'.²⁷³ The narrator in 'The Woman at the Store' is obviously not 'charmed' by Else's art. What in reality is balanced is thrown off in art, if the artist, like Else, insists upon re-creating the real stripped of embellishment. The fact that the narrator is overwhelmed when he/she sees Else's final image indicates the effectiveness of the drawing—no more needs to be said or done, for everything is within the picture. Condensation lies at the heart of both Fauve art and Else's drawings.

²⁷⁰ *CFKM*, I, 269.

²⁷¹ *CFKM*, I, 274.

²⁷² Matisse, 39: 'Suppose I want to paint a woman's body: first of all, I imbue it with grace and charm, but I know that I must give it something more. I will condense the meaning of this body by seeking its essential lines.'

²⁷³ Matisse, 39.

The fact that the narrator goes so far as to claim that Else is mentally ill demonstrates that the two have opposite understandings when it comes to drawing. The narrator, though unable to appreciate Else's art, remains a close observer of her emotions, particularly when her drawings are shown to the adults. As I mention above, an ecstasy accompanies this moment: Else relishes the very fact that her work, though misinterpreted, is shown. Such a strong sense of identification in the child artist compels her to further revelation and creation. What is seen in Else is not lunacy, but the intense joy an artist experiences when her work is not only completed, but also placed under the public gaze. Thus the impulse to draw, not acceptability or family loyalty, occupies the centre of Else's attention, and becomes the focus of her creative vision.

In his 'Notes of a Painter', Matisse mentions that '[t]here was a time when I never left my paintings hanging on the wall because they reminded me of moments of over-excitement and I did not like to see them again when I was calm'.²⁷⁴ Matisse describes a double reaction in the artist—there are both the 'moments of over-excitement', which are by-products of the artist's creative energy, and moments of calm, which indicate re-visioning of the artwork via a normative view, suggesting the artist's distancing of himself away from it. Else's art has a similar effect on her; the action of merely looking at her own drawings throws her emotions off balance. Apparently for both Matisse and the child artist Else, art is too irresistible a stimulus to be contained in the normal or ordinary sense of perception. This also marks the difference between Matisse, a painter who tries to imitate the effect of the innocent eye, and Else, an unaffected artist who does not yet know how to segment 'over-excitement' from the serenity of creation; she is too close to her own art to be able to adopt an aloof point of view.

Both children and artists, therefore, when they are able to produce recognizable and satisfactory images, are often 'filled with intense joy'—the same excitement seen in Else. But Luquet, talking about drawings made by children, argues that '[t]his joy does not last' because in the case of children's drawings, 'the resemblance was produced fortuitously', and will not likely or 'immediately occur again ... This is especially true when in case where the resemblance is bizarre But there is one case in which the form of scribble is like to reoccur, is easy to remember and easy to reproduce, and in which the resemblance is to a very familiar object: the human figure.'²⁷⁵ Every single piece of drawing Else produces in 'The Woman at the Store' involves human figures, which is why the child returns to the motif throughout the story. The narrator, who represents an adult's perspective, is taken aback by Else's art and deems it mad, but the adult has no trouble recognizing or interpreting the images the child produces. Thus Else has made herself understood via the only language in which she demonstrates competence—the skill of seeing and true representation via drawing. Matisse believes that '[d]rawing ... is the expression of the possession of objects'²⁷⁶ or subjects, and this is the case with Else. The child expresses her possession of 'objects' and knowledge via drawing, an action that entails power. Once this power is asserted, when she presents the travelers with the drawing of the woman shooting a man with a rifle, and digging a hole to bury him, Else falls asleep 'breathing loudly'.

²⁷⁴ Matisse, 38.

²⁷⁵ Cited in Willats, 160.

²⁷⁶ Matisse, 156.

The narrator's description of this drawing communicates urgency: 'The kid had drawn the picture of the woman shooting at a man with a rook rifle and then digging a hole to bury him in'.²⁷⁷ There is no punctuation and no pause. It is as if the drawing is done in such a way that a viewer is unable to segment one movement from another, or to put the two events in sequential order. The drawing, if we try to imagine it, must look more like a collage of simultaneous happenings—it should not resemble the narrator's delineation of images, which are linear, much like the descriptions in 'The Aloe', but rather share more affinity with Kezia's way of seeing, which encourages simultaneous processing. Else's drawing must have disturbed the narrator's accustomed way of seeing objects. In the narrator's point of view, images follow a given track of movement—they are organized, composed, and safe. But Else's art is brutally bare, honest, and violent.

With the release of such creative energy, the child's compulsions to record and reveal have been satisfied. Else as a child artist moves from 'mad excitement' to undisturbed slumber, undergoing a journey via the overwhelming power of drawing. For Else, her art has the ability both to provoke and to calm. According to Matisse, drawing is not 'an exercise of particular dexterity, but above all ... a means to expressing intimate feelings and descriptions of states of being, but a means deliberately simplified so as to give simplicity and spontaneity to the expression, which [speaks] directly to the mind of the spectator'.²⁷⁸ Else's art is powerful precisely because it is intimate and direct. What the narrator describes to us are the images presented immediately to his/her mind's eye. Whether willingly or not, the narrator is pulled away from 'the ordinary window' by the child's drawings. There is, however, no absolute way to judge how much the narrator has been removed from the normative vision, since with a gothic and inconclusive 'bend in the road, ... the whole place disappear[s]' as if in a nightmare.

The ending echoes an earlier confessional description by the narrator: 'There is no twilight in our New Zealand days, but a curious half-hour when everything appears grotesque—it frightens—as though the savage spirit of the country walked abroad and sneered at what it saw'.²⁷⁹ Both this impression of New Zealand as a grotesque giant and the disappearance of the store at the end of this story communicate the sense of remembrance by presenting a dream-like image, which like light and colour is difficult to capture. In this sense 'The Woman at the Store' may be seen as a study of light and drawing. By light I do not mean phenomenological light, but rather the light a painter sees in her/his mind's eye. As Matisse puts it: 'Color helps to express light, not the physical phenomenon, but the only light that really exists, that in the artist's brain'.²⁸⁰ Else's final drawing lacks colour. Her drawing is of two actions: killing and burying. It is not filled with patches of colour like the images of the exterior and interior of the store that the narrator renders, but rather an intentional departure from view through 'the ordinary window', and a simultaneous representation of two events. Else as I argued is a type of the Fauve artist, in the sense that she abbreviates and abstracts so much of her vision. Although Else's final drawing indicates an absence of colour, at the same time it invites colour to fill its stark spaces.

²⁷⁷ *CFKM*, I, 276.

²⁷⁸ Matisse, 131.

²⁷⁹ *CFKM*, I, 271.

²⁸⁰ Matisse, 156.

Here the ultimate Fauve principle is put into practice because we witness not a supremacy of colour, but rather, a supremacy of imagination.²⁸¹

If Matisse's idea of the relation between colour and light is valid, then what happens in 'The Woman at the Store' is an interaction between colour and drawing, which when combined form an overall image and produce the grotesque effect. Matisse continues: 'What counts most with color are relationships. Thanks to them and them alone a drawing can be intensely colored without there being any need for actual color'.²⁸² And the child becomes the connecting medium between drawing and colour, for we have the juxtaposition of the narrator's framed images, which are particularly attentive to colour, and Else's stark drawings, which mirror the narrator's descriptions. The former images do not bear any significance until Else intrudes the frames of her drawings that complete the other half of the mystery. Drawing and colour are thus inseparable.²⁸³

Another Mansfield child who shares both Kezia's ability to see and Else's ability to remember is the unnamed child character in 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired'. This story is not in the *Something Childish* collection, but is nonetheless intriguing in terms of vision and imagination. The title suggests that this is an event told in hindsight. A motif, discussed in Chapter one, of a 'little white road with tall black trees on either side' can be either a dream or a memory. This road, rendered in minimalistic monochrome, is rather an after-image—it has the effect of lingering upon the Child's retina when she closes her eyes. 'With an immense effort', the Child 'open[s] her eyes' and sees the Frau, the baby and the other three children. Envisioning coincides with confusion again in this case, and we have another protagonist who has trouble discerning dream from wakefulness, and fantasy from reality. The result is obliteration of the line between these two realms, which leads to reconciliation (as in Else's case) between sleep/dreaming/rest and wakefulness/reality, when the Child eliminates the crying of the baby by suffocating it.

Both 'The Woman at the Store' and 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired' include a murder that involves a child who possesses the power to see and remember artistically. While Else mostly records, the Child-Who-Was-Tired imagines, and this imagination is summed up by the image of the monochromatic path. The 'little white road with tall black trees on either side' is a liminal state that is neither life nor death, neither reality nor fantasy, but a half-wakeful dream. The fourth time the little white road is mentioned, we discover that this road is not a path at all, but a destination: ' "Perhaps," thought the Child-Who-Was-Tired, "if I walked far enough up this road I might come to a little white one, with tall black trees on either side—a little road—"' .²⁸⁴ This idea occurs after the Child's exposure to a few bright colours outside the house (see Chapter one), and it is the only time that she considers it possible to find a path to her vision in the physical world. Seeing for this particular Child becomes an intensified obsession, and as long as she is unable to reach the destination or actualize the vision, the little road will continue

²⁸¹ Giry, 10-11. 'We can thus see the importance of colour in the Fauve system, but to speak of the primacy of colour, to say [...] that colour reigns supreme is wrong. The imagination reigns supreme. It acts first on the field of chromatic expression, then on that of drawing.'

²⁸² Matisse, 155.

²⁸³ Matisse, 55, 'It is not possible to separate drawing and color. Since color is never applied haphazardly, from the moment there are limits, and especially proportions, there is a schism. It is there that the creativity and personality of the artist intervene.'

²⁸⁴ CFKM, I, 162.

to haunt her. According to Bergson, '[i]mages themselves [...] cannot create images; but they indicate at each moment, like a compass that is being moved about, the position of a certain given image, [...] in relation to a certain given image.'²⁸⁵ Thus an image can orient or 'indicate' other images. This means that images share relational links among themselves. Each time the Child sees the recurring image of the road, no new image or meaning is created, yet the monochrome picture positions the Child in an immobile and passive state. She cannot move towards the road as long as she is trapped in the real world of abuse. It is as if her vision of the future is limited so that until she really reaches this little path, she will not be able to construct more details.

Despite the vivid subjectivity of their point of view, children do not operate 'in an entire social vacuum', says Alan Costall; 'the child's creativity may often draw upon available cultural sources, such as illustrations and comic strips'.²⁸⁶ 'Available cultural sources' in the case of both Else and the Child-Who-Was-Tired include whatever they see in their surroundings. As both children are quite restricted in their education, and the world within the scope of their observation, these 'available cultural' or natural resources are sparse. All Else has to emulate are 'walls plastered with old pages of English periodicals [among which] Queen Victoria's Jubilee appeared to be the most recent number [...] The mantel piece above the stove draped in pink paper, [...] and a coloured print of Richard Seddon',²⁸⁷ the Child does not seem to have even these meagre resources to inspire her. Repression of the creative impulses of the Child-Who-Was-Tired is largely due to her seclusion from the coloured natural world. This Child could have become an Else-like artist, but she is deprived of time and material, and thus the only canvas she can work on is her imagination. The frustration of The-Child-Who-Was-Tired is of course largely due to her lack of rest, but it may also have something to do with the anxiety of her need to materialise her internal vision of the little white road. The Child's starved sensory and cultural life does not seem to have destroyed her ability to see and recreate, since once she steps outside of the house, the first things she notices are colours and shapes: 'away in the meadow she saw the grass blowing like little green hairs.'²⁸⁸ Yet her deprivation has certainly slowed or stunted her imagination, and may be a direct cause as to why the recurring image of the little white road with black trees is so sparse in detail and colour.

The Child-Who-Was-Tired's potential artistic career is terminated. In the end, her will power can no longer withstand her fatigue, and she is pushed towards the verge of madness, and suffocates the baby. Finally she is on the road she has been picturing: '[s]he heaved a long sigh, then fell back on to the floor, and was walking along a little white road with tall black trees on either side, a little road that led to nowhere, and where nobody walked at all—nobody at all.'²⁸⁹ Like Else at the end of 'The Woman at the Store', the Child-Who-Was-Tired is sound asleep, too. The completion of her picture is achieved at the cost of another child's life, but now she is united with the internal vision that haunts her throughout the story. The recurrence of one oblique yet dynamic image is often a feature of Mansfield's

²⁸⁵ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 10.

²⁸⁶ Alan Costall, 'Innocence and Corruption: Conflicting Images of Child Art', *Human Development* 40, 3(1997):142.

²⁸⁷ *CFKM*, I, 270.

²⁸⁸ *CFKM*, I, 161.

²⁸⁹ *CFKM*, I, 164.

stories, such as the aloe in 'Prelude', the pear tree in 'Bliss', and the little lamp in 'The Doll's House'. 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired' is an early Mansfield story, and although many scholars suspect that it is either a loose translation or a re-writing of Chekhov's 'Sleepy', the rhythmical repetition of an image being weaved into the tempo of a story is a uniquely Mansfieldian feature. But this idea will be more specifically addressed in Chapter four.

It is clear now that Else and the Child-Who-Was-Tired rest at the two extremes of Kezia's cognitive spectrum: the first remembers and preserves, and the second imagines yet seems powerless to fulfill her vision with colour and movement. An initial impression is that it is Kezia who truly possesses the power of 'the innocent eye', for it is she who can observe without hindrance, imagine without entrapment, and most importantly, unite envisionings with normative vision through the 'ordinary window' without violent encounters. If we look at the other two children as experimentations of envisioning at the poles of memory and imagination, as the yellow and the blue glass in the Burnell dining room, Kezia then is the focal point, the agent who is given the freedom to roam freely from imagination to reality and back. But this does not negate Mansfield's portrayal of the other more sober child characters who have an explicit or more ambiguous affinity with art; these characters either have potential to create, like Kezia and the Child-Who-Was-Tired, or are already on the road to becoming artists in the most truthful sense of the word, and devote their primary energy to translating internal visions into drawings.

The question may be raised as to why Kezia never demonstrates the ability of true representation, in Willats' sense of the term. She has certainly reached the first phase of 'seeing-in', but does not continue on to the realm of drawing, at least within the limited fictional scope of Mansfield's stories. But perhaps the definition of representation should not be limited to paper and pen, but should rather be extended to the play of light, to memory and design. Kezia is a privileged seer in 'Prelude' and other stories such as 'The Doll's House' and 'At the Bay'. Her sense of beauty often coincides with an element of surprise and re-discovery, as with the coloured window or another episode when she plans how she can 'surprise' her grandmother with something unexpected inside a match box:

She wanted to make a surprise for the grandmother. ... First she would put a leaf inside with a big violet lying on it, then she would put a very small white picotee, perhaps, on each side of the violet, and then she would sprinkle some lavender on the top, but not to cover their heads.

She often made these surprises for the grandmother, and they were always most successful.

'Do you want a match, my granny?'

'Why, yes, child, I believe a match is just what I'm looking for.'

The grandmother slowly opened the box and came upon the *picture* inside.

'Good gracious, child! How you astonished me!'

'I can make her one every day here,' she thought, scrambling up the grass on her slippery shoes.²⁹⁰

This episode suggests not only that Kezia is sensitive to the idea of design, and thinks that it should carry a certain element which involves the emotional input of surprise, but also that she is aware that she is creating a sort of 'picture'. While the other child artist, Else in 'The Woman at the Store', limits her art to the two-dimensional medium of drawing, Kezia has already started conceptualizing her play with light (the coloured windows), and independently conceived a work of art by combining emotional and pictorial effects. Each new piece of art bears a personal mark, for she often prepares such surprise for the grandmother and yet almost without exception, the grandmother is 'surprised' every time. Kezia's innocent eye enables her to perceive new images, and to reproduce them anew each time. In this sense Kezia is not a painter, but an artist. She can work with the ephemeral substance of light, as Matisse does in the chapel at Vence, creating images that have the potential to alternate colours and effects.

Seeing initiates drawing or the desire to recreate; with the eliciting of the creative impulse, the artist is impelled to reproduce, represent and re-imagine. Kezia and Pearl are mainly involved in the activity of seeing, though this does not mean that they are lesser artists than Else and the Child-Who-Was-Tired, who are more preoccupied with representing (in Willat's sense of the terms) or repeating what they see. None of these child characters stop at the stage of comprehension, but progress via their actions or imagination to the phase of representation and thus expression. Neither group of children alone can fully represent the definition of 'the innocent eye', but together they have the power to both obtain untainted vision and recreate that vision—the innocent eye should have both the power of seeing and the sophistication of abbreviating the object down to its essential lines, as in a drawing. The interactions of Mansfield's child characters with colour, drawing and image-making seamlessly coincide in their adherence to one of Fauvism's key principles, that imagination must be given primacy; as Giry puts it, for the Fauve artist imagination 'acts first on the field of chromatic expression, then on that of drawing.'²⁹¹

But assuming the observatory position of the innocent eye seems hardly enough for Mansfield—the 'born actress'—for the process of becoming the embodiment of the untainted vision is more tempting. Mansfield's trans-artistic movements are also signalled by her tendency to play a childlike role. I will discuss in the next chapter the specific techniques and fields involved in another form of crossing, which has its origin in childlike seeing.

²⁹⁰ *CFKM*, II, 72-73. Italics mine.

²⁹¹ Giry, 11.

Chapter Three

Play

1. 'Being Children Together': Mansfield's and Murry's Image-making and Play-acting

As we have seen the 'innocent eye' is not just an equivalent to a child's perspective; it is an idealistic way of observation and delineation that combines a child's innocence with an artist's sophistication, a 'metaphor for a highly experienced and cultivated sort of vision' according to W.J.T. Mitchell.²⁹² In this paradoxical sense 'the innocent eye' is both untainted and evolved. Mansfield, though no longer a child, continues to explore the art of seeing and image-making not only via her child characters, but also by playing the role of a child in an attempt to preserve an artist's vision that involves seeing through 'the innocent eye'.

Heather Murray notes that '[p]art of Mansfield longed to return to the world of childhood, to recapture that Garden-of-Eden existence lost by the adult world'.²⁹³ Mansfield's contemporary, Virginia Woolf, also described this 'childlikeness' in her diary after a visit to the Murrays when they lived in Hampstead: '[Mansfield] impresses one unfavourably at first—then more favourably. I think she has a kind of childlikeness somewhere which has been much disfigured, but still exists'.²⁹⁴ This childlike quality is not only discernible in the person of Katherine Mansfield, but also manifests in her work. Christopher Isherwood thus evaluates Mansfield: 'For she is among the most personal and subjective of all modern writers; and, in her case, fiction and autobiography form a single, indivisible opus'.²⁹⁵ What Mansfield's 'disfigured' childlikeness tries to capture is not necessarily the 'Garden-of-Eden existence', but a vision of it that she can recreate in her life and works. To recreate such a vision involves two things: seeing and image-making, which frequently indicate a retrospective point of view. We will also see that in the letters between Mansfield and John Middleton Murry, memory is often confused with imagination, whether purposefully or accidentally. Their exchange becomes a kind of dream weaving, in which the pair can create a safe space to share intimate memories, and also issue themselves license to become children again.

The exercise of seeing and image-making then moves into another dimension—role-playing. A pair of childlike characters frequently manifest in the relationship between Murry and Mansfield as they assume the roles of a little boy and a little girl, or in Mansfield's fictional characters. In this chapter I argue that the childlike role-playing is not a sign that Murry and Mansfield refuse to grow up, but rather that they, like the Fauve artists, desire the power of the innocent eye and thus long to return to a primitive stage of being and seeing. In their search for a truly artistic childlike seeing, Mansfield is more successful than Murry, as I will show.

²⁹² *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 118.

²⁹³ Heather Murray, *Double Lives: Women in the Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (Otago: University of Otago, 1990), 20.

²⁹⁴ Virginia Woolf, *Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Volume I 1915-1919, ed. Anne Oliver Bell (London: Hogarth, 1977), 216, entry for 9 November 1918.

²⁹⁵ Christopher Isherwood, *Exhumations: Stories, Articles, Verses* (London: Methuen, 1966), 65.

This chapter will first explore the Mansfield-Murry play-acting in their letters, stories and drawings. These aspects of childlike play are all extensions from the innocent vision, of seeing and recreating from the innocent eye. The pleasure of the role-playing gave access to the bliss that for Mansfield was an important creative impetus, and the deliberate simplification of children's art is an attempt to recapture primal, direct seeing. From this I will move on to how this role-playing failed, and the effect in Mansfield's writing of this failure. Not all Mansfield's trans-border attempts warrant creative success.

On 19 March 1915, Mansfield wrote a letter to Murry, saying that she felt like 'a tiny little girl ... standing on a chair looking into an aquarium'.²⁹⁶ This brief description recalls Kezia's fascination with the dining room window. Both Kezia and the 'tiny little girl' have a similar experience of gazing; they both look through coloured lenses and seem to see new images that they have not been able to capture before. Mansfield then goes on to describe a kind of drunkenness: 'Does black coffee make you drunk—do you think?'—an almost childish query. 'And then you know the strange silence that falls upon your heart—the same silence that comes just one minute before the curtain rises. I felt that and knew that I would write here'.²⁹⁷ In this passage, Mansfield equates writing with performing on a stage, and we shall see how like Kezia she will reenact her vision, not by pretending to be an adult but by mirroring the image of a child, in both her writings and her relationship with Murry.

Mansfield ends the letter with a framed picture:

The sky is still full of snow—but everything is clear to see—the trees against the tall houses—so rich and so fine and on the grey streets the shiny black hats of the cabmen are like blobs of Lawrence's paint. It's very quiet. A bird chirrup—a man in wooden shoes goes by. Now I shall start working.²⁹⁸

Ending the letter with this painterly description, Mansfield expresses what she intends to do after moving away from the window: the 'tiny little girl' is stepping away from the gazing point, and is ready to translate her internal vision into her own form of art. She specifically refers to D. H. Lawrence's 'blobs of paint', as if she, like Lawrence, has obtained both method and material to work her way into fiction writing, the equivalent of the plastic art of painting. It is worth noting that her urge to work immediately follows *visual* images, which seem to be the stimuli for writing. The parallel of seeing via a frame, be it a window or an aquarium, illustrates the connection between Mansfield and Kezia, in that both employ the method of envisioning by 'the innocent eye'. The dimension of role-playing is added by Mansfield's reference to the curtain. It seems that acting like a child places Mansfield on a creative path that combines seeing images of colour and recreating them in a literary realm, which according to her is akin to a unique way of 'painting'.

Cherry Hankin gives a brief account of the social psychology behind 'play' in Edwardian England, saying that in this period childhood was synonymous with the halcyon days of the past; the reason

²⁹⁶ *Letters between Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry*, ed. Cherry A. Hankin (London: Virago Press, 1988), 39.

²⁹⁷ *Letters between Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry*, 39.

²⁹⁸ *Letters between Mansfield and Murry*, 40.

behind this nostalgia for childhood lay in the romantic construction of children, discussed in Chapter two, as possessing ‘simplicity, innocence, and a vision of life untainted by adult experience’.²⁹⁹ Hankin’s analysis takes us once again back to Kezia at the dining room window. If Kezia is the ideal child of Mansfield’s narrative self, then this episode of looking through the coloured glass is a motion reaching not forward but backward, through which Mansfield’s self in a way looks via Kezia’s eyes into her own eternal childhood. But to recreate a Neverland, Mansfield will need a playmate—a Peter Pan to her Wendy, and Murry turns out to be that playmate. Hankin suggests that Murry and Mansfield share a common fantasy of being children together:

To quite some extent, Mansfield’s early relationship with John Middleton Murry was built upon sharing that fantasy. The game of being each other’s playfellows, of being children together, enabled them to avoid feeling trapped by the traditional roles and responsibilities of husband and wife; it also united them against the rest of the world in a childish secret society of two.³⁰⁰

Hankin argues that this play-acting enabled Mansfield to see her children characters from a fresh angle, in much the same way as Kezia sees the yellow Lottie, so that she was able to represent them more realistically—in the sense of representing a convincingly childlike view of the world—and in so doing ‘transformed utterly the representation of children in adult English fiction’.³⁰¹ However, I argue that Mansfield’s play-acting is not this simple; it is hard to believe that she compartmentalizes her playful acting of children in her letters with Murry, and the genuine child characters in her stories. With Mansfield, the line between role-play and actuality is not always clearly drawn.

2. Play-acting in Letters

For Murry and Mansfield, capturing the state of childhood starts with image-making, both in the more abstract verbal, descriptive image-production of the two of them as childlike characters in their stories, and as actual acts of drawing imagined events. The letter in which Mansfield casts herself as the ‘tiny little girl’ is the culmination of an exchange of images of childhood, real and imagined, that she shares with Murry. Mansfield, in her last letter to Murry before the one quoted above, describes her childhood home to him, and in his answer he paints a picture of a physical location, the home he plans for himself and Murry at a house they have named Heronsgate. Mansfield’s vision of her childhood overlaps with Murry’s image of their future, as he is moved to relate a particularly childlike vision of their lives together—a fabricated childhood they will share—in enthusiastic, descriptive language that evokes a paradise-like space of freedom and childlike joy:

²⁹⁹ Cherry Hankin, ‘Katherine Mansfield and the Cult of Childhood’, in *Katherine Mansfield: In from the Margin*, ed. Roger Robinson, 25-35 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State UP, 1994), 28.

³⁰⁰ Hankin, 31.

³⁰¹ Hankin, 31.

—you can run out naked in the long grass and roll, roll, right under the pine trees, and little winds creep about and pin your body all warm, and right over the wall on the right hand side is a deep place, all white nettle and convolvulus, and you don't dare jump down because there must be creepy things in the water, so you wriggle back under the tummocky grass right back to the Cherry Tree; and then you cry just out of pure joy because you know the world is made for you and you can do anything with it: and day after day you do nothing because you can do everything and you lie on your back under the pine tree and look right up the long tunnels and little stars just twinkle down, twiddling round and round the long barrel till they drop in your face, and they sing and you shout—My God it's awful: and all at the cherry-tree, Heronsgate. Heron's gate—my god those herons just coming on a wisp of wind and flickering over the pine tops.³⁰²

Murry's letter recalls one of Mansfield's twin creative impulses, discussed in Chapter one—the impulse of pure bliss. Writing of Mansfield as a writer, Murry explains her impulse to joy as an ability, much like Kezia's, to imagine and receive life with 'the peculiar gift of *spontaneity*', a kind of seamlessness between her life and writing.³⁰³ It is the same kind of incentive that moves Else in 'The Woman at the Store' to create an un-segmentable drawing, where events and memories, life and art merge into a holistic piece of work. In his letter about Heronsgate, Murry's empathetic use of 'you' ties his imaginary world and Mansfield's together; they converse with each other in pictorial terms, as if the message and emotion are contained in the images themselves. The tone in which Murry discusses the objects around him, and the implied size of these objects, show that he has assumed the role of a child—the 'long grass', 'little winds', 'wriggle', and 'twiddling'. An idyllic sense of leisure permeates the image of Heronsgate. We are reminded, too, of Kezia's exploration of the new Burnell house in 'Prelude', especially when her journey outside the new house takes her through the jungle of flowers and plants to the 'top of the rolling grassy slope that [leads] down to the orchard'. Kezia, like Murry's imaginary self, rolls down the slope, then pauses for a moment, laying on her back, and then '[gives] a squeak and [rolls] over and over into the thick flowery orchard grass'.³⁰⁴ The name Murry and Mansfield choose for their home also has significance in terms of their relationship. Murry pictures a flock of herons descending upon their newly imagined wonderland, but another resonance is with Mansfield's brother, Leslie Heron Beachamp. The original ideas of 'Prelude' began to form after Mansfield's meeting with her brother in early February 1915, and it was around March of the same year that she wrote Murry the letter comparing herself to the 'tiny little girl' staring into an aquarium.³⁰⁵ Murry's letter was written prior to the conception of 'Prelude', but he may have been familiar with Kezia as a central character in Mansfield's planned next piece of writing. A secret community seems to form between Murry and Mansfield, each of whom sees and processes the world like a child, or deliberately invites a

³⁰² Murry to Mansfield, Wandsworth Common, 30 March 1912, *Letters between Mansfield and Murry*, 12-13.

³⁰³ Murry, *Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Studies*, 72-73.

³⁰⁴ *CFKM*, II, 72.

³⁰⁵ Vincent O'Sullivan, 'Introduction,' in Katherine Mansfield, *The Aloe with Prelude*, ed. Vincent O'Sullivan, 7-16 (Wellington: Port Nicholson Press, 1982), 9.

childlike perspective when experiencing and observing the world. By setting aside an imaginary locale they alone share, Murry and Mansfield start to construct their own Neverland. This re-imagined return to childhood also suggests the desire to retrieve an original or even primitive state of creativity, of re-commencing at a starting point, which the couple share with the Fauve artists.

The pleasure of play-acting at being children is arguably analogous to the particular pleasure we take in visual art. Of course the most obvious portion of our pleasure is 'simple pleasure in subject matter. But in addition the contrast occurs between painting and reality, and the contrast between the painting as a depiction and the marks on the surface'; part of visual delight is the pleasure we take in this contrast.³⁰⁶ Thus the greater the contrast between the depicted scene and reality, the more intense is the delight. Mansfield and Murry, being children no more, seem to carry out an active demonstration of such pleasure by assuming childlike roles with each other. By being what in reality they cannot be, they derive greater pleasure in the contrast between reality and the depictions of their imaginations, which take the form of not only letters and stories but also poems and drawings. In both their play-acting as children and the drawings that often accompany their letters, they resemble the child characters in Mansfield's stories, discussed earlier. The child personas of Murry and Mansfield simultaneously possess Kezia's ability to see and mirror the essential shapes of an adult world, and Else's power to create images of extreme brevity as if they form a secret code. Wollheim adds to his description of visual pleasure that it 'rests on matching, on bringing together, on deriving something out of juxtaposing, two experiences or two aspects of a single experience'³⁰⁷; in an analogous sense, it could be argued that the pleasure Mansfield and Murry derive from their play-acting arises from the overlapping of their experience and, ideally speaking, the aligning of their visions, much like the aligning of Kezia's and the narrator's visions in 'Prelude'. However, the central question for the Mansfield-Murry relationship then is not whether their two separate visions can become one joint envisioning, but rather whether what they see can eventually align with the vision of the innocent eye. If the joy of truly artistic, childlike vision is the real source behind their delight in acting as children, then their role-playing takes on a much more meaningful interpretation.

The purpose of her childlike conversing with Murry in their letters is an attempt at intensifying pleasure by matching two experiences into a single one. Play, or play-acting, is a source for Mansfield's creative bliss; role-playing opens up a new area that connects yet differs from the innocent eye. Role-playing is a serious artistic technique for Mansfield, as in the three fields of letters, stories and drawings.

3. Literary Role-play

The second overlap of the reimagined child selves Murry and Mansfield develop occurs in their publications in *Rhythm* magazine. Murry published a puzzling story titled 'The Little Boy' in the August issue of *Rhythm*,³⁰⁸ where it seems to be a misfit among Rice's discussion of the Russian Ballet and

³⁰⁶ Willats, *Making Sense of Children's Drawings*, 208.

³⁰⁷ Wollheim, 100.

³⁰⁸ 'The Little Boy,' *Rhythm* 2, no. 3 (1912): 95-97.

Fergusson's drawings with their clearly defined demarcation lines and simple expressiveness. The story is sentimental at best; it is Murry's attempt at sharing a little boy's secret with Mansfield's little girl. The tale marks the beginning of the process of retrieving something—a common experience, imagined or real—out of storytelling and aligning his vision with hers. Throughout 'The Little Boy', the text emphasizes the boy's smallness—how 'his head *just* [touches] the top of the standard when he [goes] to fetch water in a *big* jug that he could *hardly* carry' (Italics mine).³⁰⁹ Unlike Mansfield's method, Murry renders his child from an adult's perspective by stressing the small size of the little boy in order to elicit pity. The story reads too much like a personal reminiscence of the bitter abuse Murry suffered in his childhood: 'In those days he was always very unhappy, for the old woman was very cruel to him [...] He seemed always very tired in those days. He was always very frightened.'³¹⁰ A more positive interpretation is that Murry may be attempting, however crudely, to combine the two aspects of childlike and artistic envisioning characteristic of 'the innocent eye'. He is striving for 'true representation' in Willats' sense by rendering what appears to be an internal image onto paper.

The story line is simple: a little boy, the unnamed central character, is constantly abused by Mother Thompson, his employer and caretaker. One day he picks up some meat wrapped in coloured Christmas paper decorated with '[red] and yellow and green devils with pitchforks danc[ing] all over it'. He cannot stop 'reading' it until he comes to the 'green tubs in the doorway'.³¹¹ The boy is reading without understanding, but he separates the paper from the meat—a significant selective behaviour—and keeps reading until Mother Thompson beats him with a leather strap. Murry's little boy faces a situation that closely resembles that of Else's in 'The Woman at the Store'. While Else finds bits of butter paper—also wrapped around an item of food—and draws on them, the little boy 'reads' coloured images of 'red and green and yellow devils'. It is like being at the receiving end of a produced image; the little boy seeks the meaning of the coloured images. However, no Kezian distortion or confusion occurs at this stage but only an inexplicable barrier between meaning and presentation. The images of the three coloured devils on Christmas paper seem to have an emotive power over the boy regardless of this barrier, for he goes to bed happy that night even after Mother Thompson's punishment. The boy has no possessions, no toy whatsoever since Mother Thompson has destroyed them. The Christmas paper, then, becomes an emotional replacement for the things that used to be, so much so that '[it] was the first night that he did not cry quietly for Lily his doll.'³¹²

Mansfield used the pseudonym of Lili Heron when she published 'The Little Girl' in the ninth issue of the second volume of *Rhythm*, and like Murry's little boy, Mansfield had a Japanese doll. The reference to children and dolls in the correspondence between Mansfield and Murry presents another analogous picture of play. Mansfield once declares that she and Murry 'are still babies enough to play with dolls.'³¹³ Hankin argues that the pattern of their role-play evolved into a more 'desperate' form after Mansfield's health worsened. 'The couple [...] using the Japanese dolls, Ribni and O'Hara San, as

³⁰⁹ 'The Little Boy,' 95.

³¹⁰ 'The Little Boy,' 95.

³¹¹ 'The Little Boy,' 95.

³¹² 'The Little Boy,' 96.

³¹³ Hankin, 32.

symbols of their continuing childlike love.³¹⁴ By blurring the line between play and reality, Mansfield seems to be deliberately constructing a type of Kezian window through which her alternative vision of life can offer a degree of escape. The result is an urgent attempt to overlap Murry's vision with hers, so much so that this framework of play-acting, doll-sharing and fake parenting refuses separation or segmentation. Mansfield wrote to Murry in December of 1917 that since he could not come to her, then he 'will have to have two homes', and they 'shall have all [their] babies in pairs, so that [they] can possess a complete 'set' in either place'.³¹⁵ A confusion of identity coincides with the desire to be children together: in an attempt to maintain their play-acting game, Mansfield and Murry are also playing the roles of mother and father. 'Their children—and their go-betweens when relations became strained—were the dolls, later joined by their cat, Wingley, and his companion, Athy.'³¹⁶ This more desperate game occurs when their relationship becomes more constrained at a later stage. But in the earlier, happier times Murry seems quite enthusiastically to take up the other end of the literal and literary play-acting and conversation, for example in his story.

The dancing devils and Christmas paper are puzzling details until they are juxtaposed with Murry's autobiography *Between Two Worlds*. As a child, Murry recalls, he found *The Pilgrim's Progress* unreadable because of 'its terrifying pictures'. The edition he had access to was 'filled with crude oleograph pictures of Giant Despair', and the 'highly-coloured ogre outside' was 'too much for' him.³¹⁷ Murry's reaction toward these threatening images recalls the little boy's encounter, both horrific and fascinating, with the 'dancing devils'. However, Murry's memory continues as follows:

Once, I remember distinctly, a fearful nightmare followed immediately upon reading a Christmas number of *The Graphic* lent me by a neighbour, which contained a comic picture of a pack of little devils with tails and toasting forks dancing round a curmudgeonly old man. Rather fearfully, I had laughed at them; but when they surrounded me at night, I howled with terror, until I was taken into the big bed beside my mother.³¹⁸

That Murry is drawing upon autobiographical sources is obvious, but his method of mixing his own waking fascination and sub-conscious horror with that of the little boy is rather a crude experimentation of story writing. He merely alters a few details and reverses character roles in 'The Little Boy', and he does not even bother to change the original visual source that inspired 'The Little Boy'. Both Murry and the little boy demonstrate a degree of obsession with images of the devils, and later a latent regret which manifests itself in a nightmare. There is a sense of forbidden vision from which one cannot tear oneself away, and that vision returns in a haunting and almost uncanny manner. In this sense Murry's little boy differs significantly from Mansfield's little girl. Perhaps Murry's concern, unlike Mansfield's, in

³¹⁴ Hankin, 32.

³¹⁵ Mansfield to Murry, Chelsea, 23-24 December 1917, *CLKM*, 357.

³¹⁶ Hankin, 32.

³¹⁷ Murry, *Between Two Worlds*, 15.

³¹⁸ Murry, *Between Two Worlds*, 16.

their childlike role-play, is mainly to parallel or mirror his own trauma, and not to offer true companionship or become playmate to Mansfield's little girl. This is possibly why their carefully constructed relationship as children or child lovers cannot last. Murry's story refers heavily and directly to his personal experience, which seems to indicate that his main focus is on releasing suppressed memories through this literary play-acting with Mansfield even though he enjoys such a relationship. The fact that he enriches the visual image (for his autobiographical account lacks colour and movement when it comes to the images) that his little boy sees indicates a willingness to engage in a more intimate dialogue with Mansfield.

When the little boy in Murry's story has a nightmare of the three differently coloured devils torturing and killing him, he summons all his courage to seek comfort in another human being's presence, in this case, his only choice—Mother Thompson. The result is another severe corporal punishment for waking her, 'You little devil, I'll tear your eyes out'.³¹⁹ The threat is a horrific one, for although Else's mother in 'The Woman at the Store' threatens physical punishment, she never becomes a menacing presence who wishes to completely deprive the child artist of her most valuable faculty—sight. A crucial transposition also occurs when the woman calls the boy 'devil'; the reader of images—the boy—has now become the subject—the devils on the Christmas paper. Mother Thompson, in this case, appears to be Murry's version of the narrator in 'The Woman at the Store' in that her perception of the boy's fascination with the vivid colour images, or perhaps with art in general, is characterized by the same type of repulsion the narrator betrays when observing Else's drawings. Thus Murry's little boy may share some affinity with Mansfield's child artist. This is perhaps not surprising, because 'The Woman at the Store', Mansfield's first story for *Rhythm*, appeared before 'The Little Boy' was published. Murry was perhaps trying to present a child character with artistic potential, aiming to emulate Mansfield's Else. The result, however, is a story not quite as genuine as Mansfield's because Murry is unable to produce the effect of the initially deceptive overlapping of Else's vision and the narrator's, which are then revealed to be drastically different. In Mansfield's story, we can be taken away by the narrator's colourful description (the narrator gives the impression that she/he is artistically articulate), but soon enough Else's drawings are seen stripped of embellishments; they are evidence of an artist's endeavour in truth telling. The little boy as artist thus does not provoke sympathy as easily as Else does.

But there is one thing that Murry does pay close attention to, and that is the use of images and colour. The coloured images on the wrapping paper in Murry's story in a manner rebound upon the boy who observes and remembers them. While Kezia seems to experience an innocent moment of confusion as Lottie intrudes her picture frame, the little boy has uncannily taken up the position of the observed. In a way this is a deeper and more disturbing confusion, since the whole story is triggered by seeing and imaginary reproduction or even resurrection of the images. Positioning 'The Little Boy' in relation to 'the innocent eye' seems difficult. Murry's little boy neither draws, nor gazes, but rather demonstrates a more intellectual trait by reading with no comprehension but only effect. The boy does not or is unable to assign the devils other colours or movements in his waking hours, nor is his vision

³¹⁹ 'The Little Boy', 97.

restored to normative order in the end. In fact it remains unclear whether his vision can be aligned with 'the innocent eye' at all. It is only through dream and imagination that the devils come to life, and unlike the experience of Mansfield's child characters, for the little boy the lines between reality and dream are clearly segmented.

Following 'The Little Boy' in the ninth issue of *Rhythm* is a mirroring story titled 'The Little Girl'. The story at first sight seems a sentimental echo of 'The Little Boy'. It also contains a menacing parental figure, the father who punishes the girl after she shreds his important speech to fill the pincushion she is making as his birthday present. But unlike the ending of 'The Little Boy', the little girl, Kass—a recognisable version of Kezia—seems to be reconciled with her father at the end of the story, as she lies on his chest in the big bedroom, saying to him, 'my head's on your heart; I can hear it going. What a big heart you've got, Father dear.'³²⁰ By emphasizing the largeness of Father, Mansfield indicates Kezia's smallness, and thus achieves a similar effect to Murry's in 'The Little Boy', only more indirectly. The two stories present a pair of child characters who form mirror images of each other, as if each gazes into a looking glass and simultaneously sees him- or herself and also this other child. But a mirror image is always a more limited production of the original: it lacks the dimension and clarity or visibility of details that the original possesses. who gradually becomes merged or fused with the child's self until neither can tell the other apart. Perhaps this juxtaposing or matching literary role-play is more akin to Kezia's experience of gazing through the dining room window, discovering another child with a kind of recognition, or even a type of strange familiarity.

'The Little Girl' has the same intentional pathetic appeal as 'The Little Boy'. After Father finds out that Kezia has torn his speech to make a pincushion for him, the child is sent to bed: 'Crying too much to explain she lay in the shadowed room watching the evening light sift through the venetian blinds and trace a sad little pattern on the floor.'³²¹ Kass then is whipped for what she has done. Even though grandmother comforts her, saying she will forget it in the morning, Kass never forgets. The incident becomes a traumatic memory that she sets aside from all other memories. She also dreams, a highly detailed close-up of a 'butcher with a knife and a rope who' comes 'nearer and near, smiling that dreadful smile, while she [cannot] move.'³²² Like the little boy, Kass finds emotional release in the nightmare in which, like him, she is paralyzed by the horror of the day transformed into a vivid visual representation. This horror continues its invasion into the realm of the children's imagination, over which they have no control.

However, even in a sentimental story like 'The Little Girl', Mansfield includes intriguing details that can give the story richer layers of meaning. Unlike Murry's little boy, who appears to be an aloof observer of art, the little girl is very much involved in a process of simultaneous destruction and creation. Kass tears up her '[f]ather's *great* speech for the Harbour Board' without realizing its value. Perhaps in her innocent eye the speech has not much value at all.³²³ Because of this discrepant assessment of value, Kass feels that she can dismantle the speech in order to provide material for her

³²⁰ Mansfield, 'The Little Girl,' *Rhythm* 2, no.9 (1912): 218-221.

³²¹ 'The Little Girl', 220.

³²² 'The Little Girl,' 220-221.

³²³ 'The Little Girl,' 219. Italics mine.

own new art. The different systems of worth and appreciation clash between father and daughter, and lead to punishment, through which Kezia is taught the adult sense of importance or worth. The speech Kass destroys without permission is a marker of an adult's creative effort. Kass's action can be read as her attempt to establish her own language against that of adults, and against the claims of patriarchal authority. Her use of the speech to stuff the pincushion then may show that Kezia is not only unaware of the significance of the speech, but also that she is unfamiliar with the adult *language* of actions and significations to which it belongs. In turn, her father does not comprehend her action of first disembodied his words, and then enveloping them in her new creation. A barrier between the two quasi-artistic languages, of the adult and of the child, becomes obvious. In the same way as Murry's little boy is threatened with the loss of his eyes—the source of his active mind and consequential offence—Kass is punished by being beaten on her hands, the destroyer of her father's art.

However, Murry's little boy, when compared with Mansfield's little girl, becomes more like a mirror image of Kass than a fully powerful match to Mansfield's original. Murry's omissions and vagueness regarding the images that trigger the boy's nightmare impede the story from becoming a genuine investigation of 'the innocent eye' and its power to see the same thing with fresh eyes again. When the stories are side-by-side, it is clear that the boy lacks what the girl has more fully: the power to see, to comprehend in childish fashion, and in turn to comfort the adult who abuses her. In this twice-removed literary Neverland of theirs, Murry and Mansfield start to form complementing mirror images rather than perfectly aligned visions.

Despite these signs that their Neverland will ultimately collapse, at this stage Murry and Mansfield share an intense desire for unity of vision, achieved through childlike role-play. In a letter to Mansfield dated 16 December 1915, Murry writes:

For you and I are not of the world, darling; we belong to our own kingdom, which truly is when we stand hand in hand, even when we are cross together like two little boys. Somehow we were born again in each other, tiny children, pure and shining, with large sad eyes and shocked hair, each to be the other's doll. I cannot speak save to you—and to you I have no need of words.³²⁴

Here Murry explicitly states his understanding of the play-acting: by merely holding hands and standing together, he and Mansfield are constructing a world of their own where they can be children *in* each other. The identical appearance of both children, with 'large sad eyes and shocked hair', smudges the gender distinction between them so that Murry and Mansfield can be 'two little boys' together. In his autobiography Murry confesses that he did not want a carnal relationship with Mansfield because a previous friendship with a French woman, Margueritte, was 'spoiled' for him when they became lovers.³²⁵ Speaking of Mansfield, he says that he 'was perfectly happy to be with Katherine [Mansfield],

³²⁴ Murry to Mansfield, Hampstead. N.W., *Letters between Mansfield and Murry*, 66-67.

³²⁵ *Between Two Worlds*, 205.

as we were. I did not want to be her lover.³²⁶ Murry admits that he lacks the typical male trait of conquest in a romantic relationship, and claims to know nothing of ‘the torment of physical passion for its own sake’.³²⁷ It may thus be speculated that Murry’s lack of physical passion in the early phase of their relationship catered to Mansfield’s desire to play-act as children. The ‘born mimic and actress’ adapts not only to her surroundings, but also to her companion.

However, Murry’s final line in the letter ‘I cannot speak save to you—and to you I have no need of words’ betrays the failed literary role-play between his ‘little boy’ and her ‘little girl’ in *Rhythm*. When it comes to constructing a convincing pair of fictional child characters, Murry’s writing seems inadequate when juxtaposed next to Mansfield’s more carefully articulated Kezia. Three days after Murry’s letter, Mansfield wrote back, further emphasizing the imagery of little boy companions, and her affection bursts into a shower of romantic sentiments: ‘How I admire you! How I love you—we are two little boys walking with our arms (which don’t quite reach) round each other’s shoulders & telling each other secrets & stopping to look at things. We must not fail our love.’³²⁸ By agreeing to Murry’s definition of them as ‘two little boys’, Mansfield compromises the identity of ‘the little girl’ in the relationship she originally envisioned for them. But she may have already recognized the danger of living out the desire to be children together with another adult. This recognition is expressed in another of her stories, ‘Psychology’, where the unnamed characters, the man and the woman, constantly experience a blank space in their conversation: ‘Weren’t they just a little too quick, too prompt with their replies, too ready to take each other up? Was this really anything more than a wonderfully good imitation of other occasions?’³²⁹ When the roles Murry and Mansfield take on in their play are always the same, it is easy to slip into always drawing on the same ideas and images, which can turn the game into a ‘wonderfully good imitation of other occasions’. Although the story is ‘[s]ometimes read as drawing on KM’s friendship with Bertrand Russell in 1916’,³³⁰ it also seems, especially the lines quoted, to comment on her relationship with Murry. The child-versions of themselves that Mansfield and Murry re-imagine in their correspondence can pretend and smile at each other like the characters in ‘Psychology’, but the prolonged acting involved in this smiling can betray them: ‘[The smile] lasted too long; it became a grin. They saw themselves as two little grinning puppets jiggling away in nothingness’.³³¹ This description ominously prefigures the pair of children Mansfield and Murry try to conjure up in their game. Repetition is only an inexhaustible source of pleasure for children, and it will eventually fail to perform its miraculous effect for Murry and Mansfield.

4. Drawing and Sharing Vision

³²⁶ *Between Two Worlds*, 205.

³²⁷ *Between Two Worlds*, 206.

³²⁸ Mansfield to Murry, Bandol, 19 December 1915, *Letters between Mansfield and Murry*, 69.

³²⁹ *CFKM*, II, 195.

³³⁰ Notes to the story ‘Psychology’, *CFKM*, II, 198. O’Sullivan and Kimber mention this popular reading of the story, as well as other theories that it relates to Ida Baker; they argue the story is not possible to date precisely.

³³¹ *CFKM*, II, 196.

But before they exhausted the possibilities of play-acting, the couple also experimented with other methods of satisfying their appetite for a childlike love. Besides their written correspondence, and the stories in which they carve out an overtly sentimental literary space to reimagine their child characters, Mansfield and Murry also sent drawings to each other as a further attempt to align their visions. Language does not seem enough for them to consolidate the effect that this secret society of two produces; images, especially drawings, pull their visions together until both 'the little girl' and 'the little boy' are in front of a metaphorical Kezian window, gazing through the same coloured lens at a world strange and wonderful only to them. The drawings are parallel attempts, alongside the words of the letters in which they appear, to share the act of making images .

In a letter dated 11 May 1915, Murry uses a drawing to accompany and even explain his internal image of the couple's togetherness: 'Gilbert's going to see Pinker about my book so with D.H.L. too, something ought to happen. Won't it be fine if we both appear together. Tig and Wig'. The image follows immediately after this use of one of the sets of pet names the couple developed for each other (Figure 5).³³² The drawing has an overall childlike manner of rendering objects: the picture plane is distinctly flat, and objects and figures are stripped down to utmost abbreviation.

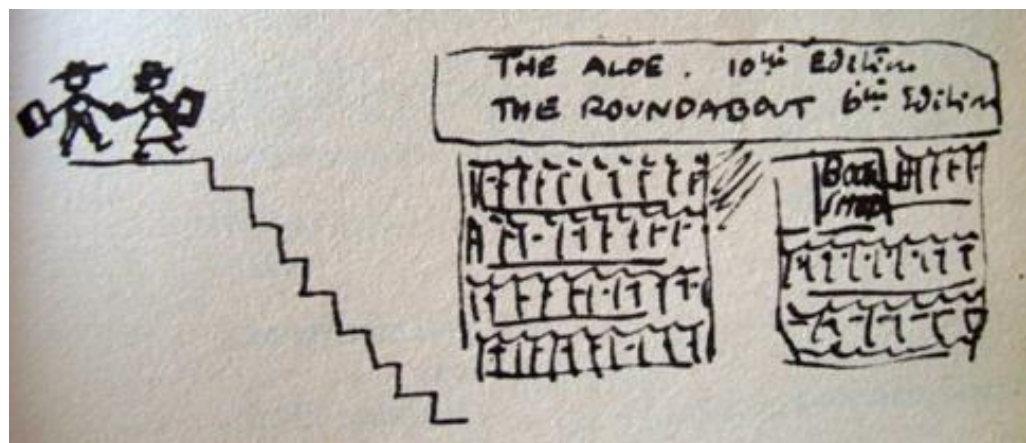


Figure 5. Drawing by Murry, 'Tig and Wig'

While the illustration can be interpreted as a random act of doodling, it has, like a number of Mansfield's illustrated letters, a quality that recalls children's art. According to Whitfield, this use of childlike features is characteristic of other Post-Impressionist artists; in his *Pink Onions* of 1906, for example, Matisse 'knowing that a child's attention is held by details rather than by the whole, concentrates on the crudely painted designs on the pottery as well as on the long shoots of the onions'.³³³ In Murry's sketch, a similar attention to detail is shown in the labeling of the bookshop and the two volumes, 'The Aloe' and 'The Roundabout'; he seems to be emulating a child artist's tendency to use inscriptions to enhance or explain the visual representation. Children, observes Whitfield, 'love to

³³² *Letters between Mansfield and Murry*, 55.

³³³ Sarah Whitfield, *Fauvism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 172.

label the people in their paintings'.³³⁴ Again Matisse gives a supporting example; in *Marguerite* the image of Matisse's eldest daughter is rendered in simplistic brushstrokes and colours, and her name is inscribed in the upper left corner of the canvas. I am not saying that Murry's sketches are equivalent to Matisse's paintings, but that Murry and Mansfield demonstrate a desire both to manifest their preoccupation with the innocent eye, and to represent this preoccupation in a form that highly resembles children's art.

As has been mentioned earlier, Murry and Mansfield form their own secret society of two and try to re-construct a linguistic system, in their literary role-play. The childlike illustrations in their letters bring another dimension into their game by reinforcing their joint vision of themselves as 'two little boys', and further emphasizing their togetherness. Imitating children's painterly language, their drawings also take on an 'iconic' appearance.³³⁵ This is characteristic of children's art, as Whitfield explains: children 'use a coded sign-language to create pictures, a language which is adapted from what they see and from what they know. The concentration which they bring to making images invests those images with special significance.'³³⁶ This special significance, to Murry and Mansfield who cast themselves as children, must have included an 'enormous pleasure' in creating these images; each is confident in the pleasure his or her images bring to the recipient, the other 'child'.

Murry's drawing, especially his inscriptions above the bookshop window, clearly envisions him and Mansfield as successful writers in the future. 'The Aloe' has already gone into its tenth edition in the illustration, but in reality Mansfield only started jotting down ideas for the story in March of 1915—two months before Murry's letter containing the drawing—and went back to it in February 1916. Murry's vision of Tig and Wig then entails a literary ambition, whereas Mansfield's corresponding illustrations that often accompany her letter to Murry mainly express an idyllic mood of escape, or simply her desire for family life.

Whitfield describes how several Fauve artists, including Matisse and Derain, "often referred to painting and drawing as 'writing' or 'a form of script', indicating that they gave marks made on canvas or paper the status of language".³³⁷ Willats also analyses children's art in terms of the resemblance between their acquisition of drawing skills and of language.³³⁸ Murry's deliberately child-like sketch thus arguably evinces a desire to return to the primal kind of linguistic marker used by children, as well as to further the secret society to which only he and Mansfield belong. Both Mansfield and Murry delight themselves so much in J. D. Fergusson's and other Fauve artists' paintings because they would have seen what Willats calls 'anomaly'—a contrast between reality and depiction. Such seeing process brings them pleasure, and motivates them to create their own images—much like children copying adults' work. Their pleasure in the Fauve drawings and paintings indicates that the ideals behind these art works align with their shared vision and secret desire to be children again. In their correspondences in

³³⁴ Whitfield, 172.

³³⁵ Whitfield, 173. According to Whitfield, children often abbreviate their knowledge of subjects into their art, and in this sense the images they made resemble symbols rather than literal representations, and thus their art, which can often look like tribal art, is abstract and symbolic.

³³⁶ Whitfield, 173.

³³⁷ Whitfield, 164.

³³⁸ Willats, 77.

particular, as well as in their fictional writings, baby talk, whether in linguistic or pictorial terms, prevails. Baby talk for Mansfield and Murry has now taken on another layer of meaning apart from the linguistic one: Mansfield and Murry converse with each other via language by mimicking the grammatical properties of children in their writing, and via drawings by proudly making images in a mock childlike and/or Fauve fashion, so that they can return to an innocent state of visual representation. The drawing is initiated by imagination, coloured by details, and finally materialized into the visual presentation in the letter—a process that is parallel to the developmental and perceptual patterns followed by Mansfield's child characters and the couple's play-acting.

This weaving of their lives together enables Mansfield and Murry to assume multiple versions of the essential child roles: two little boys, little girl and little boy, or brother and sister. After losing her brother in the First World War, Mansfield desperately sought a symbolic replacement. This new version of her little brother is sometimes Murry, whom Mansfield also calls Bogey—the same name she has used for Leslie Heron Beauchamp—and occasionally Murry's brother Arthur. In another letter to Mansfield in May 1915, Murry describes a meeting he had with his brother Arthur, who was upset about having taken a wrong bus and so 'began to cry' when they met. Murry writes, 'I used to be just like that. But he had a lemon squash which seemed to revive him, and then we rowed for 2 hours round the Serpentine.'³³⁹ Mansfield responds to this letter with much affection, and seems to see Arthur and Leslie as one—her little brother as well as Murry's: 'Poor Arthur—the beginning of the day sounded very like a little you. But I envied him being on the Serpentine with you. Leslie and I used to go in the old days but I've never been since'.³⁴⁰ This may very well be a moment where a Kezian confusion occurs: Mansfield looks through the lens of the more distant memory of Leslie, overlapping it with Murry's description of a recent event, and the result is an imaginary and momentary episode where the childhoods of Murry, Leslie and Mansfield overlap. There is a confusion of time, place and memory in Mansfield's response. First she does not distinguish Arthur and Murry ('the beginning of the day sounded very like a little you'), then she is envious of the brother because he is the one with Murry, and not her, and fondly she retrieves another memory where she and Leslie visit the Serpentine, which is the same place Murry and Arthur are in the letter. In this sense Mansfield is not like Else, an accurate artist, who clearly segments real events from imagined ones, but shares more affinity with Kezia in that both are, intentionally or not, smudging the line between imagination and reality, and become lost in this liminal stage of visioning, however briefly. Mansfield and Murry's play-acting as children thus is a more complicated process than merely standing together and holding hands. Each uses the other's raw materials of memory to evoke events in her/his own past, and then either fabricates this memory or event by reinvesting it in fiction writing, as in the case of 'The Little Boy' and 'The Little Girl', or by sharing, appropriates and possesses the other's memory as her/his own, as is the case with the letters.

In the end, Murry fails to understand that for Mansfield the most important result of their play-acting is image making. One of her drawings in an unpublished letter to him expresses a sense that they are going in opposite directions, or even a strong desire to escape their Neverland (Figure 6). The short

³³⁹ Murry to Mansfield, London, 8 May 1915, *Letters between Mansfield and Murry*, 51.

³⁴⁰ Mansfield to Murry, Paris, 11 May 1915, *Letters between Mansfield and Murry*, 53.

letter reads: 'This is the kind of place that would be so nice, Bogey. You observe we are driving from the sea; and I am sitting with my back to you & and horse to watch the waves. Tig'.³⁴¹ The accompanying illustration recalls once again Mansfield's first 'kick-off', that joyful reception of life that what Murry calls 'spontaneity'. In Mansfield's letters, such displays of joy often occur with an act of remembering, or an attempt to construct a space where she can indulge in an almost dream-like state of splicing imagination with creation and memory—something she invented with the writing of 'Prelude'.



Figure 6. Drawing by Mansfield, 'Driving from the sea' (Courtesy of ATL)

Murry, however, does not possess the same type of spontaneity. In his autobiography he confesses that '[he] had been cursed with "an experiencing nature" ', but this nature is 'of a minor sort', it is 'not of the willing eager kind. It was of the timid, hesitating sort, that is drawn into life against its will and its desire'.³⁴² His confession partially explains why his response, though perhaps enthusiastic enough by his own standards, does not match up to Mansfield's desire for total immersion and fascination with childish role-playing. Mansfield may not need to be cast in the role of the little girl for long, but while she is in that particular role, she is able to summon all her acting capability. Her intensity drastically contrasts with his comparatively lack-luster devotion to this game of being children together.

As I have indicated several times in the course of this chapter, therefore, the role-playing and the image-making it sets off thus cannot go on forever for Mansfield and Murry. As mentioned in Chapter one, the innocent eye must see new things each time, and mere repetition, no matter how colourful, is bound to deprive the evolving artist's nature of a fluid vision. Mansfield's writing begins to reflect an intention to break the bond of their childish secret society. After repeated disappointment in Murry, she starts to create childlike couples where the once-innocent role-play no longer suffices. The 'little girl' seeks to gaze through the window by herself again, and make her images alone. The next section of this chapter traces the breaking of her childish bond with Murry, by examining the stories 'Something Childish but Very Natural', and 'A Suburban Fairy Tale'.

³⁴¹ Mansfield to Murry, illustrated letter [ca. winter 1915-16], *Papers*, MS-Papers-11326-016, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³⁴² Murry, *Between Two Worlds*, 198-99.

5. From Illusory Vision to Crossing-over and Transformation

To constantly maintain a childlike status is to take on a static being, and so in the end Mansfield's role-playing cannot satisfy the needs of the new type of prose she wishes to write. The nature of the innocent eye is defined by changes of colour and image, which a static point-of-view cannot recapture, and also, literary role-playing leaves not much room for recording and true representation in Willats' sense of the term. Mansfield seems to realize that she will not be able to reproduce a perfect childhood vision with the 'little boy', but instead should focus on representing it. She may have started out like Kezia, switching between the blue and the yellow glasses, but becomes aware that eventually she will have to step away from the coloured lenses, not only to look through the normal window again, but also to move away entirely and start a representing process. Mere alignment of two visions will not suffice, for this is not production, but only memory. The two stories that I will discuss here, 'Something Childish but Very Natural', and 'A Suburban Fairy Tale', come from a collection *Something Childish and Other Stories* which is arranged in chronological order. I suggest that the fact that these two stories were written after the tales exploring the innocent eye (discussed in Chapter 1), indicates a departure in Mansfield's understanding of the term, and more importantly, a stepping-away from the vision of the little boy.

The two stories I will explore, 'Something Childish but Very Natural' and 'A Suburban Fairytale', prefigure the final ending of the childish role-playing that happened in 1919-20, when Mansfield's health was deteriorating. In December of 1919, she wrote with a certain measure of determination that the childish role-play must end between Murry and herself:

We'd been *children* to each other, openly confessed children, telling each other everything, each depending equally upon the other. Before that I had been the man and he had been the woman and he had been called upon to make no real efforts. [...] we'd always acted (more or less) like men-friends. Then this illness—getting worse and worse, and turning me into a woman and asking him to put himself away and to *bear* things for me. He stood it marvelously. It helped very much because it was a romantic disease [...] and also being 'children' together gave us a practically unlimited chance to play at life, not to live. It was child love.³⁴³

This entry explains Mansfield's moving-away from their literary role-play; her intention to cease such childish games springs from the observation that she has now become more 'woman' than 'child' to Murry. A much clearer division or definition of gender roles is the result of Mansfield's deteriorating health and the realisation that Murry has had to adjust his own vision or role accordingly. Her instinct, as the spontaneous artist who cannot separate life from art, is that survival now must be given precedence over play. The tone of this entry implies that she knows where Murry's weakness lies: he

³⁴³ JKM, 183-84.

can love her as either child or man-friend, but not as a woman weakened by disease, even if it is a 'romantic disease'. Mansfield's clear vision of her changing role, from man-friend to child and now to woman, contrasts with Murry's blurred understanding of this significant shift in their relationship, and ultimately causes her to completely abandon her attempts to align her vision with his.

Hankin notes an 'intensely autobiographical' feature that appears in Mansfield's writing much earlier than this letter, saying that 'Something Childish but Very Natural', written in 1914, 'prefigures remarkably the change that took place in her relationship in 1920. The idyllic—because childlike—companionship of a young couple, Henry and Edna, is ruined by Henry's desire for a more normal, adult relationship'.³⁴⁴ In the same journal entry I have just been discussing, from 1919, Mansfield describes a dream she has in which everything shakes; 'there [i]s a sense of flashing greenish brilliance, like broken glass', and it dawns on her that she has died. This devastating dream led to a wave of disillusionment: 'That queer simplicity—that deep simple love *is* not. It only existed until we put it to the test.'³⁴⁵ Mansfield wrote another, even more desperate entry not long after this 'death' of the self: 'I'd say we had a child—a love-child, and it's dead. We may have other children, but this child can't be made to live again.'³⁴⁶ Hankin believes that Mansfield's description of the death of this 'love-child' is an accurate allegory of the 'withering of romantic love between her and Murry', and that in the letters they exchange after this date, though the image of the child still exists it is no longer Mansfield herself who is cast in the role but only Murry—the still-living child who refuses metamorphosis to adulthood and truth.³⁴⁷ In this autobiographical reading, Mansfield shares more of an affinity with Henry than with Edna in 'Something Childish'. However, her characters are seldom consistently relatable to counterparts in real life. In the end it is difficult to discern which character in the story resembles Mansfield more, and which Murry. The important thing is the overall mood of the story, which communicates a weariness with their previously excessive childlike role-play, and something close to resentment of Edna's reluctance to change.

'Something Childish but Very Natural' resides between dream and reality as the beginning and the ending indicate. The opening sentences of the story communicate a sense of ambiguity as to the truthfulness of the story that will follow: 'Whether he had forgotten what it felt like, or his head had really grown bigger since the summer before, Henry could not decide'.³⁴⁸ It ends with Henry waiting for Edna; she does not come, and a moth-like little girl arrives with a telegram. Henry then enters a kind of static dream-state, without movement. By positioning the story in such a liminal state of dreaming and memory, Mansfield obscures any possible normative or colourless reading. The telegram Henry gets is a poem, and after reading it he thinks that the poet must have been in a half-awake state because the poem has 'a smile of a dream on it'.³⁴⁹ The verses speak of the opposition between the imagined and the real—the impossible mission of capturing reality in a dream, which is the essential nature of Henry

³⁴⁴ Hankin, 33.

³⁴⁵ *JKM*, 184-185.

³⁴⁶ *JKM*, 187.

³⁴⁷ Hankin, 33.

³⁴⁸ *CFKM*, I, 373.

³⁴⁹ *CFKM*, I, 374.

and Edna's relationship.³⁵⁰ The poem begins by negating the possibility of flying to a loved one; reality does not gift one with wings, for only in the dreaming world can the reunion with the beloved come true, and if one wakes up one is 'All, all alone' again. The final stanza urges one to 'dream on' voluntarily as if staying in the dream world is a choice that carries one outside of ordinary time.³⁵¹

Unaware of the danger of its seductive message, Henry memorizes the poem. In blind faith he follows wherever the poem may lead him, and forgets that the whole affair will evaporate once he wakes from his dream. As I have mentioned, the poem that impresses Henry so is a condensed version of his relationship with Edna. The structure of the story thus juxtaposes two versions of the same essential plot, one in poetry at the story's opening, and another in prose at its end. The two versions, or rather, two visions appear to overlap, for they express the same content, but the technique of enveloping the poetic in the prosaic is more of a splicing of images dreamt or imagined.

'Something Childish but Very Natural' has a certain fairy-tale quality, but it simultaneously invites and rejects such an interpretation. When Henry first meets Edna, he notices her 'long wave of marigold hair' at which he cannot help staring. As she leans against the window, one of her tresses '[slips] through the window-strap', almost beckoning a bold trespasser to climb up the forbidden tower.³⁵² The image of Edna is a Mansfieldian Rapunzel. Repeated references to her hair—Henry repeatedly feels the urge to touch her hair, or 'the shape of her face wonderfully delicate against all the burning hair'—invite the Rapunzel comparison. At the sight of her hair Henry's passion is fanned: "'How beautiful she is! How simply beautiful she is!' sang Henry's heart, and swelled with the words, bigger and bigger and trembling like a marvellous bubble".³⁵³ Edna's Rapunzel-like hair is directly linked to Henry's arousal. But Henry also recognizes the fragility of his romantic notion of love and fears the fulfillment of his physical desire. As he and Edna pass a small house, he pretends to open the door as if it is their future home, but then he urges Edna to go away quickly because '[it's] going to turn into a dream.' Pretense dictates the future Henry envisions for them. Thus irony is created in the contrast between the apparently fairy-tale narrative and characterization, and the uncharacteristically unhappy ending. Pretending to be children together cannot conceal the fact that both characters have crossed beyond the realm of such role-playing—child love must be replaced by adolescent or a more mature form of love which inevitably involves physical contact between lovers. Yet physical contact is precisely what Edna rejects. When Henry's sexual desire manifests itself as a hunger to touch Edna and devour her, she shrinks away, saying that if they touch they will cease to be children.³⁵⁴ Henry then is caught between the dream of them being children together, and satisfying his adult needs. This conflicting state, though expressed rather romantically in the poem, becomes the source of Henry's lack of fulfillment.

³⁵⁰ *CFKM*, I, 373-74.

³⁵¹ *CFKM*, I, 373-74.

³⁵² *CFKM*, I, 374.

³⁵³ *CFKM*, I, 375.

³⁵⁴ *CFKM*, I, 380-381.

As mentioned earlier, despite the fairy tale aura of 'Something Childish', it does not, observes Delphine Soulhat, 'depend upon archetypal fairy tale structures.'³⁵⁵ In this the tale is like a number of other Mansfield stories that concern children or childlike characters. In a detailed analysis of Mansfield's child characters in terms of the narrative mode of Lewis Carroll's *Wonderland*, Soulhat points out that Mansfield does use fairy tale devices such as 'labyrinth' and 'liminality', but argues that '[t]hese structural metonymies are meant to depict children as standing on a liminal place between a fantasy world and a wonderland—the imaginary realm where light and darkness compete, and where dream and nightmare merge. The passage from childhood to adult reality crosses a form of limbo.'³⁵⁶ Soulhat's comment, though directed toward Mansfield's child characters, aptly explains the difficulty of transition from childhood to adulthood for both Henry and Edna—two 'childish' characters on the verge of transformation. Because they occupy this liminal state, the two characters constantly negotiate their territories of 'light and darkness' and 'dream and nightmare' because each has different definitions of and concerns about the competition between fantasy and reality.

Edna, for instance, refrains from touching. Her fear may be interpreted as fear of entrapment, or a temporary refusal of crossing the limbo space. To Edna, once they 'touch', they will lose their innocence, and possibly an innocent vision as well. The consequence of crossing that boundary may be a more disastrous loss of the self. This is implied in an almost sinister picture when Henry confesses his desire to lock Edna up with a room full of toys in their future house.³⁵⁷ She also risks the danger of being consumed if she allows Henry to touch and run her future. Mansfield makes this explicit: 'Edna, with the marigold hair and strange, dreamy smile filled [Henry] up to the brim. He breathed her; he ate and drank her.'³⁵⁸ Carnal desire corrupts the nature of their relationship; these are not two 'childish' characters, child lovers, or 'two little boys', but potentially figures who can develop into the Big Bad Wolf and Little Red Riding Hood (Henry pays particular attention to Edna's coat and hat), or Blue Beard and his next wife.

As this liminal state of being and becoming prevails, a striking parallel appears between Edna and Henry, the two fictional characters who pretend to be children, and Mansfield and Murry who have so enthusiastically involved themselves in similar play-acting. While waiting for Edna in the house he prepares for their future, Henry recalls a conversation they have had:

He was downstairs and sat on the doorstep with his hands clasped round his knees. That night when they found the village—and Edna said, 'Haven't you faith, Henry?' 'I hadn't then. Now I have,' he said, 'I feel just like God.'³⁵⁹

Murry's recollection of the time when he first became Mansfield's lodger goes as follows:

³⁵⁵ Delphine Soulhat, 'Kezia in Wonderland,' in *Historicizing Modernism: Katherine Mansfield and Modernism*, ed. Janet Wilson, Gerri Kimber and Susan Reid, 101-111 (London: Continuum, 2011), 104.

³⁵⁶ Soulhat, 104.

³⁵⁷ *CFKM*, I, 383.

³⁵⁸ *CFKM*, I, 384.

³⁵⁹ *CFKM*, I, 387.

Those were golden days. But somewhere in myself I was afraid of my own happiness. It seemed by its very nature such that it could not last; and I was half-terrified of doing anything to disturb the loveliness. [...] I had been musing aloud on how long our happiness would last. [...]

‘But why won’t you *believe* that this will last for ever?’

‘*Pour toujours?* Do you know I’m frightened of believing that; I’m frightened of the very word. I always hear something saying, when I begin to believe those things, ‘The little fool, the little *fool!*’

There was a long silence.

‘You haven’t much faith, have you?’ said Katherine.³⁶⁰

The exact same question is posed to both male characters by the more perceptive female characters. By juxtaposing the two accounts, one fictional and one actual, I argue that Henry and Edna can be viewed as a critique of the Mansfield-Murry role-play. But as the poem predicts in ‘Something Childish But Very Natural’, the attempt to be children to each other, like creating reality in a dream, will not last. Edna’s query to Henry’s lack of faith echoes Mansfield’s question, both of them indicating doubt which, like a crack in the wall of a home, will see it crumble in the end.

Although Henry and Edna appear to be the evolved versions of Murry’s little boy and Mansfield’s little girl, the question of ‘faith’ as well as the dimension of sex alter and limit their relationship. It is not that the two characters are incompatible on an intellectual level, for when describing themselves, Edna obviously consents to Henry’s conclusion: ‘I know about you and you know about me—we’ve just found each other—quite simply—just by being natural. That’s all life is—something childish and very natural.’³⁶¹ Henry’s version of the story’s title replaces the original ‘but’ with ‘and’, which betrays his desire to possess both childlike innocence and his *natural* sexual craving. Edna, however, rejects this both/and notion of their relationship. Soulhat’s comment once again offers insight to this dilemma:

Childhood then would appear to be the time when everything is possible, but also when subjects can only live on the edge of things. Such an attitude seems to suggest an identity crisis or identity transition.³⁶²

It is in this sense that the story is something *childish*, but very *natural*. Though Henry and Edna negotiate and compromise, they discover the challenge of harmonizing each other’s visions in such a transitory state. The discordance in their perception is probably caused by a divergence in their visions that cannot be overcome by rehearsing their social roles and play-acting a grown-up couple who still retain childlike traits. ‘This life-ritualizing process is no more than a sign of the children’s’, or the childlike characters’, ‘need for stability’, observes Soulhat. ‘They seek new bearings in rituals but when stability

³⁶⁰ Murry, *Between Two Worlds*, 207.

³⁶¹ *CFKM*, I, 379.

³⁶² Soulhat, 109.

comes to mean sclerosis, this movement towards adulthood turns against them.³⁶³ Soulhat's comment seems to predict the fate of both Henry and Edna's relationship, and Mansfield and Murry's play-acting. At the beginning of 'Something Childish', traces of the Mansfield-Murry role-play are still very much present: as Henry and Edna 'walked away from the hall Henry felt they were very little and alone.'³⁶⁴ But gradually a disturbance of that vision occurs, in the same way as the Mansfield-Murry role-playing stiffens. Even though Henry sees in his mind's eye the two of them as children, he also seeks to break that image. Edna, on the other hand, rejects this idea, and tells Henry that if they do become lovers physically, they will have to bid childhood farewell. Edna's stubbornness in protecting their innocence is the very thing that stops Henry from achieving the union he so desires. A constant departing and re-adjusting process happens between Henry's vision and Edna's, which is similar to the process we see in Mansfield's relationship with Murry as they continuously work to reaffirm each other's vision of their relationship as Tig and Wig, the little boy and the little girl.

In 'Something Childish But Very Natural', Edna submits her vision to Henry's dreams, which completely eclipse her. It is often Henry who sees and describes these visions to the reader: '[Edna] turned and looked at him, pressing her hands to her cheeks in the way he knew so well, and behind her as in a dream he saw the sky and half a white moon and the trees of the square with their unbroken buds'.³⁶⁵ This dream-like vision is one-sided, only seen by Henry, and it has a sense of foreboding that their love will not bloom if it remains the static connection it currently is. This tone of unease suggests an impulse to move from this still state of being. The story shows nothing of Edna's vision, but rather an image of her as rendered by Henry—a child wife.

Henry also fears that his vision will turn into a dream, which is why they must 'go away at once' because 'if you wait for things they only go further and further away.'³⁶⁶ However, Henry seems to have the trait of a storyteller. 'I'd make up a terrific history of the house if anyone came to look over it, and you' he says, encouraging Edna to play a role, 'you could dress up and be the ghost moaning and wringing your hands in the deserted picture gallery, to frighten them off.' This constructed possibility has a sense of role-play as well as story telling, and implies what Henry sums up in these words: 'if one really wants things it's either there or it doesn't matter'.³⁶⁷ He appears to be less the preserver than the pursuer of a vision; what he sees is thus less static, and his vision impels motion.

The image of two children walking down the street recurs soon after this, again via Henry's imagination: 'suddenly he saw himself and Edna as two very small children walking through the streets'.³⁶⁸ Henry's vision unmistakably aligns with Mansfield's image of walking with Murry down the street like two little boys, telling each other secrets, and set apart from the other pedestrians on the same street. The problem is that all this is a dream for Henry: 'Ever since waking he had felt so strangely that he was not really awake at all, but just dreaming. The time before Edna was a dream [...]

³⁶³ Soulhat, 108.

³⁶⁴ *CFKM*, I, 381.

³⁶⁵ *CFKM*, I 381.

³⁶⁶ *CFKM*, I 383.

³⁶⁷ *CFKM*, I, 383.

³⁶⁸ *CFKM*, I, 384.

and somewhere in some dark place another dream waited for him.³⁶⁹ Henry's attitude toward his relationship with Edna reaches its zenith in terms of ambiguity and contradiction: he defines the times before and after Edna as dreams, but now they are 'dreaming together'; he embellishes their present and future with great detail, yet simultaneously questions their being together, asking, '[A]re we a dream?'. He sees the two of them as little children, yet at the same time wants to kiss Edna, and 'put his arms round her and press her to him and feel her cheek hot against his kiss and kiss her until he'd no breath left and so stifle the dream'.³⁷⁰ The conflicting impulses heighten Henry's sense of limbo in the dream-reality state. For him, the minute he realizes that he is dreaming is the moment he prevents this realization by entering into another constructed yet involuntary trance, as the ending of 'Something Childish' describes: 'The garden became full of shadows—they span a web of darkness over the cottage and the trees and Henry and the telegram. But Henry did not move.'³⁷¹

It is then natural for Henry to try to preserve his dreams, converting them into more material forms by assigning linguistic descriptions to them. He repeatedly pictures their future to Edna. In this way Henry recalls both the child artist Else in 'The Woman at the Store' and the lost dreamer in 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired'. But what he sees, or imagines, is not a lasting vision. Edna wishes to stay in one place, while Henry envisions more dreams on the path of their future; his visions keep evolving. Instead of two little boys sharing perfect union, the pair embark on a journey of divergent dreams or visions where they are less and less like children the more they pretend to be.

The ending of the story finds Henry waiting for Edna downstairs in the house Henry has found for them. The line between reality and dream is once again blurred as Henry seems to see 'a big white moth flying down the road'. A Kezian optical confusion and a fairy-tale metamorphosis coincide: the moth Henry thinks he sees is not an insect, but a little girl wearing a pinafore. Soulhat once again explains this phenomenon in Mansfield's stories involving children and transformation:

Illusive, too, are the experiences of metamorphosis and anamorphosis, that is to say, a change or distortion of form or nature as the result of an actual process. Both are corollaries to a flawed perception. In Carroll's *Wonderland* as in Mansfield's, shapes are altered, identities shift, causing Alice and Mansfield's children to experience or witness something halfway between metamorphosis and anamorphosis.³⁷²

Henry witnesses this kind of identity transition from insect to human. It echoes a previous episode in the story when Edna asks him if he will catch her feet were she to 'start flying suddenly'.³⁷³ Henry seems to share a similar wish for transformation, even though the notion comes to him from the poem he has read: 'Had I but two little wings, / And were a little feathery bird, / To you I'd fly, my dear—'. The problem then lies in Henry's final recognition: 'What a nice little girl, and he smiled in his sleep, and she

³⁶⁹ *CFKM*, I, 384.

³⁷⁰ *CFKM*, I, 384.

³⁷¹ *CFKM*, I, 388.

³⁷² Soulhat, 106.

³⁷³ *CFKM*, I, 385.

smiled, too, and turned in her toes as she walked'.³⁷⁴ The smile seems to indicate a certain level of recognition or even intimacy. But the key event is the telegram that the little girl has brought, which may serve as a catalyst for metamorphosis. When Henry spreads it open, the garden is immediately filled with shadows that envelope him in their drowsy embrace. Henry thus is on the doorstep of his next dream, or perhaps on the verge of transforming himself.

These features of 'Something Childish But Very Natural'—using fairy tale mechanisms, employing childlike role-play and summoning the power of imagination—can be interpreted as parallels to or parables of Mansfield and Murry's literary role-play. The central question is not which character is the equivalent of Mansfield and which of Murry, but rather that the similarity between Henry and Edna's relationship and Mansfield and Murry's is a problematic alignment of visions. The story expresses anxiety about a relationship between a man and a woman that exists in-between the fantastic and the real—a state that can only be continued if the act of dreaming is dominant. But if Kezia's experience of gazing through the dining room window is any indication, 'Something Childish' expresses concern about losing the normative view, which is a crucial aspect of the innocent eye. As the relationship between the lovers evolves beyond the initial shared desire to see themselves as two little children, one partner eventually moves away from the lens which they struggle to coordinate and focus, and transforms into a new type of child in a new place where the other one cannot follow. The ending of 'Something Childish' indicates that the children, or at least one of them, are impelled to cross the liminal state between reality and dream, childhood and adulthood, in order to overcome their 'identity crisis' or complete their 'identity transition'. In the case of Mansfield and Murry's role-play, the point of departure lies in their failure to produce one harmonized image that satisfies both of them. Mansfield's major concern is not dreaming, or dwelling in a perpetual liminal state of being, but her multiple roles as child, sister, and wife.

'A Suburban Fairy Tale', written in 1919, may be an indicator of this desire to cross over. This story also contains elements of anamorphosis, yet compared to 'Something Childish But Very Natural' it is less ambivalent in its attitude concerning such transformations. The beginning of the story sets the scene with little B. sitting between Mr. and Mrs. B at their breakfast table. A cognitive and perhaps also a linguistic barrier is set up between the child and the parents from the very beginning, for the parents keep ignoring little B's comments and questions:

'Why aren't there two kinds of eggs?' said Little B. 'Why aren't there little eggs for children and big eggs like what this one is for grown-ups?'

'Scotch hares,' said Mr. B. 'Fine Scotch hares for 5s. 3 d. How about getting one, old girl?'

'It would be a nice change, wouldn't it?' said Mrs. B. 'Jugged.'³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ *CFKM*, I, 387.

³⁷⁵ *CFKM*, II, 171.

The child and the parents are obviously having two conversations that operate on entirely different levels, one practical and the other philosophical. The adults' preoccupation always seems to be food: Scotch hares, date pudding, and cheese. As they sit attentively 'reading about what you could get now without coupons [...]—a glut of cheese—a glut of it—whole cheeses revolved in the air between them like celestial bodies'.³⁷⁶

Little B., being ignored, directs his attention outside of the window, and sees a flock of sparrows who are 'funny and eager'. He shifts to the window with his bread and marmalade, and pleads with his parents to open the window so that he can give the birds some crumbs. The parents reject Little B.'s request, saying that if they do, the birds will bite his head off. As the adults become more absorbed with their own thoughts about crumbs for themselves, Little B. witnesses a moment of transformation that occurs outside among the birds:

Suddenly as Little B. watched the sparrows on the grey frozen grass, they grew, they changed, still flapping and squeaking. They turned into tiny little boys, in brown coats, dancing, jigging outside, up and down outside the window squeaking, 'Want something to eat, want something to eat!' Little B. held with both hands to the curtain. 'Father,' he whispered, 'Father! They're not sparrows. They're little boys. Listen, Father!' But Mr. and Mrs. B would not hear.³⁷⁷

What marks the difference between the child and the adults is the power of seeing through the innocent eye; the grown-ups in the story hardly seem capable of seeing at all. A steady gaze from Little B. transforms the outside world, and the key to this transformation does not of course just lie in the watching, but in imagination. Only he can see the true form apart from the obvious or ordinary forms of the birds outside. As the birds metamorphose into little boys—Little B.'s own kind—we witness a visioning process similar to Kezia's, in which the little boy sees the world outside the window being transformed. But Little B. does not need the distorting power of Kezia's coloured glasses, for his imagination suffices. No confusion occurs, but a conviction captures Little B. because in his eyes, what he sees *are* little boys.

An even more striking event occurs when Little B. takes a further step away from the Kezian window, by joining the other little ones outside. When the parents notice the absence of Little B., he is nowhere to be found. They search near the window and for the first time start to look outside, and see '[there] on the grey frozen grass, with a white, white face, the little boy's thin arms flapping like wings, in front of them all, the smallest, tiniest was Little B.' And for the first time they understand what used to be a '*Cheek-a-cheep-cheep-cheek!*' from the sparrows is the boy's chanting of 'Want something to eat, want something to eat.' They call out to him, but it is too late. 'The little boys [are] changed into sparrows again, and away they flew—out of sight—out of call'.³⁷⁸ Two visions can only be aligned if they come into focus simultaneously; once the moment of seeing the transformation ends, it becomes almost

³⁷⁶ CFKM, II, 172.

³⁷⁷ CFKM, II, 172.

³⁷⁸ CFKM, II, 173.

impossible, or 'too late', to reclaim that vision. A move has to be made immediately if the vision is to be seen and then captured. Like Mr. and Mrs. B., Murry may have been lagging behind while Mansfield was already in a newer realm of seeing and becoming.

Gina Wisker offers a Gothic reading of 'A Suburban Fairy Tale', pointing out Mansfield's incorporation of literary Gothic elements in a range of her stories such as 'twinning and mirroring, changelings, mer-children, and shapeshifters who metamorphose.'³⁷⁹ The use of these motifs, according to Wisker, raises the issue of 'identity and ontological security', and 'thus exposes 'normality' as pretence and performance by emphasizing the pedestrian, the dull and the pretentious, and beneath these, the effects of silencing, marginalisation, neglect and abuse.'³⁸⁰ 'A Suburban Fairytale' is a 'changeling tale', but it subverts expectations of traditional Gothic tales by portraying Little B., another unique Mansfield child, with a sympathetic touch, and thus reversing the changeling theme of children being the grotesque other. Unlike fairy tale versions of changelings who are misfits to be expelled from the normative family environment and human society, the child character voluntarily enters exile to be with his real family—the sparrows in the cold world outside.

The key action of stepping voluntarily outside, and of abandoning what is initially recognised as a normal image of family life seems to reflect Mansfield's preoccupation with her relationship with Murry and with her art. After all, Mansfield has been from the outset a transgressive traveler over many boundaries: sensuous, generic, and symbolic. The domestic picture is rejected as false, while the seemingly beastly existence outside of the window becomes more genuine and inviting. Perhaps like Little B., whose gaze is engaged with the metamorphosis of the sparrows into little boys, Mansfield also ponders a similar transformation in terms of visioning and representing. Throughout her career, she has portrayed a range of colourful child and childlike characters, and most of them, like Little B., are more artistically acute, 'more sensitive and sympathetic than [their] complacent, [...] small-minded parents' or other adults nearby.'³⁸¹ These characters go through a phase of self-discovery and in consequence find that their language—verbal or visual—is ignored or misinterpreted by those around them. They feel the need to seek another channel and a new way of expression, and in the process of doing so, hope to find their own kind and, more importantly still, to retain their innocence and vision. This is why Little B.'s decisive crossing-over bears allegorical significance for the way Mansfield treats the little artists in her stories: she is desiring transformation of a similar sort, and the achievement, like theirs, of a truer vision.

6. Liberating the 'Child of the Sun'

Cézanne, whose philosophy on colour profoundly influenced the Fauve artists including Matisse, proposes that 'the sun is a thing one cannot reproduce but that one can represent'.³⁸² The literary role-play that Mansfield and Murry share is not representation, but rather always remains a form of re-enactment, or reproduction of an imagined version of childhood. In its essence this play-acting cannot

³⁷⁹ Gina Wisker, 'Katherine Mansfield's Suburban Fairy Tale Gothic,' *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, 4 (2012): 24, doi: 10.3366/kms.2012.0025.

³⁸⁰ Wisker, 24.

³⁸¹ Wisker, 29.

³⁸² Giry, 42.

replace the vision of the innocent eye, and therefore cannot produce a true representation in Willats' sense of the term. Giry notes that the works of Cézanne that were most admired by the Fauve artists were those that 'aim[ed] essentially at expression through colour', they valued the way he 'liberated the coloured areas from the contour line ... saturated his tones', and pushed the intensity of colour to its utmost expression.³⁸³ This idea of 'liberat[ing] the coloured areas from the contour lines', which gives primacy to imagination, is another way of saying that the vision seen through the innocent eye does not remain static, and should not be contained within fixed colour frames. Kezia's initial observation via the dining room window moves between only two squares of coloured glass, enough to produce fascination and confusion, but not to explore full visual delight which art is capable of producing. Mansfield, toward the end of her career, wrote about how she was no longer content to be always on one side of the lens:

I love [...] the sea—the sun. All that we mean when we speak of the external world. I want to enter into it, to be part of it, to live in it, to learn from it, to lose all that is superficial and acquired in me and to become a conscious direct human being. [...] I want to be all that I am capable of becoming so that I may be [...] *a child of the sun*. [...] Let it be at that. *A child of the sun*.³⁸⁴

Mansfield seems to be extending the definition of the innocent eye towards the other side of Kezia's window—the gazing little girl will not be able to resist the pleasure of joining Lottie in the external world, or that of Pearl Button who scoops the blue out of the sea in pure delight. Thus seeing or visioning, no matter how marvellous, will not suffice for Mansfield, who is determined to step outside into the world, sunny or frosty, and by doing so, become 'a child of the sun'.

Mansfield once wrote a poem titled 'When I was a Bird'. The poem explores a related theme of anamorphosis, though in a much more cheerful and playful tone than the examples discussed so far:

I climbed up the karka tree
Into a nest all made of leaves
But soft as feathers.
I made up a song that went on singing all by itself
And hadn't any words but got sad at the end.
There were daisies in the grass under the tree.
I said, just to try them:
'I'll bite off your heads and give them to my little children to eat.'
But they didn't believe I was a bird
They stayed quite open.
The sky was like a blue nest with white feathers
And the sun was the mother bird keeping it warm.

³⁸³ Giry, 42.

³⁸⁴ *JKM*, 254.

That's what my song said: though it hadn't any words.
 Little Brother came up the path, wheeling his barrow
 I made my dress into wings and kept very quiet
 Then when he was quite near I said: 'sweet – sweet'.
 For a moment he looked quite startled
 Then he said: 'Pooh, you're not a bird; I can see your legs.'
 But the daisies didn't really matter
 And Little Brother didn't really matter –
 I felt just like a bird.³⁸⁵

The poem is not dated, but it certainly bears marks of the New Zealand of Mansfield's memory, notably the karka tree, which is an indigenous canopy tree that bears a date-like fruit. The karka tree and Little Brother act as trigger points enabling the narrator to enter this childlike fantasy of becoming a bird. This central character, when juxtaposed to Little B., still seems to communicate in human terms: she still has to climb up, and not fly up to a karka tree, wants to make a song, but cannot. Neither the daisies nor Little Brother are convinced that a metamorphosis has taken place. However, the speaker feels no different from a bird. The most significant metaphor occurs in lines 11 and 12 when the narrator's view is directed upward: 'The sky was like a blue nest with white feathers. / And the *sun was the mother bird* keeping it warm.'³⁸⁶ Compared to 'A Suburban Fairy Tale', 'When I was a Bird' is much more optimistic. The narrator not only securely nestles among the karka tree's leaves that are as soft as feathers, but also is protected by 'the sun' which is like a 'mother bird'.

In confessing that she would like to become a 'child of the sun', perhaps what Mansfield really means is that she does not want to become the offspring of a traditionally masculine symbol, but rather the child of a more matriarchal one, a 'mother bird'. Although we cannot be sure that the poem was in Mansfield's mind when she wrote 'A Suburban Fairy Tale', such a reading seems to make more sense given Mansfield's confession that she became more woman than child in her relationship with Murry. Becoming a 'child of the sun' then is possibly a reassessment of her identity, and a return to a more original vision of the self; it may be an act of preserving her first 'kick-off', and finding a way to a different sort of innocent vision now that her view no longer includes Murry—it is not longer a case of 'two little boys', but one 'child of the sun'.

Mansfield's exploration of the innocent eye begins with Kezia, and ends with her crossing to the other side of the observing lens to finally achieve a highly evolved version of the innocent eye. We can interpret this desire to perpetually deepen her experience of the seeing power of the innocent eye as Mansfield's wish to maintain its virtue by becoming 'a child of the sun'. Becoming this child challenges her previous notion of what being a child means, for it involves stepping away from Kezia's coloured glass and becoming part of the external vision which strips everything down to its essentials. She has to 'become a conscious direct human being', as she puts it in the journal entry, and does not seem to

³⁸⁵ *Notebooks*, II, 87-88.

³⁸⁶ Italics mine.

hesitate. The kind of vision Kezia has is equivalent to Willats' internal vision, and what Mansfield now sees is more external, one step closer to true representation. Thus the initial excitement of seeing via the innocent eye wanes, but a new vision, more substantial, essential, and abbreviated, will take its place. This new vision may produce writing that owes less to realism than to abstraction and expression—it is a vision embroidered with Fauve rhythm, coloured imaginings, and unheard melodies.

Chapter Four

Rhythm

1. A Collaborative Definition of 'Rhythm'

In the opening paragraph of 'Art and Philosophy', Murry offers a Modernist, and more especially Rhythmist definition of the scope and purpose of art, the famous 'golden thread' passage to which I have referred in my previous chapters:

Art is consciously eternal. The creation of art is the expression of the continuous and undying in the world. It is the golden thread that runs through a varied texture, showing firm, brilliant, and unbroken when the fabric has fallen away. Art sweeps onward, and by its forward march alone has its being. It is imperishable because through all the ages it is life; because the artist's vision is a moment's lifting of the veil, a chord caught and remembered from the vast world of music, less or more, yet always another bond between us and the great divinity immanent in the world.³⁸⁷

Murry's editorial statement indicates *Rhythm* magazine's desire to foster new directions in art. His description rests upon Bergson's idea of *élan vital*, or the vital force of life. But more importantly, the paragraph paints a picture that simultaneously includes movement, vision, and music. The description of art moving forward and in this action creating its own identity signifies a dance movement. Murry also uses a classical allusion to Penelope and her weaving by comparing the tangible or visible aspects of art to the 'fabric', while using the 'golden thread' to embody the essential lines that remain when the surface of beauty dies. By relating the artist's vision to a momentary removal of the veil, and 'a chord caught and remembered from the vast world of music', Murry is also connecting his definition to performing art and music. This manifesto operates by means of a multi-layered analogy that attempts to express art's nature and relevance by combining visual references with those of sound and dance.

Murry continues, explaining that artists distil their vision until they '[see] the essential forms, the essential harmonies of line and colour, the essential music of the world'.³⁸⁸ And 'Modernism [...] penetrates beneath the outward surface of the world, and disengages the rhythms that lie at the heart of things, rhythm strange to the eye, unaccustomed to the ear, primitive harmonies of the world that is and lives'.³⁸⁹ Thus Modernism is at the service of rhythm. Murry's extrapolation of how art correlates to Modernism includes three aspects of rhythm that respectively relate to literature, music and visual art. As drafter of *Rhythm's* vision, Murry has rendered a descriptive image of rhythm. But the encompassing concept demands further clarification in the context of my

³⁸⁷ *Rhythm* 1, no. 1 (1911): 9.

³⁸⁸ 'Art and Philosophy,' 12.

³⁸⁹ 'Art and Philosophy,' 12.

discussion, as well as definitions via the musical and the visual art perspectives; rhythm, after all, for Mansfield especially, provides a point of intersection for her work that often draws upon both music and visual art.

The word 'rhythm' according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, originated as a variant of 'rhyme'.³⁹⁰ Verse is thus the original context of rhythm as a concept. Yet the definition rapidly expands—"the regular repeated pattern of sound or movement"—from poetry and language to music, dance and a general sense of regularity and repetition in art and life, to 'action, process, feature, condition, event', and much more.³⁹¹ It has become an all-encompassing concept, adaptable yet indefinable—which is certainly how Murry understands it—and permeates many artistic genres. But more importantly for my argument's sake, rhythm is also a momentum that compels artistic transgressions and creates 'interartistic transformations' in the process.³⁹² I wish to centre my analysis of such transformations in Mansfield's writings upon the links that rhythm creates between prose, music and dance, for the term itself becomes the 'golden thread' which draws together the three aspects in Mansfield's own art of literary weaving.

The prevailing Modernist milieu in which Murry and Mansfield worked encouraged all arts to interact with and echo each other explicitly or implicitly. Whether we treat rhythm as a musical or a prosodic term, it can represent both disciplines' ephemeral aspects. The border between music and poetry is never completely secure, and in the ill-defined territory where the two disciplines co-exist, rhythm becomes a representative that moves between them and an agent that engages further conversations. Ezra Pound argues that the divorce of arts that should be adjacent, for example, music and literature, is 'to the advantage of neither, and that the melodic invention ... decline[s] simultaneously and progressively with their divergence'.³⁹³ The naming of *Rhythm* magazine, which bears out the central role of rhythm in Murry's declaration, aligns his vision with Modernism's advocacy of interartistic exchanges. Delia da Sousa Correa holds that a connection between words and images is easy to acknowledge, since both possess 'representational power'.³⁹⁴ Music is perhaps less obviously linked to language yet, Correa notes, language can also be valued for its 'referential uncertainty'; this uncertainty is traditionally 'music's preserve, and music, arguably, offers a richer fund of analogy for literature and new modes of understanding language itself'.³⁹⁵ This 'referential uncertainty' also refers to the incremental distance that remains between the verbal description and the thing described, or between the musical score and the mood and atmosphere of the music in performance.

The rationale behind Da Sousa Correa's phrase 'referential uncertainty' is comparable to the logic that compels Murry to use such a pliable term as rhythm as the emblem for Modern art.

³⁹⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'rhythm'.

³⁹¹ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first recorded usage of rhythm in critiquing a literary work appeared in 1560 in J. Daus tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries*, while the first use of the same term for music appeared six years later.

³⁹² Siglind Bruhn, *Musical Ekphrasis: Composers Responding to Poetry and Painting* (New York: Pendragon Press, 2000), xix.

³⁹³ 4-5.

³⁹⁴ Delia da Sousa Correa, *Phrase and Subject: Studies in Literature and Music* (London: Legenda, 2006), 2.

³⁹⁵ Correa, 2.

While music's role in nineteenth-century literary culture has occasionally been acknowledged, it is often forgotten. Da Sousa Correa argues that music plays an equally or even more important part in the Modern era; it was an ear "when artists [were] consciously working amidst the echoes of Pater's famous dictum that 'all art constantly aspire to the condition of music'".³⁹⁶ These artists were also influenced, as I mention in my introduction, by Bergson's philosophy 'about rhythmical correspondences between the arts'.³⁹⁷ Mansfield, working in the atmosphere that fostered art forms like Fauvism and the Russian Ballet, could hardly remain deaf to the seductive call to merge artistic voices and generic materials. Rhythm, like colour, becomes another catalyst in Mansfield's experiments to amalgamate modes and genres of art and transform her stories into richly layered works.

Though as pointed out above, the term 'rhythm' first appeared in the context of verse, Modernism's strong association of music with art prompts me to approach rhythm as a musical term. I wish first to approach rhythm through music via John L. Dunk's comprehensive early study of the term's origins and structures. Dunk names two principal aspects with which definitions of rhythm are associated: the Regulative aspect and the Structural aspect.³⁹⁸ The Regulative aspect refers to rhythm's ability to organize or put free-flowing sounds in order, while the Structural aspect refers to rhythm's contribution in relation to the overall structure of a musical composition. Although he believes that rhythm's 'most extensive development is apparent in music', Dunk also acknowledges the term's application in 'poetry [...] prose, as well as the postural and motional arts in recreation, ceremony, the drama, etc.'³⁹⁹ Dunk clarifies that in any flexible form of association with rhythm,

... there must be some agreement between the conditions imposed by the medium of expression, and the matter expressed. Thus the whole conception of rhythm is necessarily somewhat wider than any particular aspect that we can condense into a definition.⁴⁰⁰

Dunk's acknowledgement of rhythm's capacity to embrace a broader definition is conditional. For rhythm to extend its elasticity, a common understanding between artists from different fields must be reached, which was *Rhythm's* situation, however vague or unutterable the understanding was. Defining rhythm is in itself an expanding and evolving process.

The structural and regulative aspects of rhythm provide it with technical possibilities for adhering to other forms of arts. But as Dunk notes, the aesthetic logic behind rhythm is also a compelling reason for the term to be closely examined:

³⁹⁶ Cited in Correa, 5.

³⁹⁷ Delia da Sousa Correa, *Phrase and Subject*, 5.

³⁹⁸ John L. Dunk, *The Origin and Structure of Rhythm* (London: James Clarke, 1952), 78.

³⁹⁹ Dunk, 7.

⁴⁰⁰ Dunk, 78.

In common with other factors of art, rhythm attracts by beauty, intrigues by form, appeals by utterance, and impresses a feeling of personality, by the choice and disposition of the particular objective material employed in manifestation; sounds, words, movements, etc.

Perhaps the most convincing proof of the importance of rhythm is the feeling of artistic loss which arises from neglect or carelessness in performance: it seems to take life out of the work; this is also evident with unintentional or experimental distortion. In such case we see how beauty wanes, form becomes vague, utterance meaningless, while the impression loses all feeling of personality.⁴⁰¹

Dunk describes rhythm as if it is the aesthetic glue that combines form, beauty and sensory effects. The 'artistic loss' is also an abandonment of the life that is central to any creative representation. The power of rhythm, according to Dunk, explains the significance of its presence in art. But Dunk's definition excludes experimentation, which is in opposition to Murry's ideal of a strange new rhythm from which novel artistic forces not seen or experienced before are to emerge. In Murry's vagueness he embraces almost all fruit brought forth by rhythm. Dunk's analysis, though welcoming rhythm's influence in other arts, is still more engaged with musical discourses, while Murry's metaphorical explanation of rhythm as the golden thread is an analogy that comfortably interacts with other fields. I do not wish to devote an entire chapter arguing for or against Dunk's ideas, but will simply highlight his recognition of rhythm's value in the arts.⁴⁰² Understanding the importance of rhythm will give us a better sense of Murry's thinking when he calls his magazine *Rhythm*.

In the context of early twentieth-century Paris, rhythm was a term that immediately suggested the Bergsonian philosophy which was popular among artists and intellectuals. Murry records that rhythm was a 'recurrent word' in his discussions with J. D. Fergusson:

[Neither] made any attempt to define it; nor even took any precaution to discover whether it had the same significance for us both. [...] Assuredly it was a very potent word. For F— it was the essential quality in a painting or a sculpture; and since it was at that moment that the Russian Ballet first came to Western Europe for a season at the Châtelet, dancing was obviously linked, by rhythm, with the plastic arts. From that it was but a short step to the position that rhythm was the distinctive element in all the arts, and that the real purpose of 'this modern movement' [...] was to reassert the pre-eminence of rhythm.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰¹ Dunk, 7.

⁴⁰² Dunk, 79-82.

⁴⁰³ Murry, *Between Two Worlds*, 155-56.

In this retrospective account of the genesis of the 'rhythm' idea for the magazine, Murry presents a clearer picture of what the term really does: it links performing art with other forms of art—especially the plastic arts and literature.

In these discussions, not only a verbal description of the concept of 'rhythm', but also a visual representation began to form. As mentioned in my introductory chapter, Fergusson at the invitation of Murry and Michael Sadler agreed to design the cover for the new literary magazine which was to fully embody 'rhythm' in all forms of art. Fergusson, as I note above, in fact produced more than one image associated with rhythm. The most famous drawings are arguably two versions of the same concept. One is his cover design for *Rhythm* magazine (Figure 8), and the other the coloured oil painting, first shown at Salon d'Autome in 1911 after the publication of *Rhythm's* first issue the same summer (Figure 9). Kirsten Simister argues that two more images—Figures 7 and 10 below—are also part of the series, and shed light on the visual representation of the rhythm idea. She places the cover (Figure 8) before the full oil painting of the same figure (Figure 9) chronologically, even though Fergusson remembers Murry and Sadler seeing the oil painting first and then asking for a cover design.⁴⁰⁴ As I mention in Chapter one, the origin of the famous *Rhythm* design may actually be an earlier abstract painting, the *Étude de Rhythm* of 1910 (Figure 10), which features the same strong black lines and colour scheme as the oil painting *Rhythm* (Figure 9).⁴⁰⁵



Figure 7. Cover design for *Rhythm* (1911), courtesy of the Fergusson Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council.

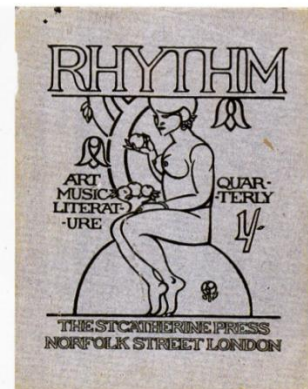


Figure 8. *Rhythm* magazine cover (1911), courtesy of the Fergusson Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council.

⁴⁰⁴ Margaret Morris, *The Art of J. D. Fergusson: A Biased Biography* (Glasgow: Blackie, 1974), 64.

⁴⁰⁵ Simister, 51.



Figure 9. *Rhythm* (1911), courtesy of the Fergusson Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council.

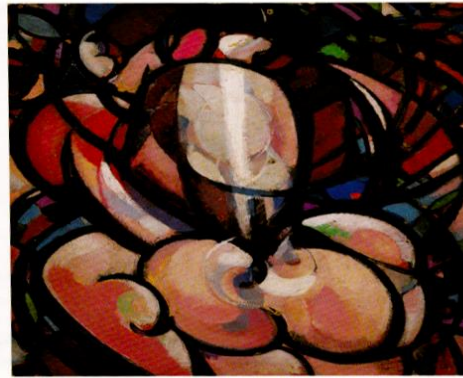


Figure 10. *Étude de Rhythm* (1910), courtesy of the Fergusson Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council.

The static pose of the figure in Fergusson's sketch (Figure 7), when juxtaposed next to the final version of *Rhythm*'s cover design, says Simister, indicates the evolution of an idea of 'rhythm' which exists between stillness and motion; the later drawing embodies the concept of a readiness for movement, yet at the same time maintains a stature of composure.⁴⁰⁶ Smith also notes that the nude figure in the final version for the magazine's cover 'looks as if she is on tip-toe, poised to move, not sedentary'.⁴⁰⁷ The series as a whole is a juxtaposition of four images, all inspired by the same concept but each in its own way playing with (Figures 7 and 10) or embodying (Figures 8 and 9) the defining qualities of 'rhythm' that appealed to Murry and Sadler. If Simister's chronology is accepted, 'rhythm' cannot have been a new idea to Fergusson, but rather something he tried to express in more abstract terms first (in *Étude de Rhythm*), perhaps because 'rhythm' is an abstract idea. But as a magazine cover, *Étude* is not immediately accessible; instead, Fergusson produces a figure with distinctive yet abbreviated features, memorable, and to which the magazine's audience can easily relate.

The four images reflect four directions within Fergusson's artistic expression of the idea of rhythm: the study (Figure 7) mostly emphasizes stillness with only a vague suggestion of motion in that the nude is leaning slightly forward. The oil painting *Rhythm* (Figure 9) focuses strongly on colour, and directs attention away from the strong black lines around the figure. *Étude de Rhythm* (Figure 10) is abstract and repels easy identification. Figure 8 is the most inclusive of the four images, embracing artistic ideas from the other three. Its suggestion of rhythm is fuller, due to the strong contrasts of its monochromatic style, and the rhythmical harmonization of curved and straight lines. Smith interprets the straight vertical lines of the seated figure's torso in the drawing as an expression of the barbaric.⁴⁰⁸ These straight almost masculine lines seem first to sever the image, and then to accentuate and complement the curvaceous or feminine ones. Both fluidity

⁴⁰⁶ Simister, 49-51.

⁴⁰⁷ *Literary Life*, 80.

⁴⁰⁸ Smith, *Literary Life*, 78.

and control are expressed by the interplay of vertical and horizontal lines somehow coming to rest within one composition. The cover design for the magazine becomes a simplified yet inclusive image which embraces visual expressiveness, musical rhythm as articulated in the fluidity of the lines, and a suggested dance movement, in the figure's energized stance. Seeing all four images together reveals Fergusson's thought process, and demonstrates that together with Murry and Sadler, he chose for the magazine's cover the image in which are embedded the richer means and meanings. The nude figure becomes the ultimate spokesperson for *Rhythm*, and a symbol for artistic freedom.

The visual representations in the magazine in fact surpass its literary reputation thanks to J. D. Fergusson. Both *Rhythm's* content and form communicate a will to break loose from 'conventional boundaries', and to push towards new artistic creations and expressions. The Rhythmists did not give their magazine a conventional definition. Instead, they offered a collaborative interpretation via words, visual images and other creative works, demonstrating rather than articulating their ideal of art. The essential advantage of such an illusive emblem, Binckes concludes, is that 'from the outset the fluid boundaries of not only the movement, but the concept, possessed a flexibility that enabled it to be almost endlessly reassigned, recycled, and reformulated, a miscellaneousness imprinted on the composite format of a magazine'.⁴⁰⁹ Although they formulate no explicit shared definition of rhythm, the Rhythmists all seemed to reach a unanimous understanding that they were working under the same banner towards promoting the avant-garde. The seeming ambiguity of rhythm gives the contributors of *Rhythm* license and freedom to produce expressive art and literature that in turn elevates the magazine's status in the Modernist movement, describing and not prescribing artistic rhythms within the magazine.⁴¹⁰ These fluid rhythms struck a chord with the wider impetus of Modernism to question old assumptions and break accepted barriers; Smith observes that '[j]ust as *Rhythm* expresses in its physical appearance its contributors' will to transcend conventional boundaries between the arts, its fluid movement between drawings and text embodies its rejection of conventional gender, social and academic identities.'⁴¹¹ One of Fergusson's greatest contributions to *Rhythm* magazine is giving this multifarious rhythm a face and body; what Murry cannot capture in words, Fergusson expresses in voluminous lines. As a writer, observes Judith Dundas, whose 'medium is not paint but words, the writer', in this case Murry, 'will be clear exactly where the painter is vague—that is, in directing attention to meaning; and he will be vague exactly where the representational painter will be clear—that is, in depicting the appearances of things.'⁴¹² Murry's and Fergusson's definitions make more sense in combination as each uses his own medium to find coordinated voicings of the meaning of rhythm.

⁴⁰⁹ Faith Binckes, *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde: Reading Rhythm, 1910-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 50.

⁴¹⁰ See Murry's 'What We Have Tried To Do', *Rhythm*, I, no. 3 (1911): 36: 'in its very vagueness lay its strength'.

⁴¹¹ Smith, *Literary Life*, 81.

⁴¹² Judith Dundas, 'Style and the Mind's Eye', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37, no. 3 (1979): 325, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/430786>. Accessed 3 July, 2013.

To Mansfield, rhythm is an equally inclusive and malleable concept as for Fergusson and Murry, a phenomenon that can only be actualized and defined by means of generic trespassing. But such transgressions need to be contained, however loosely, within the perimeter of her experimental writing. I argue that her understanding of rhythm manifests as musicality in her works, in the sense of a painterly weaving of sounds in the service of mood and expression, or a choreographed composition of motion, words and music. I will show that Mansfield's responsiveness to rhythm manifests in what Murry identifies as her 'spontaneity' that seamlessly blends life with work or art.⁴¹³ Rhythm contains infinite possibilities for application and re-definition. In this sense the concept is like 'the innocent eye' in that it encourages change, movement, and varied interpretation, representation and expression, propelling the arts to cross artistic boundaries, and violate taboos that tolerate no contamination between arts. Within the Rhythmist group and within Mansfield's writings, painting, dance and literature form a vital web of interactions. By placing Mansfield and her works against the backdrop of this artistic scene, I hope to investigate the degree to which she absorbed and transformed the varied artistic influences operating under the banner of *Rhythm*.

2. 'Miss Brill': Crafting Sounds and Choreographing Text, Images and Movements

Mansfield was a cellist in her early days, and an acute sense for sound harmony and musical rhythm saturates her literary works. Interestingly enough, she did not discuss this penchant with a musician, but a painter, Richard Murry, John Murry's brother, in one of her earliest statements of belief in the interconnection of art forms:

[...] let me say how I appreciate all you feel about *craft*. Yes, I think youre [sic] absolutely right. I see your *approach* to painting as very individual. Emotion for you seems to grow out of deliberation—looking long at a thing. Am I getting at anything right? In the way a thing is made—it may be a tree or a woman or a gazelle or a dish of fruit—you get your inspiration. This sounds a bit too simple when it is written down & rather like 'Professor Leonard the Indian Palmist'. I mean something though. Its [sic] a very queer thing how *craft* comes into writing. I mean down to details. Par example. In Miss Brill I chose not only the length of every sentence, but even the sound of every sentence—I chose the rise and fall of every paragraph to fit her—and to fit her on that day at that very moment. After Id [sic] written it I read it aloud—numbers of times—just as one would *play over a musical* composition, trying to get it nearer and nearer to the expression of Miss Brill—until it fitted her.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ See Murry, *Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Studies*, 72-3.

⁴¹⁴ *CLKM*, IV, 165. Mansfield to Richard Murry, 17 January, 1921.

Two things are worth noting here regarding Mansfield's view of art as interconnected. First, she takes note of an artist's approach to painting, seeing it as guided by the same principles that can direct a writer. By drawing an analogy between Richard Murry's painting and her writing, and saying that both arts require 'craft' and serious thought, she establishes a logical premise for making such a connection between music and writing, and thus establishing both her and Richard Murry as artists on an equal footing. The other significant detail is Mansfield's explanation of how 'Miss Brill' (1920) is 'composed'—not written, but structured as if it were a musical piece. Mansfield chooses the 'length' and 'sound' of the sentences, with an artist's intention to sculpt minor details. But Mansfield's preoccupation with 'craft' does not seem to stop at sound, for sound alone does not comprise rhythm, but rather the regulated repetition of sounds. This regulated repetition, together with other layers of reiterated images and motions that are both echoed and choreographed throughout, completes Mansfield's crafted rhythm in 'Miss Brill', and ties the story into a holistic and harmonised '*musical* composition', as I will now discuss in more detail.

The story first requires us to hear a voice. A kind of fluidity runs through the sentences and paragraphs, so much so that the words and punctuation do not form the usual conversational pauses, but rather continuations. That Mansfield repeatedly read the story aloud when writing it must have contributed to this effect. The opening sentence communicates a musical urgency: 'Although it was so brilliantly fine—the blue sky powdered with gold and great spots of light like white wine splashed over the Jardins Publiques—Miss Brill was glad that she had decided on the fur.'⁴¹⁵ There is something deceptively simple about the rhythmical construct of this beginning. If we take out the dashes and the nested description, then we do not have anything left, really, except the mundane abstractions of a narrative line which quickly travels from the character's consciousness to that of the third person omniscient narrator. The breathless string of words between the dashes is comparable to Fergusson's vertical lines in his painting *Rhythm*, for Mansfield's words produce an equally out-of-place effect in our senses, and they give the opening sentence an active play of sounds which are soon to be echoed. When we read this sentence in silence, visual impression becomes dominant, but when we read it aloud, the auditory reference becomes more prominent, almost overshadowing the visual. Between the alliterations of 'spots', 'splashed' and 'brilliantly' and 'blue', the rhyme of 'fine' and 'wine', and the assonance of 'light like white wine', we are introduced to a Mansfieldian rhythm structured to fit the character and the mood. The beginning of 'Miss Brill' thus also initiates a rhythmical collage of images, motions, and musical sounds.

The inserted description of the Jardins Publiques is a romanticized visual image—a way of seeing that we soon learn is characteristic of Miss Brill throughout the story. The opening line thus creates two intersecting visions which intertwine to set the basic tone of the piece, as the narrative oscillates between her vision and her consciousness. She imagines herself to be different from the 'odd, silent, nearly all old' people in the garden, and an indispensable part of a lively stage play. However, soon an acrimonious comment by a young couple forces her out of this vision, and into

⁴¹⁵ CFKM, II, 250.

a more normative view—she is only a very minor character in someone else’s drama. Both views, the stimulating and the vapid, are framed in the first sentence of the story, setting up an intersecting rhythmical pattern that is reiterated throughout the story.

From its opening, the story seems to claim that this pattern will be a visual representation, since the language used draws attention to colour and light, and we see everything in snapshots as Miss Brill moves her gaze back and forth between clusters of people. These snapshots form the imagist component of the story’s rhythmical reiterations. In addition, regulated undertones soon surface in the form of repetitions of sound and figure that march by in deliberate formations. Movement alternates with pauses in this rhythmical portrayal of life:

The old people sat on the bench, still as statues. Never mind, there was always the crowd to watch. To and fro, in front of the flowerbeds and the band rotunda, the couples and groups paraded, stopped to talk, to greet, to buy a handful of flowers from the old beggar who had his tray fixed to the railings. Little children ran among them, swooping and laughing; little boys with big white silk bows under their chins, little girls, little French dolls, dressed in velvet and lace. And sometimes a tiny staggerer came suddenly rocking into the open from under the trees, stopped, stared, as suddenly sat down ‘flop’, until its small high-stepping mother, like a young hen, rushed scolding to its rescue. Other people sat on the benches and green chairs, but they were nearly always the same, Sunday after Sunday, and—Miss Brill had often noticed—there was something funny about nearly all of them. They were odd, silent, nearly all old, and from the way they stared they looked as though they’d just come from dark little rooms or even—even cupboards!⁴¹⁶

Again, the paragraph presents two opposing images, this time of youth versus age, and there is also a contrast of silence and sound, inertia and activity, forming the rhythmical play of which Miss Brill imagines she is a part. She obviously identifies with the moving, ‘swooping’, ‘laughing’ crowd, and not the isolated, almost petrified ‘odd’, ‘old people’. As I will discuss shortly, Miss Brill sees in them too brutal a reality to face. The verbs Mansfield uses here are telling, reflecting Miss Brill’s perception of these differences in age and movement. For instance, ‘sat’, a verb denoting stillness, is used only for the ‘old people’—the ‘[o]ther people’, and is repeated twice. ‘Stared’ is used both for a child and the elderly onlookers; however, in the description of the toddler the verb is sandwiched between two other verb phrases, ‘suddenly rocking’, and ‘suddenly sat down’, and thus still indicates activity, while in the description of the old people there is no such association. For the young and jolly crowd, even the word ‘stopped’ loses its usual meaning of stillness because they stop to perform other actions—talking, greeting, buying. In this single Fergussonian frame Mansfield captures both movement and repose, simultaneously evoking a rhythm to be heard and another rhythm to be seen. In the gaps between movement and stillness, between big

⁴¹⁶ CFKM, II, 252.

and small, a contrast also forms via verbal repetition. The word 'little' is repeated directly and also appears through the faint echoes of its synonyms 'tiny' and 'small', furthering the contrast between the static poses of the old and the vivacious movements of the young.

This paragraph is exemplary of Mansfield's craft of 'deliberation'; every detail contributes to the scene's emotional underpinnings—Miss Brill's fondness for the young and distaste for the old. As we have seen, for Miss Brill stillness is associated with age and movement with youth. She observes that the people seated on the benches are prop-like, 'still', and the startlingly cruel comparison she makes—they look as if they come out of dark little rooms or cupboards, where they have been stored—implies they are shut off from the world, only taken out occasionally to see daylight or a stage play. Had Miss Brill's consciousness not been disturbed by the young couple's intrusion, she would never have connected this sinister association with herself, but in the end of the story this exact image is used for the room she returns: 'the little dark room—her room like a cupboard', where she takes off her fur and puts it back in its box.⁴¹⁷ At the story's close there is no romanticized vision to follow the dash.

The opening scene of the story is succeeded by another highly descriptive section, which repeats several of the first sentence's features: a visual picture of sun-drenched nature, and a strong rhythm of vowel sounds (this time provided by the sound of the band):

Behind the rotunda the slender trees with yellow leaves down drooping, and through them just a line of sea, and beyond the blue sky with gold-veined clouds.

Tum-tum-tum tiddle-um! tiddle-um! Tum tiddley-um tum ta!⁴¹⁸

Numbers then seem to correlate with words and sounds, and form similar rhythmic patterns:

Two young girls in red came by and *two* young soldiers in blue met them, and they laughed and paired and went off arm-in-arm. *Two* peasant women with funny straw hats passed, gravely, leading beautiful smoke-coloured donkeys. A cold, pale nun hurried by. A beautiful woman came along and dropped her bunch of violets, and a little boy ran after to hand them to her, and she took them and threw them away as if they'd been poisoned. Dear me! Miss Brill didn't know whether to admire that or not!⁴¹⁹

The numbering of these groups of characters as they come into view is not accidental, but rather forms a rhythm that matches the beat of the band's tune, 'Tum-tum-tum tiddle-um! tiddle-um! Tum tiddley-um tum ta!' The matching is not mechanical, numbers equating exactly with beats, but rather an evocative musical repetition. The presentation of this scene is like a play, in which the various characters move about, entering the stage via different points, coming together and marching away, all choreographed as if in a procession across the stage.

⁴¹⁷ *CFKM*, II, 254.

⁴¹⁸ *CFKM*, II, 252.

⁴¹⁹ *CFKM*, II, 252. My emphasis.

But 'Miss Brill' is not simply a composition of repeated sounds and motions; there is also a pattern of rhythmical echoes of images. The fox fur is seen several times throughout the story, from the opening comment that Miss Brill is 'glad' she is wearing it. We see it taken out of its box in a later passage, and the fur is almost lively in Miss Brill's imagination, with its 'little eyes' and black nose. But when the young couple in the park refer to it as 'her fu-fur which is so funny [...] like a fried whiting'—the alliteration sheds a harsher light upon the shabby thing—the fur seems immediately to lose its joyous light. Claire Drewery comments that Miss Brill's 'fox fur is the first and last image to appear in the story', symbolizing her reluctance to acknowledge her 'marginal status of aging'.⁴²⁰ The story is thus bracketed by repetitions of the same symbol shown with subtly adjusted nuances. The image of the fox fur and its link with aging is also reflected in the 'ermine toque' that becomes a metonym for the aging woman Miss Brill notices in the Jardins Publiques. There is a symbolic connection between Miss Brill's fox fur with its 'sad little eyes' and the 'ermine toque' which, Miss Brill thinks, its wearer must have 'bought when her hair was yellow', whereas now 'everything, her hair, her face, even her eyes, was the same colour as the shabby ermine'.⁴²¹ As Drewery points out, 'the owners of these two battered, worn furs become connected through these images of superfluity', as Miss Brill first judges the 'ermine toque' as the unattractive Other, and then interprets the band's music as a protest against a man's rejection of the 'ermine toque'.⁴²²

As I have already mentioned, the imagery of cupboard and box is also repeated, forming another set of metaphors to which Miss Brill keeps returning even while she is watching the day's 'play' outside. And it is to the same image that both she and her fox fur returns in the end:

she [...] climbed the stairs, went into the little dark room—her room like a cupboard—and sat down on the red eiderdown. She sat there for a long time. The box that the fur came out of was on the bed. She unclasped the necklet quickly; quickly, without looking, laid it inside. But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying.⁴²³

Miss Brill's return to her 'cupboard', Drewery notes, is 'echoed by the act of shutting of the fur into its box'.⁴²⁴ The story is thus patterned with rhythmical resonances: echoes of words and sounds, of movements and symbols, of action and imagery. Mansfield's crafting of 'Miss Brill' can be seen on the micro level of assonance and rhyme, and also on the macro level of rhythmical reiteration of symbol and imagery. The story thus demonstrates Mansfield's interpretation of the same idea of rhythm that inspired both Murry and Fergusson. Theirs is a collaborative definition of the term, both verbal and visual, and Mansfield's story in a comparative way weaves together visual and conceptual understandings. Rhythm becomes the 'golden thread' in her story that strings sounds,

⁴²⁰ Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 101.

⁴²¹ *CFKM*, II, 252.

⁴²² Drewery, 102.

⁴²³ *CFKM*, II, 254.

⁴²⁴ Drewery, 103.

motions, images and words together, all choreographed to echo each other in an uneven, rippling way. Rhythm is transformed, through Mansfield's craft, into an artistic synaesthesia where picturesque reiterations, tempos, and mood are combined. What seem to belong to distinct artistic realms—images, poetic sounds, and movements—when mixed together produce expressive nuances that invite us to access both the logical and the imaginative faculties of the mind.

I agree with Wolf's claim that '[w]ords become more powerful by being visualized as things', but words also become mobile from the moment they are activated by sound—another reason why Mansfield intended 'Miss Brill' to be a 'musical piece'.⁴²⁵ Her amalgamation of words, visual images and musical sounds are all reiterated to accentuate and harmonise a new rhythm that triggers motion and life. What Mansfield has attempted to do in 'Miss Brill' is not only so that she can draw analogous relations between the arts of painting and of music, and thus engage in conversation with a painter, but also to achieve her own form of 'interartistic transformation' via synthesizing different elements from visual art, music and language into an organic rhythm that best suits Miss Brill 'on that day, at that very moment.'⁴²⁶

3. Rhythmical Reiterations in 'The Man without a Temperament' and 'Psychology'

'Miss Brill' is not the only example in which Mansfield exercises her own 'rhythmic grace'.⁴²⁷ In two other stories written in 1920, 'The Man Without a Temperament' and 'Psychology', rhythm features in varied guises, and almost forms inter-textual rhythmical echoes with 'Miss Brill'. Smith points out the corresponding rhythms between the main character and the structure of 'The Man without a Temperament':

The opening paragraph of 'The Man Without a Temperament' enacts through the rhythm of its sentences the action of its protagonist: 'He pursed his lips—he might have been going to whistle—but he did not whistle—only turned the ring—turned the ring on his pink, freshly washed hands' (p. 201). The reader hears, rhythmically, the ring being turned through the punctuation of the passage; part of the pared-down quality of Mansfield's prose is the crafting of the lines.⁴²⁸

I believe Smith is not actually saying that the turning of a ring is audible, but rather the sight of it and the rhythmic motion of turning trigger our imagination, so much so that it is almost as if we can *hear* something through this repetitive movement. It is analogous to Rousseau's 'putting the eye in the ear', which is a transposition of senses. What the reader then remembers throughout the story is the rhythmical turning of the ring—the significant beginning note that creates an invisible 'golden thread' that sews together the fabric of reiterations of sound and image.

⁴²⁵ See Wolf, 183.

⁴²⁶ *CLKM*, IV, 165.

⁴²⁷ *CLKM*, I, 80.

⁴²⁸ Smith, 'Introduction,' in *Katherine Mansfield: Selected Stories*, ed. Angela Smith, ix-xxxii (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), xxxi.

The opening sentence is constructed with rhythmical repetition, a technique that appears frequently in Mansfield's works. The restatement of the pronoun 'he' as well as the verb 'turn' establishes the fundamental rhythm which determines the tone of the story: repetitive actions corresponding with Robert Salesby's monotonous duties, and a sense of entrapment. The same rhythmical reenactment of turning the ring is repeated four more times throughout the story, with Jinnie the wife, and not Robert performing the final act, and inquiring whether he minds being in a foreign country with his invalid wife. It is almost as if Robert is portrayed through a silent rhythm, which is inaudible, but rather visual and action-based. Smith observes that the 'man's consciousness is never revealed by his speech, but by unexplained disjunctions in the text that are signalled by an ellipsis and a line space.'⁴²⁹ These ellipses and line spaces work more efficiently upon the memory of the reader because of their suggestive powers. The rhythmical instead of mechanical repetitions of the man's action, highlighted by his turning of the ring, a symbol of his bondage, form structural lines to which the allusive pauses attach.

This rhythmical repetition is carried on throughout the story with intermittent flashbacks from the husband's point of view of the days before his wife became sick. An interactive rhythm plays between them:

Mr Salesby put the letters into his pocket; the papers lay on the table. He turned the ring, turned the signet ring on his little finger and stared in front of him, blinking, vacant.

But she—with the teacup in one hand, the sheets of thin paper in the other, her head tilted back, her lips open, a brush of bright colour on her cheek-bones, sipped, sipped, drank... drank....⁴³⁰

The dynamic between the husband and wife subtly alters: though the couple seem to present a harmonised image in their married life, their mechanical performance betrays the lifelessness of this co-operation. Such superficial concordance runs through 'The Man without a Temperament', which ends, as Vincent O'Sullivan and Gerri Kimber note, 'with the penetrating, bitter punning of its last line—'Rot!' he whispers'.⁴³¹

Mansfield's rhythmical repetitions are not limited to the echo of sounds and actions; she also liberally synthesizes painterly image with rhythmical repetition. 'Psychology', a story written at approximately the same time as 'The Man without a Temperament', represents a different application of rhythm, especially rhythmical repetitions. The rhythm in 'Psychology' shows strong resemblances with the conception of rhythm advanced by another of the Rhythmists, C.J. Holmes (which I discuss in Chapter one), and put into practice by Mansfield's friend and fellow artist, Anne Estelle Rice. Holmes defines rhythm as 'the measured flow of movement or beat, in verse, music, or by analogy in other connexions', and extends this definition to 'poetical rhythm' which he argues

⁴²⁹ Smith, Introduction, xxxii.

⁴³⁰ *CFKM*, II, 201.

⁴³¹ *CFKM*, II, 209.

is particularly close to a 'painter's rhythm'.⁴³² This 'painter's rhythm', continues Holmes, calls for 'inequality rather than equality' in terms of using lines, mass, volume and any representational means available to an artist. This definition consequently condemns 'all methods of work which incline to mechanical repetition'.⁴³³

Holmes's essay is illustrated by a drawing of two voluptuous women by Rice, one of whom is adorning the hair of the other. Both are seated against a richly decorative and equally curvaceous drapery as background. The drawing is a visual demonstration of Holmes' notion of rhythm. Repetition of the pomegranate pattern accentuates the smooth curves of the female bodies, recalling Fergusson's nude figure on the cover of *Rhythm* magazine. The painting shows no clear symmetry, no equal division lines, no architectural stiffness; every line is as expressive as it is precise, everything is harmonized, and each line is a continuation and choreographic response to the others. The two smooth yet strong lines delineating the upper arm of the woman in the foreground are repeated in the shape of the other woman's forearm. These shapes demonstrate what Holmes calls 'unequal repetition' in line and mass. These two forms are easily identified as similar, but on closer inspection other slightly varied versions of these contours multiply. The limbs also echo in a slightly magnified form the seed-like patterns in the drapery. Both women are rendered in abbreviated lines that capture their form and movement—or rather the readiness for movement that Sadler notes about Rice's work. The women in Rice's picture are like twins in two senses, each mirroring the other's features *and* movement. In its spirit, Rice's illustration also manifests Fergusson's cover design for *Rhythm*, in that both communicate the still moment that anticipates imminent movement. As the Fergusson nude seems ready to spring to her feet, these two figures in the Rice picture also appear ready to stand up at the first note of music and join the vivid patterns behind them in dance and celebration. Rice's image invites action.

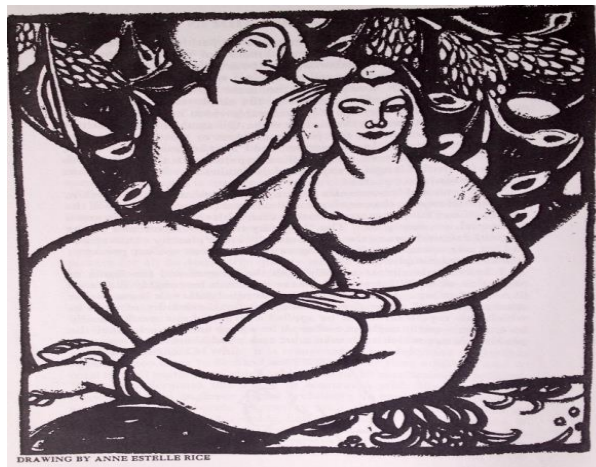


Figure 11. Drawing of two women by Anne Estelle Rice in *Rhythm* 1, no. 3 (1911)

⁴³² 'Stray Thoughts,' 1.

⁴³³ 'Stray Thoughts,' 1-2.

Mansfield's story 'Psychology' demonstrates this same kind of visual rhythm reinforced by repetition. The story is intensely visual and rhythmical, weaving together silence and sound, and opens with seamlessly tailored motion and conversation:

When she opened the door and saw him standing there she was more pleased than ever before, and he, too, as he followed her into the studio, seemed very very happy to have come.

'Not busy?'

'No. Just going to have tea.'

'And you are not expecting anybody?'

'Nobody at all.'

'Ah! That's good.'

He laid aside his coat and hat gently, lingeringly, as though he had time and to spare for everything, or as though he were taking leave of them for ever, and came over to the fire and held out his hands to the quick, leaping flame.⁴³⁴

This exchange of words, like the beginning of 'Miss Brill', is rather mundane. But what remains unspoken is much more intriguing than what has been said. The opening exchange of words is followed by a series of actions by the unnamed man, which betrays the banal nature of his relationship with the woman; their superfluous words are perfectly coupled with empty gestures. His hesitant and silent movements occupy a space and time that have no direction. In the hollowness of the conversation and gestures, the rhythm of the story is tuned to an awkward frequency where the two unnamed characters never fully achieve any form of substantial communication. Yet they continuously fool themselves into claiming that their friendship is of a rare kind 'which made it possible for him to be utterly truthful to her and for her to be utterly sincere with him'.⁴³⁵ The question thus remains throughout the story as to the direction, or rather, directionlessness of this mutually declared loyalty.

According to Andrew Bennett, Mansfield crafts expression in the absence of sound and meaning; the opening of 'Psychology'

... is concerned with what Wordsworth calls the 'sad incompetence of human speech'. But, as Wordsworth realized, it is precisely this incompetence, this inexpressiveness, that is expressive, since—in the case of Mansfield's opening—it conveys a powerful sense of superficiality, of naïve enthusiasm, of an absence of self-reflection. ... Mansfield's opening is expressive in its representation of inexpressiveness, subtle and carefully nuanced in its

⁴³⁴ *CFKM*, II, 193.

⁴³⁵ *CFKM*, II, 194.

representation with superficiality, with the way in which social worlds are constructed through surfaces.⁴³⁶

The central concern of 'Psychology', as Bennett analyzes, lies in expressing what is not expressed, in the gap between the false prospect of fruitful exchange and the actual lack of conversational substance in the pauses and hollow, voiceless spaces. The story, like an expanded fictive explanation of the frequently used dashes and ellipses in Mansfield's writings, suggests through superficial emptiness an underlying rhythm of 'a tale of missed romantic opportunities, of love that fails through non-communication', writes Bennett.⁴³⁷

Silence dominates the exchange between the two characters. The man and the woman imagine themselves most content when their perceived notion of communication is transmitted via a mutual understanding of tempo. Both are disturbed by silence and uncomfortable every time a gap occurs in their collaborative effort, but every time when they attempt to recreate the flow, a disruption occurs. Their 'secret selves', according to the woman, are frustrated by their inability to reconstruct the same experience.⁴³⁸ Bennett comments further on this strained effort:

The perfect accord of the conversation that takes place—or fails to take place—between the characters' 'secret selves' is indicated by the extent to which their mutual agreement is built around abstraction, generalization, and incomplete sentences. But this unspoken accord contrasts painfully with the triviality and the subtle misgivings of the articulated speech of the couple. Just as when the man turns to look at the woman she moves quickly away; the interchange is constituted by a nervous series of movements towards and anxious movements away.⁴³⁹

'Psychology' thus is Mansfield's experimentation with an alternate rhythm to 'The Man Without A Temperament', one that operates with contradiction and inexpression; it is a piece that presents its characters through pauses, inarticulation, and involuntary stops, and attempts to make rhythm felt in the empty spaces of conversation and activity. The paradoxical success of the story lies precisely in Mansfield's capturing of vacancies and absence of sounds in the middle of such superficial articulations and movement.

Lawrence Binyon, in 'The Return to Poetry' published in the Spring issue of *Rhythm* in 1912, discusses the artist's duty,

... in seeking rhythm, not to impose it. [For] a rhythm imposed is no rhythm; it is like the scansion-tortured words of the incompetent versifier. Rhythm is

⁴³⁶ *Katherine Mansfield* (Tavistock: Northcote and British Council, 2004), 28.

⁴³⁷ Bennett, *Katherine Mansfield*, 28.

⁴³⁸ *CFKM*, II, 197.

⁴³⁹ Bennett, *Katherine Mansfield*, 29.

subtle and natural, unendingly various, like the waves of wind in the corn. We must feel it in ourselves before we can express it. We must be wooers; neither slaves, nor enslavers.⁴⁴⁰

Although Binyon is discussing rhythm in general, this is a fitting description for the lapses and failures to control and 'impose rhythm' in Mansfield's 'Psychology'. During the frozen moments of pause, the woman's consciousness speaks for them both, marveling at their eagerness to artificially reproduce the harmony they experienced a moment ago, and agonizing over the fact that their rigid attempts have failed to capture the same tempo of dialogue. Both complain in secret:

'What have we been talking about?' thought he. He was so utterly bored he almost groaned.

'What a spectacle we have made of ourselves,' thought she. And she saw him laboriously—oh, laboriously—laying out the grounds and herself running after, putting here a tree and there a flowery shrub and here a handful of glittering fish in a pool. They were silent this time from sheer dismay.⁴⁴¹

The visual images, tree, shrub, pond, are used to signify the discordance in their communication, and an absence of sound to render a vivid picture of the two now that 'the silence put a spell upon them like solemn music'.⁴⁴² The simile compares the effect of 'silence' to that of 'solemn music', which is a contrariety. But such comparison aptly describes this peculiar effect upon emotion, and misplaces or replaces one sensuous perception with another. These experiences are awkward silence are scattered through the text, and are gathered up again when the woman sees the same scene twice as the story approaches its ending:

She saw the beautiful fall of the steps, the dark garden ringed with glittering ivy, on the other side of the road the huge bare willow and above them the sky big and bright with stars.

[...]

Again she saw the beautiful fall of the steps, the dark garden ringed with glittering ivy, the willows, the big bright sky. Again she felt the silence that was like a question.⁴⁴³

When the same scene is presented for the second time, Mansfield obviously intends a clearer reinstatement by tracing along the same lines that have already been impressed in our memory

⁴⁴⁰ *Rhythm* 1, no. 4 (1912), 2.

⁴⁴¹ *CFKM*, II, 196.

⁴⁴² *CFKM*, II, 196.

⁴⁴³ *CFKM*, II, 197-98.

the first time, forming rhythmical repetition via images. The method of this repetition is allusive and melodic in nature; what the woman sees resembles a mental picture conjured up by a nocturne, and every detail of the vision is accentuated briefly, before melting into the atmosphere like a musical note dying out.

The rhythmical repetition in 'Psychology' indicates an 'inner structure', to borrow a term from Stéphane Mallarmé.⁴⁴⁴ According to Mallarmé, the 'inner structures of a book of verse must be inborn', not designated:

From each theme, itself predestined, a given harmony will be born somewhere in the parts of the total poem and take its proper place within the volume; because, *for every sound, there is an echo*. Motifs of like pattern will move in balance from point to point. There will be none of the sublime incoherence found in the page-settings of the Romantics, none of the artificial unity that used to be based on the square measurements of the book. Everything will be hesitation, disposition of parts, their alternations and relationships—all this contributing to the rhythmic totality, which will be the very silence of the poem, in its blank spaces, as that silence is translated by each structural element in its own way.⁴⁴⁵

Though addressing the issue of inner structures in a collection of verse, Mallarmé's metaphor of a governing harmony distributed in parts provides helpful insight into the structure of 'Psychology', and of all Mansfield's works initiated and motioned by rhythm. There has to be, of course, a main theme, which in Mansfield's case is the structure and rhythm pre-established for the story, namely the alternating tempos of inner and outer dialogue between the man and the woman. The minute details are then distributed in imagistic associations throughout the story: food ('little sharp sandwiches, short sweet almond fingers, and a dark, rich cake tasting of rum'),⁴⁴⁶ objects ('blue shell arm-chair', 'blue teapot lid', 'the black table', and the statue of the head of a 'sleeping boy'),⁴⁴⁷ and metaphorical pictures of their relationship (two cities open to each other, travellers, planting trees and setting up a garden, two 'grinning puppets jiggling away in nothingness').⁴⁴⁸ These physical details assume their assigned places in the story, merging into the right moments of silence. The story also demonstrates what Mallarmé calls 'sound' and 'echo': the repetition of the woman's description of the willow and steps. But instead of making the original 'sound' (which in fact is an aural *image*) the stronger note, Mansfield places more weight on the 'echo', the

⁴⁴⁴ William W. Austin ed. *Prelude to 'The Afternoon of a Faun': An Authoritative Score, Mallarmé's Poem, Backgrounds and Sources Criticism and Analysis*, Norton Critical Score: Claude Debussy (London: Chappell, 1970), 120.

⁴⁴⁵ See Austin, 120-121. My emphasis.

⁴⁴⁶ *CFKM*, II, 193.

⁴⁴⁷ *CFKM*, II, 194, 195.

⁴⁴⁸ *CFKM*, II, 194, 196.

second appearance of scene, conjuring a rhythm 'strange' to both eyes and ears. And between the blank spaces and poetic resonance, 'Psychology' strikes the tune of a 'rhythmical totality'.⁴⁴⁹

4. Lingering Notes in the Air: 'A Debussy Thème' and Mansfield's Submerged Rhythms

Mansfield's writings during her Rhythmist years form a trajectory of 'interartistic transformation' while paying attention to the rhythmical unity of a story. After 'Miss Brill', 'The Man without a Temperament' and 'Psychology', she continued to adopt subtler forms of rhythm that are knit tightly with plot, character and mood; these forms of rhythm are often submerged, hard to detect since they have been assimilated into the movement of the whole piece. 'At the Bay' (1921) is exemplary of this technique. Mansfield's style and approach in this story can be viewed via the thought and practice of Mallarmé, introduced in the previous section, and the music of Debussy. Mansfield had a special appreciation for Debussy from a young age. In a letter written in 1908 to her lover, the young violinist Garnet Trowell, Mansfield described her readiness to associate imagery and natural sound with Debussy's music:

This evening, Dolly and I walked in the garden, and the sound of the falling leaves at our feet was like the sea breaking upon sand and shell—a strange, shivering sweetness of sound—And, almost like a Debussy thème, stars shone through the barren boughs of the trees. The air was very still; a little fog wreathing itself about the garden.⁴⁵⁰

Mansfield immediately relates what she sees with Debussy's music. This indicates, for one thing, that before she met any of the Rhythmists Mansfield was already intuitively sensitive to the transformative powers that exist between music and imagery, and also that Debussy's music for her intrinsically solicits visual associations. In this brief account, Mansfield has crossed the boundary between visual and auditory. She immediately relates images to music, and then music to images. The cycle will resurface in more delicate forms in her later writing.

This discourse of music, writing and visual images continues in another letter to Garnet Trowell written in the same year. The image of the sea figures more prominently this time, and Debussy is mentioned again:

... I wrote four poems which I send you tonight. They are to be set to music—so you will understand just what music I want—I know. Can't you imagine it. For instance that one 'In the Church' almost recitative at the beginning with a strange organ like passage—then the ivy, rough, cruel, horrible, and then the first verse in a dream—you hear it? And

⁴⁴⁹ Austin, 121.

⁴⁵⁰ *CLKM*, I, 66.

then 'By the Sea Shore', with strange Macdowell, Debussy chords—and the lilac tree, full or [for of] a rhythmic grace—I wrote them for you [...].⁴⁵¹

In the series of four poems enclosed in the letter, Mansfield attempts a lyrical composition designed to emulate Debussy's rhythmical music, to experiment with artistic synaesthesia in writing. The poems themselves are experimentations, yet they show a conscious repetition of sounds as well as an emphasis of images. The alignment of both the auditory and the visual echo within the poems' small space, demonstrating understanding of the structural characteristic of a Debussy piece—what Mansfield calls 'a rhythmic grace'.

This technique of Debussy's makes more sense via Mallarmé theoretical analysis. In *Music and Literature*, Mallarmé exalts music without demeaning literature; he advocates 'a scene of lovely, evanescent, intersecting forms', which can also be used to describe what Mansfield does with her writing.⁴⁵² Both music and literature, for Mallarmé, aim to capture the fleeting images that life presents or creates: 'To create is to conceive an object in its fleeting moment, in its absence'.⁴⁵³ However literature is masculine, and music feminine, he argues. Literature is the mind's rendition of 'things', a rendition that echoes and confirms what is in nature, and will in turn reflect upon our own consciousness—it is a sort of proof that we have correctly captured the essential qualities of what we see.⁴⁵⁴ In contrast, music (the feminine) gives literature (the masculine) its proper place by relying on language to realise its meaning, which includes ephemeral movements that if not captured or encircled by language will evaporate in a moment. What Mallarmé asks for is a 'synthesis' of music and literature; when music releases its power of 'hearing and vision', a channel in our mind opens to 'Comprehension', which consequently gives license to language to perform whatever impression has been initiated by music. Music and literature, in this interactive and free relationship, thus form a 'perfect cycle'.⁴⁵⁵ Mallarmé's view on music and literature, especially his appreciation for artistic synthesis, is in the same vein as Rousseau's 'unity of melody', though the poet's preference for 'lovely, evanescent, intersecting forms' pushes music's territory beyond poetry and language, and into a terrain of atmospheric expression.⁴⁵⁶

Mallarmé's famous poem *L'après midi d'un faune* was equally famously translated into musical language by Debussy. In this act of re-writing literary images into musical ones, Debussy stretches the poet's original associations and allusions. Mansfield was in Paris with Murry the same month that *L'après midi d'un faune* premiered. Although there is no record that she or Murry

⁴⁵¹ *CLKM*, I, 80. Four of Mansfield's poems are enclosed with the *letter*. 'Macdowell' refers to the then very popular American composer Edward Alexander MacDowell (1861-1908). Mansfield is notorious for her handwriting, so the words enclosed by the second bracket indicate another possible reading from the manuscript.

⁴⁵² Cited in Austin, 113.

⁴⁵³ Cited in Austin, 113.

⁴⁵⁴ Cited in Austin, 114.

⁴⁵⁵ Cited in Austin, 114-115.

⁴⁵⁶ This atmospheric expression will be more thoroughly discussion in my next chapter on mood.

attended the performance,⁴⁵⁷ it was during this holiday that Mansfield was introduced to Fergusson, and his then-lover Anne Estelle Rice, both of whom did see *L'après midi*. Rice's illustrations of the same name in *Rhythm* magazine, with their quasi Egyptian-dancer profiles, drapery, and rhythmical movements of limbs and bodies, express in a limited two-dimensional space the essential features of the music and choreography of Debussy's work. Mansfield soon became close friends with Fergusson and Rice. Mansfield in all likelihood have at least have heard them mention *L'après midi d'un faune*, and have certainly seen Rice's illustrations. It is of course impossible to establish a definitive link between Mansfield, Debussy and Mallarmé. But it is hard to deny the manifestation of their influence in her work, especially since she is already such a visual and musical writer, and *Rhythm* no doubt served as a forum for her to legitimise her perceived connections between the arts of music, painting and writing.

Smith notes that the 'essays in *Rhythm* are part of the reader's experience of rhythmic form, investigating the themes of barbarism and its relationship with deep structures, roots, recurrently, from a variety of perspectives.'⁴⁵⁸ One of these essays is Rollo Myer's discussion of Debussy's music. The essay discusses from the point of view of music theory what Mansfield tries to do with writing—experiment with the 'deep structures' and 'roots' of rhythm, its original music association, and how it can function in the interartistic transformation into literature.⁴⁵⁹ Myer places Debussy within the context of the wildly avant-garde musical milieu of early twentieth-century Paris, with the Russian Ballet experimenting with free movement and expressive rhythms, and modern music taking a more liberal turn from organized compositions to free-flowing sounds. Debussy, being one of the leading figures of this significant move away from tradition, sacrifices melody for pure harmony.⁴⁶⁰ He relinquishes the rigid traditional frames of melody and frees music to become a more individual and fluid expressive power. 'For, after all, melody is limited, but harmony infinite', concludes Myer.⁴⁶¹ The free-flowing harmony of Debussy's music can be taken as Impressionistic, but the rationale behind his musical aesthetics is more Fauvist. The pursuit for expressive power of music does not aim for form, 'for music is coming more and more to be treated as pure sound, and this means increased plasticity and greater emphasis on its purely rhythmic qualities'.⁴⁶² The process thus involves stripping music of all pretentious and unnecessary embellishments, and returning to a natural, original state, to restore a rhythm that releases 'primitive harmonies of the world that is and lives'.⁴⁶³

William Austin compares Debussy's music to a kind of continuous flow whose parts are almost impossible to clearly 'identify':

⁴⁵⁷ See Norburn, 22-23.

⁴⁵⁸ Smith, *A Literary Life*, 83.

⁴⁵⁹ 'The Art of Claude Debussy,' *Rhythm* 1, no. 2 (1911): 29-34.

⁴⁶⁰ Myer, 29-34.

⁴⁶¹ Myer, 33.

⁴⁶² Myer, 33.

⁴⁶³ Myer, 12.

Every part of this music clings to every other part so firmly, so naturally, that it is hard to identify parts when you want to talk about them. No part torn out of context makes sense. No part spontaneously breaks loose to lodge in our memories as a tune. While we listen, the parts seem to overlap each other, so that the continuity of the whole work is extraordinarily smooth, and our recollection of it at the end is imprecise, though intense.⁴⁶⁴

Debussy not only sacrifices melody for harmony, but also partial effects or impressions for continuity; he composes like Matisse paints—both harmonize elements, whether these are colour or sound, for the overall effect of the piece. Segmentation of sounds or colours does not create meaning, but a rhythmical composition that activates these elements has a more powerful expression and wholeness. In this sense Debussy's work departs from Impressionism, or Impressionistic music, a term with which his music is often associated. The central philosophy of the Impressionists is a *separation* of colours, not a unification or harmonization of them. The harmonising that Matisse and Debussy achieve, this completion and holistic effect, should not be mistaken for the 'finishedness' of a piece. Debussy's music has a quality of lingering in the air when the last note is over, but that final note melts into the atmosphere, and is extended rather than terminated with the perceived ending of the piece.

Delia da Sousa Correa describes Mansfield's writing as 'musical prose', and recognizes her trait of applying musical allusions, both explicit and implicit, in juvenilia pieces such as 'Juliet' as well as more mature work including 'At the Bay'.⁴⁶⁵ Correa points out that although 'At the Bay' uses very little 'direct reference to music', it 'is highly musical in its structure and language'.⁴⁶⁶ Viewing the story as a close equivalent to a musical composition, Correa demonstrates how it is composed of 'a calm opening *aubade*', 'a frenetic *crescendo*', and an abrupt stop, before moving into 'a lyrical coda', and concluding with 'a final cadence'.⁴⁶⁷ This reading is based on the same logic that interprets painting as poetry—*ut picture poesis*—except Correa is describing 'At the Bay' as a piece of music.

But more specifically, 'At the Bay' can be read together with Debussy's *Clair de Lune* and *L'après midi d'un faune*. The story begins with an '*aubade*', to use Correa's metaphor, a piece played outdoors at dawn, and everything seems to emerge out of an ethereal mist in an imagined world:

Very early morning. The sun was not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay was hidden under a white sea-mist. The big bush-covered hills at the back were smothered. You could not see where they ended and the paddocks and

⁴⁶⁴ Austin, 71.

⁴⁶⁵ Correa, 'Katherine Mansfield and Music: Nineteenth-Century Echoes' in *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays* ed. by Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson, 84-98 (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2011), 85.

⁴⁶⁶ Correa, 'Katherine Mansfield and Music,' 85.

⁴⁶⁷ Correa, 'Katherine Mansfield and Music,' 85.

bungalows began. The sandy road was gone and the paddocks and bungalows the other side of it; *there were no* white dunes covered with reddish grass beyond them; *there was nothing* to mark which was beach and where was the sea. A heavy dew had fallen. The grass was blue. Big drops hung on the bushes and just did not fall; the silvery, fluffy toi-toi was limp on its long stalks, and all the marigolds and the pins in the bungalow gardens were bowed to the earth with wetness. Drenched were the cold fuchsias, round pearls of dew lay on the flat nasturtium leaves. It looked *as though* the sea had beaten up softly in the darkness, *as though* one immense wave had come *rippling, rippling*—how far? Perhaps if you had waked up in the middle of the night you might have seen a big fish flicking in at the window and gone again....⁴⁶⁸

It is as if we are looking through the sleepy eye of a personified sea, blinking in the drowsy dawn, trying to focus our vision. Subtle repetitions, which I have italicized, initiate a languid rhythm, while a momentary silence is created by the ellipsis at the end of this first paragraph. But these descriptions also paint a picture of stillness—not frozen motionlessness, but the moment anticipating immediate movement, for the large dewy drops ‘did not fall’, nor do the ‘round pearls’ on flowers and leaves stir. Crescent Bay is on its feet, on tiptoe like Fergusson’s nude, and ready to prance and dance like Rice’s ladies. Setting the opening of ‘At the Bay’ at the precise instant before the bay is spun into full motion creates both a rhythmical and a choreographic starting point; the picturesque long-shots accompanying the minute details of close-ups. But as the morning continues, the ‘*aubade*’ is followed by a quite different song and dance, pushed forward in a metaphorical and structural wave that includes the selected movements of the characters, both physical and emotional. And as the story closes, all motional rhythms return to the sea, ending with a nocturne. Just as the beginning opens up a portal, which unfolds into a world of moving images, impressions and sounds, the conclusion slowly closes up as the day ends and ‘[a] cloud, small, serene, floated across the moon. In that moment of darkness the sea sounded deep, troubled. Then the cloud sailed away, and the sound of the sea was a vague murmur, as though it waked out of a dark dream. All was still.’⁴⁶⁹

Clair de Lune is Debussy’s setting of Paul Verlaine’s poem by the same title. The poem, according to Roger Nichols, ‘conjures up a magical, moonlit world. ... It is the epitome of that dream world in which sense is abandoned before the senses. No loved one is addressed, no story told.’⁴⁷⁰ Nichole’s comment can also be an appropriate description of ‘At the Bay’, for the story, like *Clair de Lune*, has no plot in the strict sense of the word, no purposeful destination, but gathers images, sensual impressions, actions and sounds that are loosely strung, and in the movement between episodes, recreates Mansfield’s make-believe homeland. What binds the seemingly fragmentary structure together is a rhythmic unity expressed via atmospheric rendering of subject.

⁴⁶⁸ CFKM, II, 342-43.

⁴⁶⁹ CFKM, II, 371.

⁴⁷⁰ ‘Debussy’s Two Settings of ‘Clair de Lune’,’ *Music and Letters* 48 no. 3 (1967): 229.

Nichols argues that Verlaine's poem communicates a 'well-defined unity', and what Debussy does is to create 'music that will capture the essential unity without losing the shades of meaning, music that is at once atmospheric and subtly detailed'.⁴⁷¹ This is achieved via 'the use of rhythm as a unifying element', thus reaching 'the balancing of unity by diversity'.⁴⁷² Debussy's composition, devoid of words or vocal sounds, begins with quivering, tentative notes, leaving gaps in-between that are only filled with vibrations created by the same notes. But the music gradually awakens, like dawn at the bay, calling sounds to teem together, pushing the languid rhythm away, and then repeats 'in various guises' a similar 'figure which reappears from time to time' in order to create unity.⁴⁷³ And just as Correa's description of 'At the Bay', *Clair de Lune* then eases into a *diminuendo*, in which all sounds are immersed into static moonlight, and the slumbering sea.

If 'Miss Brill' was an experimentation, an *étude* with literal amalgamations of sounds, images and movements, 'At the Bay' then attempts a larger musical canvas that aims at capturing not the verisimilitude of a day, but rather an unfinished, or even on-going harmony subtly unified by a submerged rhythm. Mark DeVoto remarks on that repetition occurs in Debussy's music as a 'fundamental aspect of [his] sense of form'.⁴⁷⁴ This feature of 'paired repetition', which recalls Mallarmé's sound and echo paradigm, is the musical equivalent of the technique used in Rice's drawing of two women that repeats lines and shapes (Figure 4.5), and in the reiteration of the same scene in Mansfield's 'Psychology'.⁴⁷⁵ DeVoto also compares Debussy's repeated notes to 'breathing', which marks simultaneously the strangeness and familiarity of Debussy's work: it creates a sonorous loop, and in the very sense of *déjà vu* creates a paradox of a 'style instantly recognisable even on first hearing'.⁴⁷⁶ In this light, perhaps we can trace such a 'breathing' effect in Mansfield's 'At the Bay' where she turns the sub-rhythm of the living, breathing sea into an echoing response to the melodic structure of the story.

Juxtaposing Debussy's music with Mansfield's work provides new ways of reading her stories. Austin writes of Debussy's *L'après midi d'un faune* that '[in] the opening phrase of melody the first and last notes are especially memorable'.⁴⁷⁷ This applies very aptly to 'At the Bay'. The story was originally in twelve sections when it was published in *The Garden Party and Other Stories*. Each section is not connected by plot, but resembles an episodic snapshot of life. Mansfield later added section XIII for the American edition. The story now begins with the notes: 'Very early morning' and ends with 'All was still.' This opening phrase, which is made up of three double-syllable words, carries with it a sensuous association of the bay waking up, almost yawning to greet us. The ending sentence is made up of single-syllable words. Although 'All was still' sounds like the concluding notes of a finale, these words do not seem to finish the story.

⁴⁷¹ Nichols, 229-30.

⁴⁷² Nichols, 235.

⁴⁷³ Nichols, 230.

⁴⁷⁴ Mark DeVoto, 'The Debussy Sound: Colour, Texture, Gesture,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise, 179-96 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521652438.0142>. Accessed: June 16, 2013.

⁴⁷⁵ DeVoto, 179.

⁴⁷⁶ DeVoto, 179.

⁴⁷⁷ Austin, 79.

Rather, they linger in the air in their slow, hypnotizing resonance that dissolves into the sea. The sea in this story is the undercurrent, the vital rhythm that runs through each section; it often intervenes with minor rhythms of the day's procession, and at times sinks into a silent murmur. But then, all of a sudden, its voice clear yet unobtrusive, the sea is heard again on the horizon, or in Beryl Burnell's bedroom, accompanied by moonlight. Mansfield's rich layers of sound in this particular story are carefully designed to appeal to the sense of hearing, which is usually neglected in written words.

Austin observes of Debussy's work that neither the beginning nor the ending notes 'sounds like a tonic, a suitable resting point They do not point ahead. They hang in our memories. They seem to vibrate with uncertainty.'⁴⁷⁸ Debussy's music is comprised of relational sounds, and these sounds function as suggestions and not declarations; they encourage us to remember them throughout the entire composition, and gradually conjure up clearer meanings as our perceptions and senses are guided along the 'accompanying chords', and meander through 'melodic contexts'.⁴⁷⁹ The 'uncertainty' that Austin speaks of is precisely the effect produced by the two tone-setting phrases in the beginning and the end of 'At the Bay'. By means of the two short sentences, Mansfield establishes a fluid frame for her melodic composition on the twin themes of the sea and the Burnell family. Our memories of the two echoing sets of Mansfieldian notes also hang in the air with uncertainty; they give the story an extending and never-ending expectancy, as sounds melt and flow into each other, and eventually increase sensory experience by intertwining memory with perception. This is what Mallarmé meant by a musical and literary 'synthesis'—that aforementioned 'scene of lovely, evanescent, intersecting forms'.

Mansfield wrote to another artist friend Dorothy Brett as she was working on this story in 1921:

Its called *At the Bay* & its [sic] (I hope) full of sand and seaweed and bathing dresses hanging over verandahs & sandshoes on window sills, and little pink 'sea' convolvulus, and rather gritty sandwiches and the tide coming in. And it smells (oh I DO hope it smells) a little bit fishy.⁴⁸⁰

Mansfield crafts a version of Mallarmé's 'synthesis' here by juxtaposing images with sensual associations and memory, rather than ideas or plot, so that she can make her painter friend see and sense ('smell') what she aims to capture. These descriptions are not to be taken as what 'At the Bay' literally is, but rather as suggestions of what the story looks, sounds, and 'smells' like. After all, '[it] is not *description* which can unveil the efficacy and beauty of monuments, seas, or the human face in all their maturity and native state, but rather evocation, *allusion, suggestion*', argues Mallarmé.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁸ Austin, 79.

⁴⁷⁹ Austin, 79.

⁴⁸⁰ *CLKM*, IV, 261.

⁴⁸¹ Cited in Austin, 120-121.

This idea of 'suggestion' strikes me simultaneously as a Fauvist and Chinese art ideal. It is Fauvist because it is not content with surface resemblance—it does not give primacy to descriptive properties in art, but rather delves into the deep structure of subjects. It is also akin to the Chinese notion of art which sacrifices the concrete and formal assurance of familiarity for a more abstract and suggestive rendering of an object. Feng Zongpu, who translates selected Chinese criticism on Mansfield, observes that she 'succeeded in grasping the particular, and was then able to reach the general'.⁴⁸² While this may be true of Mansfield's method in 'Miss Brill' and her description to Dorothy Brett of how she chose to represent 'At the Bay', the statement does not fully encompass Mansfield's creation of the lingering memory of the sea in this particular story. Feng's statement is general and still limits itself to the purely literary dimension, while Mansfield has clearly expanded her own creative realm into that of musicality and the association which arise with sounds, images, and taste—in other words, she addresses more than one strand of the reader's sensual receptivity. However, Feng's following metaphorical description of the effect Mansfield's writing echoes both what 'At the Bay' tries to suggest, and Mansfield's own aims for fiction writing:

She was able to create the most potently affecting mood and atmosphere; as if a mist rose from a valley, an impalpable, all-enveloping presence emanating from the chiseled contours of the ground; as if a faint scent drifted from a grove of plum blossoms, permeating, penetrating and lingering on even when the grove of plum trees has disappeared.⁴⁸³

This is what 'At the Bay' achieves—what Mallarmé calls 'Transposition' because '[speech] is not more than a commercial approach to reality. In literature, allusion is sufficient: essences are distilled and then embodied in Idea.'⁴⁸⁴ Mansfield has moved from experimental use of sounds and colours to a masterful blending of rhythms and images in 'At the Bay'; the mist is only lifted off momentarily, and then drops again—the evanescent moment is now preserved via the blending of musical memory with literary perception.

In 'At the Bay' it is not only the sea that sets the basic tone, but also the characters who add rich layers to the whole piece. The extended rhythm formed by the presence of the sea is complemented by the crisper and shorter notes that are created by the activities of the characters. Children, for instance, add a more upbeat dimension to 'At the Bay'. Mansfield's sea harmony is incomplete without the participation of her beloved child characters, whose presence alters the sea's languid rhythm:

⁴⁸² Feng Zongpu, 'Mansfield's Fictional Art: A Preliminary Study,' in *A Fine Pen: The Chinese View of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Shifen Gong, 68-79 (Otago: University of Otago Press, 2001), 69.

⁴⁸³ Feng, 69.

⁴⁸⁴ Cited in Austin, 120.

The beach was strewn with little heaps of clothes and shoes; the big summer hats, with stones on them to keep them from bellowing away, looked like immense shells. It was strange that even the sea seemed to sound differently when all those leaping, laughing figures ran into the waves. Old Mrs Fairfield, in a lilac cotton and black hat tied under the chin, gathered her little brood and got them ready. The little Trout boys whipped their shirts over their heads, and away the five sped, while their grandma sat with one hand in her knitting-bag ready to draw out the ball of wool when she was satisfied they were safely in.⁴⁸⁵

Mansfield presents an image of contrasts, of size—'little' against 'immense'—and of age, and the subtle variation of stillness and motion, merging all three together, and creates a harmony that is yet different from that of the early morning sea at the story's opening. After the character of the sea exits, the stage is occupied by a dominantly masculine and competitive presence: Stanley Burnell detests having another man swimming in the same water as he engages in his ritual morning exercise. In contrast, the women and children who enter the scene are capable of enjoying themselves at their own pace, which suggests a kind of synchronicity between their presence and the rhythm of the sea.

The story continues to offer an even closer look at the children at sea:

The firm compact little girls were not half so brave as the tender, delicate-looking little boys. Pip and Rags, shivering, crouching down, slapping the water, never hesitated. But Isabel, who could swim twelve strokes, and Kezia, who could nearly swim eight, only followed on the strict understanding they were not to be splashed. As for Lottie, she didn't follow at all. She liked to be left to go in her own way, please. And that way was to sit down at the edge of the water, her legs straight, her knees pressed together, and to make vague motions with her arms as if she expected to be wafted out to sea. But when a bigger wave than usual, an old whiskery one, came lolloping along in her direction, she scrambled to her feet with a face of horror and flew up the beach again.⁴⁸⁶

The children form their own rhythm in 'At the Bay'; whether they run into sea or stay ashore does not disturb the overall harmony, but rather enriches it with each 'little' additional movement and presence. Lottie, a character who does not often occupy center stage, is given a very personal and revealing moment. In 'Prelude', she is the little intruder (see analysis in Chapter 2) who surprises Kezia with her presence through the tinted yellow glass. But here, she is presented without any discolouration as her most personal and conscious self: a child who is very much aware of her own abilities and limitations, not lacking in imagination even though she cannot yet swim like her sisters. Evidence of both contrast and similarity between Lottie and her sisters finds

⁴⁸⁵ *CFKM*, II, 351.

⁴⁸⁶ *CFKM*, II, 351.

its way into her consciousness and movement. Isabel, the eldest of the Burnell girls, can swim 'twelve strokes', Kezia can do eight under very specific conditions, and Lottie can only 'make vague motions' in the air, yet we sense the emerging number she will be able to make. The numbered strokes choreograph the three little girls in a formatted procession; Mansfield wishes us to imagine, rather than to see Lottie carrying out these movements; suggestion is sufficient. Lottie's horror at the 'old whiskery' wave running her way immediately recalls Kezia's fear of things rushing at her. The three little girls, amongst other children, form a marvelous little parade that resemble musical notes in descending order on a vast score with the sea as the auditory background.

It is also not difficult to imagine this section of 'At the Bay', which is preoccupied with the activities of Kezia, Lottie, and the Trout boys, as a cheerful interlude in a musical composition of which Pip is the conductor with a card from the game as his baton.⁴⁸⁷ Each child is assigned a part which they must provide with their innate musical instrument—vocal chords. The sound dimension is also enriched by motion: Isabel moving her arms as if they were the wings of a rooster, Kezia stretching out her legs to impersonate a bee, and Pip the bull '[charging] over the table and seem[ing] to eat the cards up'.⁴⁸⁸ Coordination is also required in this 'strange company', and the get-together is sounding more and more like a rehearsal than a game.⁴⁸⁹

Like the children, the adults in 'At the Bay' also have their own parts to play, Linda being the quiet undertone, Mrs. Fairfax the calming string, and Beryl the unexpected note to disrupt the harmony. All these parts play together with the sound of the sea, or represent an aspect of the sea—what the sea begins, the characters repeat and reiterate, until the pulling rhythm of the ocean guides all movement to a *diminuendo*, and all becomes still.

5. A 'Fundamental Desire' for Rhythm

In the first issue of *Rhythm* magazine, Murry's co-editor Michael Sadler specifically addresses Anne Estelle Rice's art, saying that her work has a 'vital stillness, the same rhythmic repose always on the edge of action and always ready for action ... as have the limbs of the dancers and the crouching forms in the background of the large picture which caused such an outcry'.⁴⁹⁰ Sadler's observation places equal importance upon rhythm's desire to subdue and pacify as on its intention to move and incite; the 'vital stillness' is as crucial a part of rhythm as its movement. It is between the two states that rhythm gains its maximum momentum and effect, causing tension, eliciting association, and creating memory that lasts. In this same essay Sadler also sums up the essential nature of Fauvism:

⁴⁸⁷ See section IX of 'At the Bay', *CFKM*, II, 361-64.

⁴⁸⁸ *CFKM*, II, 363.

⁴⁸⁹ *CFKM*, II, 361.

⁴⁹⁰ Sadler, 'Fauvism and a Fauve', *Rhythm* 1, no. 1 (1911): 18.

There is one fundamental desire with which all start—the desire for rhythm. Be it of line or colour, be it simple or intricate, in every true product of Fauvism it will be present. And this rhythm is of a piece with the use of strong flowing line, of strong massed colour, of continuity. The work must be strong, must be alive, and must be rhythmical. Then there is another goal for which the Fauves are striving—*decentralization of design*. This aim is an important element in the wonderful decorative value of modern painting, painting which fills a space, which seems prepared to spread over any size of surface with the graceful continuity of its lines.⁴⁹¹

This ‘fundamental desire for rhythm’, I have shown, is one of Mansfield’s major creative concerns. Sadler’s ‘decentralization of design’ is analogous to the design of ‘At the Bay’, which is expansive and crafted to fill an imaginative space just as a painting occupies a physical space. We may recall how Ida Baker calls Mansfield’s art ‘word painting’, only now Mansfield’s image-rendering technique adopts a new vital element, musical rhythm. Compared with visual representations, musical rhythm is more ephemeral. The rhythm embedded in ‘At the Bay’ metamorphoses into a kind of enveloping atmosphere, which hangs around and upon the written words with its dewy wet existence all intact, transforming the impression woven by sound and image into a fabric that captures and reflects a prevailing mood.

Mansfield’s stories seldom explain things, which according to Mallarmé is a musician’s trait more than a writer’s.⁴⁹² Amid ‘the obscurity and ecstasy of sound’ at a concert, Mallarmé writes, the listener discerns the poetry of the music; the poem is ‘more understandable because unheard, because the composer, in his desire to portray its majestic lines, was not even *tempted* to ‘explain everything’’. In contrast, the writer’s desire is to transcribe these ‘majestic lines’ into words, to ‘find a way of transposing the symphony to the Book’; for the writer, ‘the true source of Music must not be the elemental sound of brasses, strings, or wood winds, but the intellectual and written word in all its glory—Music of perfect fullness and clarity, the totality of universal relationships’.⁴⁹³ But I believe that Mansfield demonstrates the instincts of both musician and writer equally in her rhythmic stories—she has struck a fine balance between the ‘unheard’ musical undertones and the writer’s urge to capture that evanescent moment of inexpressible silence via visual images. Thus a truly harmonious ‘rhythmical totality’ is achieved by fusing musical associations, literary expressions, and visual suggestions. This is the nature of a uniquely Mansfieldian rhythm.

⁴⁹¹ Sadler, 17. My emphasis.

⁴⁹² Cited in Austin, 121-2.

⁴⁹³ See Austin, 121-22l.

Chapter Five

Mood

1. Unpacking *Stimmung*: Suggestion, 'Aesthetic Feeling', and The 'Prose Writer's Weather'

In 1917, Mansfield was particularly thrilled by a Christmas present from Lady Ottoline Morrell. It was a black Chinese silk shawl, luxurious enough to be an offering to her mother Annie Beauchamp, or reserved for 'state occasions and christenings'.⁴⁹⁴ As Mansfield describes it, the shawl is 'embroidered very thickly with flowers and fruits and birds in the most lively yet delicate colours imaginable'.⁴⁹⁵ This beautiful object, now part of the Alexander Turnbull Library collection, was often referred to by Mansfield and her friends as the 'Spanish shawl'.⁴⁹⁶ Mansfield, before her death, instructed Ida Baker to give the shawl to Anne Estelle Rice, the artist who as discussed in Chapter one painted Mansfield's portrait,⁴⁹⁷ and Rice donated it to the Turnbull library in 1951. The Chinese silk shawl has borders of intricate green and yellow vines and small flowers, which accentuate a central motif of a pheasant among peonies and other flowers. In Chinese paintings, this bird is often paired with such flowers because of their combined meaning of auspiciousness.⁴⁹⁸ The needlework and colours of the embroidery are characteristic of Chinese bird-and-flower motifs that often find their way onto ceramics and fabric, not to mention traditional Chinese watercolour paintings. The shawl's exotic and delicate appeal made it one of Mansfield's most treasured objects in life. Mansfield's mistaking of the Chinese designs for Spanish ones is interesting, for it suggests that she understood them as exotic rather than specifically Chinese, and this in turn implies that her affinity with the principles of quintessential Chinese aesthetics that the shawl's designs display was instinctive, not mediated through intellectual understanding of these principles.

Mansfield's love for the Chinese shawl epitomises the cultural mania for Eastern art in Europe which I mention in the introductory chapter. Fergusson was also unable to resist the allure of Chinese art, and one of his best portraits, featuring Rice in a wide-sleeved blue robe and hat, is called *Le Manteau Chinois* (1909).⁴⁹⁹ Ownership of a Chinese silk shawl is hardly enough evidence to place Mansfield in a Chinese aesthetical context. But she did frequent Garsington and Bloomsbury, and must have been familiar with Roger Fry's consistent enthusiasm for Cathay, as well as the other artists' passion for *objets d'art* from China, especially Vanessa and Julian Bell. The 'foreignness' of the shawl and its brilliant yet not garish colours were elements that captured Mansfield's eye. As the aesthetics of

⁴⁹⁴ *CLKM*, II, 17, letter to Annie Burnell Beauchamp, 18 January 1918.

⁴⁹⁵ *CLKM*, II, 17.

⁴⁹⁶ Laurel Harris, Mary Morris, and Joanna Woods (eds), *The Material Mansfield: Traces of a Writer's Life* (Auckland: Random House, 2008), 24.

⁴⁹⁷ *The Memories of LM*, 229.

⁴⁹⁸ The Chinese name for pheasant, 锦鸡 (*Jin Ji*), is a play on the word '锦', which also describes a type of brocade silk. Adding flowers 上添花' to the already lustrous fabric indicates a double portion of good fortune. Mansfield of course would not have been aware of such meanings. The pattern is exemplary of the popularity of Chinese designs in Britain since the 18th century, and is more authentic than Winton's blue willow pattern on ceramics.

⁴⁹⁹ For an image of this painting, see Alice Strang, Elizabeth Cumming and Sheila McGregor's *J. D. Fergusson* (Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 2013), 79.

Chinese, Japanese, Iranian and Indian art circulated in popular taste, they also began to permeate literary and visual Modernism. Fry was one of the boldest advocates for foreign art. Patricia Laurence argues what I also suggest in my introduction, that Modernism must be viewed as a trans-national movement although scholastic attention has largely remained focused on European or Anglo-Modernism. According to Laurence, Fry “incorporated ‘Chinese eyes’ and sought in other cultures the forms that would have a bearing on the visual and, eventually, the literary sensibility of modernism”.⁵⁰⁰ What Fry recommends is a wider purview for appreciating and creating art, and a many-edged prism in viewing art and literature. This is in agreement with Modernism’s trans-national, trans-generic and trans-sensuous nature, a trend that Mansfield also embraced in her life and works.

Another connection between China, Mansfield’s practice, and Fry’s idea of aesthetic voyaging into foreign arts and literature, is the Chinese poet Xu Zhimo, whom Fry met in 1921 when they were both at Cambridge. Inevitably Fry ‘was drawn into a discussion of Chinese art and introduced Xu to European artists such [as] Cezanne, Matisse, and Picasso’.⁵⁰¹ In July 1922, Xu met Mansfield, a meeting he immortalised later as ‘the undying twenty minutes’.⁵⁰² Mansfield’s friends Bertrand Russell and his wife had recently visited China, and Mansfield mentioned to Xu that she had listened to their travellers’ tales with great interest—indeed, it was almost as if she had herself embarked on an imaginary voyage to the Far East. She told Xu that her favourite translation of Chinese poetry was by Arthur Waley, calling it a ‘wonderful revelation’.⁵⁰³ Xu is similarly enthusiastic about meeting Mansfield, an experience, he wrote later, that produced ‘the purest aesthetic feeling’.⁵⁰⁴ He immediately associates Mansfield with ‘subtle Eastern beauty’, and identifies in her what he also recognised in Chinese poets of the highest merit.⁵⁰⁵ Mansfield’s hair combed smooth and straight across her forehead, Xu observes, must have been deliberately ‘Chinese’, and he uses a cluster of characteristically poetic and Chinese analogies to describe her: ‘jade like complexion’, ‘soft spring breeze’, ‘transparent beauty’, and ‘pure spirit’.⁵⁰⁶ Xu romanticises Mansfield’s image as a woman writer, in the same way as he romanticises femininity and genius in his own poetry. But what is of particular interest to me in his short memoir of Mansfield is Xu’s quotation of lines from Giacomo Leopardi, which serve to preface his opening remarks on beauty, human nature, and the unpredictable timing of life and death.⁵⁰⁷ Xu argues that though the Italian poet does not believe that ‘women can achieve a similar *Jingjie* (境界)’, Leopardi’s pessimism has not prevented him from acknowledging the presence and supremacy of beauty.⁵⁰⁸ It is not surprising that Xu should use the word *Jingjie*, which is sometimes used in Chinese criticism as an interchangeable term for *Yijing* (意境), for Chinese critics of this period liked to use such fuzzy terms which are not unlike

⁵⁰⁰ Laurence, 347.

⁵⁰¹ Laurence, 347.

⁵⁰² Xu Zhimo. *Xu Zhimo Quan Ji*, Vol.3 (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1983), 23.

⁵⁰³ *Quan Ji*, 19.

⁵⁰⁴ *Quan Ji*, 13.

⁵⁰⁵ *Quan Ji*, 15.

⁵⁰⁶ *Quan Ji*, 15.

⁵⁰⁷ Cited in Xu, *Quan Ji*, 2. The lines Xu quoted are from the final stanza of ‘On the Portrait of a Beautiful Woman, Carved on her Monument’: ‘Ah, human nature, how,/ If utterly frail thou art and vile,/ If dust thou art and ashes, is thy heart so great? / If thou art noble in part, / How are thy loftiest impulses and thoughts / By so ignobles [sic] causes kindled and put out?’

⁵⁰⁸ *Quan Ji*, 2-3.

Murry's 'rhythm'. *Yijing* is one of the main concepts I will introduce in this chapter to demonstrate another trans-sensuous quality of Mansfield's works.

We have seen how Mansfield, influenced by the philosophical and aesthetic discussions of her time, attempted to capture in her prose qualities that are not immediately tactile, visible or audible. Mansfield herself would not have been aware of it, but the very qualities she hoped to capture would have been very familiar to Xu, and resemble what Chinese aesthetic term *Yijing*. But rather than begin with a detailed discussion of *Yijing*, I turn first to Paris, and to Fry's observation in 1913 that '[t]he East is thoroughly ransacked by arts dealers and ... one can learn more about the best things in Paris than in Beijing'.⁵⁰⁹ Simultaneous with this wave of popularity of *objets d'art* from China were Bergson's public philosophy lectures, which is perhaps not surprising considering that Bergson's ideas have a strong Eastern aesthetic underpinning. In the discussion that follows I explore a useful term through which we can view Mansfield's works in terms of mood and atmosphere: *Stimmung*, a German term which is *Yijing*'s close equivalent. *Stimmung* is as much a poetic as a musical, aesthetical and hybridising notion, and like colour, rhythm and the innocent eye, carries our understanding of Mansfield across artistic borders. In fact, *Stimmung* entails a wealth of implications that can be readily connected to many aspects of Modernist thinking: Bergson's philosophy, Walter Pater's impermanent self, and Ezra Pound's Chinese-poetry-inspired poetic state. My discussion will ultimately lead to *Yijing*. We have seen how rhythm can be embodied by a physical form, for example, Fergusson's nude for the *Rhythm* magazine cover. What *Stimmung* and *Yijing* aim to evoke is a strong sense and sensation of the unseen and the un-representable.

Reading Mansfield's works, the 'lines' of a story also become smudged if there is no simplicity of description to guide us through the mist of a story's *Stimmung*. For this reason the Literary Impressionist reading of Mansfield is problematic, because such a reading lingers on the superficial, and on the blurring of the essential lines that help to contain the movement of imagery. Smith differentiates the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist approaches by comparing Monet's 'sequence paintings' with Roberts Delaunay's *Eiffel Tower* (1922). The former are 'individually homogeneous' as the subject becomes submerged in the various paintings' changing 'lights and moods', whereas the latter is 'a heterogeneity' because it 'gives a multiplicity of angles'; Monet's paintings are quintessentially Impressionistic, while Delaunay's are characteristic of a modern layering which still preserves the central subject from variegated perspectives.⁵¹⁰ For similar reasons, *Stimmung* or *Yijing* is not an equivalent of Impressionism: *Stimmung* enhances mood and feeling without losing sight of the central subject, while Impressionist renderings of an object tend to dilate our pupils until they lose focus of the one thing upon which we should focus. The central task for the poetic eye is the 'Negative

⁵⁰⁹ Cited in Laurence, 332.

⁵¹⁰ Smith, *Literary Life*, 11. Smith also writes that '[i]mpressionism privileges surface appearances and the viewer's eye, whereas Post-Impressionism, and literary modernism in at least some of its manifestations, are concerned with the profound self, and with deep structures'. Although my argument does not entirely focus on whether Mansfield's works can be defined by Impressionism or Post-Impressionism, Smith's analysis and examples are helpful in further illustrating the differences shown in Mansfield's stories of *Stimmung*. It is also easy to confuse *Stimmung* with Impressionism for they both attempt to represent or encapsulate change, but the difference in reading and writing with *Stimmung* is that, very similar to Fauvism, the end goal is to dig deeper and reach beyond the surface resemblance in order to bring to life the strangeness that is always hidden within, to turn things inside-and-out, and thus—paradoxically—more closely resemble reality.

Capability' that does not see through everything, but feels secure in the unknown; it is a kind of creative confidence to leave a subject looking 'unfinished', which was also an effect both Modernist visual art (Fauvism) and music (Debussy) aspired to achieve. Excessive poetic projection of emotion thus can become a distraction and not an illuminating light upon the centrepiece. And as Rickett concludes, a 'poet [who] is carried away by the passion of his own loneliness and cries out his sorrow' can easily 'forge[t] the limits of nature and exten[d] his own feelings to these external objects'.⁵¹¹ By employing a Keatsian poetic eye, and engaging in creating *Stimmung*, the artist acknowledges not only his/her own limitations, but also the borders of external reality.

Eiko Nakano argues that, from her earliest writing onward, Mansfield has an intuitive grasp of Bergsonian principles, and that a more explicit connection with the philosopher's ideas stems from her involvement with *Rhythm*.⁵¹² Nakano suggests that Mansfield shows an intuitive grasp of quasi-Bergsonian ideas as early as her Wellington days, and was attracted to the *New Age* for the same reason. The Bergsonian traits of Mansfield's thinking become more evident, Nakano argues, once she became 'involved with *Rhythm*', which Nakano categorises as a "Bergsonian" magazine'.⁵¹³ More specifically, Bergson's *Time and Freewill* may have much to do with *Rhythm* and its Modernist mission. In 'The Aesthetic Feelings' Bergson brings 'rhythm' into focus to elaborate on the kind of feeling art creates in the audience. He begins by discussing 'rhythm' in architecture, saying that repetition of motifs, though in a still setting, purifies our perception and distils in our mind 'the faint suggestion of an idea' which suffices to 'fill the whole of our mind'.⁵¹⁴ The aim of art, argues Bergson, ought to be 'impressing feelings on us rather than expressing them' through suggestion'.⁵¹⁵ Bergson believes that these feelings— 'the feeling of the beautiful'—must be '*suggested*, and not *caused*'.⁵¹⁶ This notion of the power of suggestion is a subtle and submerged aesthetics, yet the intensity of such aesthetic feelings is equally important, for 'the merit of a work of art is not measured so much by the power with which the suggested feeling takes hold of us as by the richness of this feeling itself: in other words, besides degrees of intensity we instinctively distinguish degrees of depth or elevation'.⁵¹⁷ Bergson's ideas regarding both the intangible aspects of art and their concentrated potency also become creative concerns for Mansfield. The Bergsonian 'aesthetic feeling' is the next step to understanding another particular feature of Mansfield's writing, which involves both stated and implied meanings, both the overall mood and the minute details. I suggest that this 'aesthetic feeling' can be best summarised by *Stimmung*, which translates into 'mood and atmosphere'.

While it remains inconclusive whether Mansfield was aware of the concept of *Stimmung*, her knowledge of German and her interest in Goethe, who discusses the relationship between music and the visual arts, makes *Stimmung* a very relevant notion in my investigation of mood and atmosphere in

⁵¹¹ Rickett, 29.

⁵¹² Eiko Nakano, 'Katherine Mansfield and French Philosophy: A Bergsonian Reading of *Maata*' in *Katherine Mansfield Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 68-82. doi: <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/10.3366/E2041450109000080>

⁵¹³ Nakano, 'Katherine Mansfield and French Philosophy: A Bergsonian Reading of *Maata*', 71-72.

⁵¹⁴ Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, 16.

⁵¹⁵ *Time and Freewill*, 16.

⁵¹⁶ *Time and Freewill*, 16-17. Bergson's emphasis.

⁵¹⁷ Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, 17.

Mansfield's own writings.⁵¹⁸ According to Lorraine Byrne Bodey, 'Goethe draws a comparison between the musical and the visual arts, yet in music he departs from the principles of imitation: It is a kind of symbolism for the ear, where the subject, in so far as it is in motion, or not in motion, is neither imitated nor painted, but produced in the imagination, in a way that is quite peculiar, and impossible to grasp, in so far as the thing described and the describer appear to stand in scarcely any relation to one another.'⁵¹⁹ This indescribable quality is best defined as *Stimmung*, writes Bodey:

For Goethe the visual symbol is at once effective and elusive; the musical symbol, by contrast, is emancipated from its original source and merely triggers the imagination. The central purpose of art lies in the creation of *Stimmung*, and individual artistic voice, yet the domain of music hovers between thought and phenomena, spirit and matter. It is not representative of the particular, but expresses objects and emotions in the abstract, in their essential nature, and enables us to share them in this quintessence.⁵²⁰

Stimmung thus is beyond the domain of pure music, or to use Shaw-Miller's term 'absolute music'.⁵²¹ Sight and sound are invariably connected, and 'the harder music tries to hide the visual, the more effective sight becomes in showing itself, as always, surprisingly present'.⁵²² *Stimmung* has both musical and visual connotations: it denotes a sense of relations that are not immediately visible and tangible, and suggests a distance between what is described and the describer, and by doing so creates the kind of 'moment's lifting of the veil', to use Murry's metaphor.⁵²³ *Stimmung* also signifies a larger whole which is more encompassing and suggestive than the sum of the particulars. The term accurately describes one of Mansfield's techniques in which she uses a deliberate array of details to build up a particular mood and atmosphere.

A delicate balance must be maintained, however, when creating *Stimmung*: the writer must suppress exclamation with a measured amount of implication. This is what Mansfield learns, moving away from explicit statements of emotion in her earlier works to the more subdued gesturing towards meaning of her later stories, in which a significant amount of her message remains hidden in an atmospheric narrative fog.

Mansfield's own expression of *Stimmung* begins with an awareness of what she calls a story's encompassing atmosphere or 'weather'. In a review, she addresses the issue of mood and atmosphere, particularly the indefinable and inclusive nature of these phenomena:

What do we mean when we speak of the atmosphere of a novel? It is one of those questions exceedingly difficult to fit with an answer. It is one of those questions which, each time we

⁵¹⁸ JKM, 50. In a journal entry for January 1914, Mansfield writes that she will read Goethe's *Poetry and Truth*.

⁵¹⁹ Cited in Lorraine Byrne Bodey, *Goethe and Zelter: Musical Dialogues* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 9.

⁵²⁰ Lorraine Bodey, 9.

⁵²¹ Shaw-Miller, xiii.

⁵²² Shaw-Miller, xiii.

⁵²³ Murry, 'Art and Philosophy', *Rhythm I*, no. 1, 9.

look at them seem to have grown. At one time 'emotional quality' seemed to cover it, but is that adequate? May not a book have that and yet lack this *mysterious covering*? Is it the impress of the writer's personality upon his work—the impress of the writer's passion—more than that? [...] 'It is something that happens to a book *after* it is written. It droppeth like the gentle dew from Heaven upon the book beneath.' [...] For whatever else atmosphere may include, it is the element in which a book lives in its own right.⁵²⁴

Mansfield suggests the characteristic of a 'covering' atmosphere which includes but is not limited to the emotional provocation of a novel or a story. This 'mysterious' atmospheric quality is also mobile, and its definition expands (much like the notion of rhythm) as she tries to capture its true meaning. Mansfield also significantly points out that the atmosphere or *Stimmung* of a novel, like divine inspiration or dewy drops, falls from mysterious sources—sources unseen and unnoticed—and covers the written text. The emphasis on the post-production presence of atmosphere is also intriguing if we think of Mansfield's work in terms of literary weaving again: the complete image or impression only emerges after the piece is finished. Thus *Stimmung*, according to Mansfield, is often not something to be acutely felt at the outset of her creative process, but rather materialises as an enveloping narrative gauze to be fully appreciated when the weaving ends.

Mansfield explicitly discusses the atmosphere of a text again in *Novels and Novelists* as a form of emotional 'weather' that permeates writing:

It is strange how content most writers are to ignore the influence of the weather upon the feelings and the emotions of their characters, or, if they do not ignore it, to treat it, except in its most obvious manifestations—'she felt happy because the sun was shining'—'the dull day served but to heighten his depression'—as something of very little importance, something quite separate and apart. But by 'the weather' we do not mean a kind of ocean at our feet, with broad effects of light and shadow, into which we can plunge or not plunge, at will; we mean an external atmosphere which is in harmony or discordant with a state of soul; poet's weather, perhaps we might call it. But why not prose-writer's weather, too? Why indeed! Are not your poet and your writer of prose faced with exactly the same problem? [...] Then, indeed, as in the stories of Tchegov, we should become aware of the rain pattering on the roof all night long, of the languid, feverish wind, of the moonlit orchard and the first snow, passionately realized, not indeed as analogous to a state of mind, but as linking that mind to the larger whole.⁵²⁵

Mansfield's 'weather' is an organic growth out of the narrative system: it breathes with the story, remaining hardly detectable, as if it were the 'soul' of the story. And this atmospheric inner core strings the narrative together, corresponding with the outer world, and creates a living body inside the larger

⁵²⁴ *NN*, ed. John Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1930), 289-90. My emphasis.

⁵²⁵ *NN*, 50-51.

whole. Charles Dickens is one of Mansfield's favourite writers because she feels he is aware of writing's capacity to achieve this atmospheric effect; she says of him that '[t]here are moments when Dickens is possessed by this power of writing: he is carried away'.⁵²⁶ Through his sympathetic rendering of emotions and scenes, '[o]ne realises exactly the mood of the writer and how he wrote, as it were [...] [Dickens] was the falling dawn, and he was the physician going to Bar'.⁵²⁷ Mansfield's 'covering atmosphere' is not simply the author's empathetic investment in the climate, or creation of an evanescent ambience that envelops a piece of work, though these aspects are important. Her appreciation of Dickens indicates not only a preoccupation with weaving poetic or prosaic 'weather' into the *Stimmung* of a story, but also suggests an utter alignment or assimilation of the writer's consciousness with that of the subject he or she depicts. Literary creations, especially to Mansfield, are not superfluous accumulations of descriptive yet directionless details, but rather meaningful presentations of imagery that contribute to an overall mood; a story is a hybridisation of emotive, visual, atmospheric and textual elements that all connect to an affective perception—the *états d'âme*—to 'the larger whole'.

A few things are worth noting in Mansfield's emphasis of 'weather'. She criticises obvious connections between physical weather and the character's state of mind not only because such connections are superficial, but also because these 'manifestations' fail to hook onto an overall mood and atmosphere. If the writer has no awareness of this larger picture and its closely-knit inner connections, then the parts remain segments. Mansfield is not forsaking one for the other, but rather stressing the inter-relatedness, the synchronicity of the pulse of characters, weather and enveloping atmosphere. The implication of this inter-connectedness between parts and whole is that the whole is more than the parts combined. The creation of *Stimmung* adds to that intangible yet strongly felt 'weather' that appeals to the instinctive and not the intellectual faculties, to the imaginative and not to the realistic mind, to emotion rather than reason.

Mansfield later explains the meaning of 'the larger whole' in her review of Sir Harry Johnson's *The Gay-Dombey's*: 'It would be difficult to tell the story, for the story is made up of stories, each as separate as flowers on a tree, and all contributing to the delightful effect. One pauses, wondering which to gather; but no—they make so satisfactory a whole that it were useless to attempt to choose.'⁵²⁸ In this metaphorical structure, a story is not a tiered construct but more of a multi-directional composition which still shares one common root, and an ongoing, expectant envisioning experience. The difficulty of selecting one story over another is parallel to appreciate a painting where our eyes simultaneously process the picture as a whole and absorb the details that contribute to that entirety. In this light, Mansfield's writing resembles a Chinese scroll which dictates the viewing process by slowly revealing the scene as the scroll unfolds. Reconciliation can be reached, Mansfield seems to suggest, by not focusing on details alone, but rather by immersing in the 'delightful', 'satisfactory' effect of wholeness. The quote is consistent with her aforementioned ideas of a 'covering atmosphere' and a prevailing prosaic 'weather'.

⁵²⁶ JKM, 203. Entry for Feb 29, 1920.

⁵²⁷ JKM, 203.

⁵²⁸ NN, 16.

Mansfield scholars also take note of her preference for atmospheric appeal in writing. Vincent O'Sullivan relates this tendency to her ability to merge poetic elements into the prosaic. He comments that her aesthetic truthfulness is not necessarily an ally of concrete description, but a claim to creative freedom that allows her to access multiple generic territories all at once:

Thus her vignettes, with their emphasis on atmosphere and mood rather than sustained sincerity of event, were not simply a fashionable form. They first proposed to her a freedom that already moved towards the stories she would later write, easing emotion away from the need to account for it fully, allowing an adjectival assault on the notion that one needed to be either consistent or explanatory. They were excursions into that dimly defined territory between the expectations of prose and the freer emotional contours of verse.⁵²⁹

Being a poet himself, O'Sullivan takes special notice of Mansfield's stylistic sauntering into the adjacent yet ill-defined area between prose and poetry. This kind of 'excursion' marks a liberality which is reminiscent of the 'shaking free' that Mansfield remembers feeling after viewing the Van Gogh painting, as discussed in the introductory chapter; it is a freedom she exercises in her writings as analysed throughout my thesis. Mansfield's reluctance to define a silhouette for her work, or conform to a traditional genre has much to do with this tendency to bridge the two 'territories' of verse and prose. It must have been in this critical and creative mode that she tried to define a new kind of writing that is neither 'a short story, nor a sketch, nor an impression, nor a tale', but is 'written in prose', and possesses 'a special quality—a something, a something which is immediately, perfectly recognisable'.⁵³⁰

This new form simultaneously entails unfamiliarity and familiarity. Mansfield, as Janice Kulyk Keefer comments, is a master of making the familiar strange.⁵³¹ In a letter to Brett, Mansfield discusses her belief in 'technique': 'I don't see how art is going to make that divine *spring* into the bounding outline of things if it hasn't passed through the process of trying to *become* these things before recreating them'.⁵³² Both the innocent eye and *Stimmung* are part of her technique in this 'becoming' process. In the same letter, Mansfield writes about *Prelude*, saying that it is difficult to define the form of her work, since it is 'more or less [her] own invention'.⁵³³ Mansfield appears to want to obtain the advantages of multiple genres by not defining the genre of her own creation. Crossing generic and sensuous boundaries gives Mansfield's writing an authority and inclusive quality that allows her to encapsulate the larger whole, and at the same time attend to minute details. To use the metaphor she develops in her review of Johnson, through the enveloping atmosphere she can then best present the details of the flowers and branches, and still maintain a complete picture of the tree. This effect closely

⁵²⁹ Vincent O'Sullivan, 'Introduction,' in *Poems of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Vincent O'Sullivan, ix-xiii (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1988), xi.

⁵³⁰ *NN*, 211.

⁵³¹ Janice Kulyk Keefer, 'La Dame Seule Meets the Angel of History: Katherine Mansfield and Mavis Gallant', in *Tropes and Territories: Short Fiction, Postcolonial Readings, Canadian Writing in Context*, 90-102. (Montreal and Ithaca : McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 93.

⁵³² *CLKM*, I, 330, letter to Dorothy Brett, 11 October, 1917.

⁵³³ *CLKM*, I, 331, 11 October 1917.

resembles Bergson's notion of harmony. He argues that art, like nature, evokes feelings in us via suggestion arising out of sparsely arranged details. This act leads us to a kind of 'sympathy', and under its influence we see nature displaying 'beings of *normal* proportions, so that our attention is distributed equally over all the parts of the figure without being fixed on any one of them: our perceptive faculty then finds itself lulled and soothed by this harmony'.⁵³⁴

Mansfield was a cellist and an avid student of French and German. Even though as I have noted she does not explicitly use the term *Stimmung*, she refers to concepts that are closely akin to *Stimmung*—charm, tone, covering atmosphere, poet's weather—and, I suggest, is likely to have associated these *Stimmung*-like notions with the effects of music. Hans Gumbrecht explains *Stimmung*'s kinship with sound and tuning:

Only in German does the word connect with *Stimme* and *stimmen*. The first means 'voice,' and the second 'to tune an instrument'; by extension, *stimmen* also means 'to be correct.' As the tuning of an instrument suggests, specific moods and atmospheres are experienced on a *continuum*, like musical scales. They present themselves to us as nuances that challenge our powers of discernment and description, as well as the potential of language to capture them.⁵³⁵

The suggestion of *Stimmung* as something to be processed as a continuous experience is an intriguing aspect of Gumbrecht's proposal, for it resonates with Bergson's idea of duration. To experience 'specific moods and atmospheres [...] on a continuum', similarly, evokes Murry's description of rhythm's extended nature. *Stimmung*'s relation to music broadens the view of music's sister arts. Yet Gumbrecht also reminds us that although 'texts affect the 'inner feelings' of readers in the way that weather and music do', 'tones, atmospheres, and *Stimmung* never exist wholly independent of the material components of works'.⁵³⁶ *Stimmung* is thus difficult to capture and even more difficult to represent. Mansfield herself expresses frustration about an arguably similar situation by comparing writing to music: 'Musically speaking, it is not—has not been—in the middle of the note—you know what I mean? When, on a cold morning perhaps, you've been playing and it has sounded all right—until suddenly, you *realise* you are warm—you have only just begun to play'.⁵³⁷ Both Gumbrecht's and Mansfield's musical analogies make sense in that the 'tuning' or warming-up requires a gradual entering process or a prelude, until the desired mode of atmosphere unfolds. If Gumbrecht emphasizes the unity between text and mood, then Mansfield stresses the harmony of expressive precision between text and atmosphere.

Gumbrecht's definition of *Stimmung* also echoes Mansfield's idea of the prose writer's 'weather', which of course includes climatic ambience as an empathetic component of writing. But the prose writer's attention to atmospheric details does not stop at its descriptive and emotive expressions. Mansfield's call for attention to 'weather' expresses a creative concern for using structured and selected

⁵³⁴ Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, 16.

⁵³⁵ Hans Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, trans. Erik Butler, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 4. My emphasis.

⁵³⁶ Gumbrecht, 5.

⁵³⁷ *JKM*, 144.

details to represent an overall mood, and for capturing the larger picture in condensed strokes—intensity of feelings—on limited canvas. Thus the *Stimmung*-capturing process is also a process of selective abbreviation. According to Gumbrecht, *Stimmung* ‘always means paying attention to the textual dimension of the forms that envelop us and our bodies as a physical reality—something that can catalyse inner feelings without matters of representation necessarily being involved’.⁵³⁸ Indeed, both Mansfield and Gumbrecht are doubtful that it is possible to experience mood, charm, atmosphere, tone—a few of the many things that *Stimmung* has to offer—without any involvement of the physical, whether this physical aspect is our haptic senses, or synaesthesia, or the physical markers offered by textual dimension upon which *Stimmung* dwells and re-creates resonating rhythms in all those who experience such texts. This chapter argues that Mansfield’s stories are ‘works rich in *Stimmung*’, and examines relevant examples of her work to explore how this *Stimmung* works.

As I discuss in my introductory chapter, Gunsteren argues that Mansfield’s stories belong in the tradition of Literary Impressionism, a literary trend that emphasizes a ‘light’ associated with the self (especially the writing self) and with “‘*Stimmung*’ (mood+atmosphere)”.⁵³⁹ This ‘light’ is not phenomenological light, but rather a ‘psychological as well as a narrative ambience; it envelops both protagonist and scenes. This light never dramatizes action, but lends it calm.’⁵⁴⁰ Gunsteren’s description captures a crucial nuance of Mansfield’s writings, but as I mention in my introduction, I am not convinced that Mansfield’s works can be defined as Literary Impressionist alone, although they certainly carry Impressionistic elements. Mansfield’s ‘light’ is not merely a ‘psychological’ state, but also suggests the relations between character and surroundings reflected in the natural hues and shades that are integral parts of Mansfield’s fictional landscapes.

2. *Yijing* (意境) and Its Implications

While Mansfield’s works of *Stimmung* have only begun to attract the attention of Western scholars in recent years, researchers in China have paid close attention to her use of mood and atmosphere since the 1980s. The most noteworthy work in this area is by Feng Zongpu, who investigates what she calls a ‘special quality’ in Mansfield’s works that she later identifies as a ‘unity of interior and exterior, a fusion of emotion and setting, an interdependence of suppression and expression.’⁵⁴¹ Mansfield’s ‘revolutionary’ writing technique, concludes Feng, ‘succeeds in evoking an imaginary, poetic realm uniquely her own. In this realm she affects her readers with atmosphere and mood. This is the “special quality”... that is a defining characteristic of Mansfield.’⁵⁴² Drawing upon David Daiches’ early study of Mansfield’s technique, Feng claims that Mansfield prefers to begin her creation with details, with partial ideas rather than the big picture. Feng agrees with Daiches that ‘[the] artist’—Mansfield— ‘observes particulars, arrives by induction at some general view concerning aspects of human activity, and

⁵³⁸ Gumbrecht, 5.

⁵³⁹ Gunsteren, 56.

⁵⁴⁰ Cited in Gunsteren, 56.

⁵⁴¹ Feng, 68-79.

⁵⁴² Feng, 69.

embodies this general view in a particular story'; it is truly an illumination process from within, that proceeds by creating 'the most potently affecting mood and atmosphere'.⁵⁴³ Mansfield's approach is thus the reverse of the nineteenth-century tradition of showing the panorama, the long shot (as also exemplified in her early story 'The Woman at the Store'), before moving in to focus on details. Mansfield, according to Feng, expresses her visible subjects through the invisible as they are hidden in a fog, and yet a strong sense of the presence of something behind the mist is communicated most efficiently.

Feng's analysis echoes Mansfield's own flower-and-tree metaphor. She demonstrates that Mansfield's method of internal illumination can be approached via two concepts from Chinese aesthetics: *xu* (虚) and *shi* (实), which translate into 'suppression' and 'expression'.⁵⁴⁴ Feng explains that the former concept *xu*, is 'an art of exclusion and suggestion, a way of concealing meaning and leaving it to the reader to discover', while the latter, *shi*, 'is symbolism, an art of indicating something by more than narration'.⁵⁴⁵ Only the interactive play of these two can produce 'a highly aesthetic mood' which in its essence resembles the *Stimmung* that Gumbrecht argues arises from the interplay of suggestion (Feng's 'suppression'), and the explicit use of details (Feng's 'expression').⁵⁴⁶ It is as if Mansfield is a painter who shows a water-colour of flowers in which only the central blossom is rendered and the other branches remain incomplete, extending into directions suggested rather than depicted. But we soon realise that behind this single flower is an entire tree—the 'stories' behind *the* story. The flower is the *shi*— the concrete, descriptive and symbolic narrative with all the necessary details pointing in the direction Mansfield wishes us to look— whereas the tree is the larger whole that is not yet all visible, the *xu*—the suggestive, exclusive concealment of utterance of any kind. Together *xu* and *shi* create a mood, an atmosphere that can be called *Yijing* (意境). Feng implies that the unseen mood and atmosphere is more powerful than the seen, for the ambience lingers like 'a faint scent' that prevails, or perhaps like the Debussy notes that linger after the performance concludes.⁵⁴⁷

Resting her analysis upon the poetic components of Mansfield's prose, Feng underlines the importance of 'unity' in bringing together the descriptive and the suggestive, the external and the internal, and presenting an 'organically constructed' whole.⁵⁴⁸ It is no coincidence, however, that Feng takes note of this quality, for organically constructed wholes were familiar notions from the Romantics, and noticeably John Keats, whose works both Mansfield and Murry admired. The organic wholes also recall Rousseau's notion of unity as previously discussed. Murry wrote extensively on Keats, for whom he argues poetry was 'always an organic function of the human being who produced it, or it fell short of true poetry', and that 'the peculiar nature of Keats' is that 'he is organic and spontaneous; his being is

⁵⁴³ Feng, 69. For David Daiches' study of Mansfield, see *The Novel and the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 75.

⁵⁴⁴ Feng, 69.

⁵⁴⁵ Feng, 73.

⁵⁴⁶ Feng, 73.

⁵⁴⁷ Feng, 69.

⁵⁴⁸ Feng, 72.

not divided'.⁵⁴⁹ There is no separation between poetry and the poetic character himself or herself. As I have noted several times, Murry attributes the same kind of seamless spontaneity to Mansfield, arguing that it is this Keatsian ability that endows her work with creative individuality.

Feng acknowledges the theoretical source of her interpretation as the critical writings of Wang Guowei, who in the early 1900s was one of the first to adopt Western philosophical and literary theories for the study of Chinese literature.⁵⁵⁰ Wang comments on the appreciation of Chinese lyric poetry: 'When the ancients discussed poetry they made a distinction between scenic description and expression of emotions. What they did not realize was that all scenic description involves expression of emotions'.⁵⁵¹ What unites scenic description with the expression of emotions, the physical, outer landscape with the imaginary, inner one is what Wang calls *Yijing*.⁵⁵² Adele Austin Rickett, who edited and translated Wang's work, explains that the term is a compound that combines 'meaning' or 'content' (*yi* 意) with *jing* (境), 'the state in which this content exists or takes form'.⁵⁵³ Although a very literal translation, Rickett's definition indicates the composite nature of Wang's term. Wang himself suggests further trans-sensuous connotations for *Yijing*. He first claims that in all poetic production *Yijing* is the most crucial element, the highest attainable state of creativity, recalling Mansfield's definition of atmosphere as the 'element in which a book lives in its own right'.⁵⁵⁴ In the invocation of *Yijing*, a 'creative state' and a 'descriptive state' come into play. These two states form the 'basis of distinction between the idealists and the realists. However, it is difficult to make a differentiation between the two because the state which the great poets create must accord with what is natural, and the state which they describe must approach the ideal'.⁵⁵⁵ Perhaps the closeness of these two states can help explain why Mansfield's imagined landscapes, particularly the homeland fictionalised in her works, simultaneously possesses the qualities of familiarity and strangeness. This is the ultimate defamiliarization—*ostranenie*—endorsed by Mansfield's contemporary Viktor Shklovsky. The meaning of *Yijing*, balanced between the 'creative' and the 'descriptive' states, may be treated as a close equivalent of 'making the strange familiar', a technique which Mansfield is more than happy to use.

Wang also distinguishes within *Yijing* a 'personal state' and an 'impersonal state'. He believes that '[i]n the personal state the poet views objects in terms of himself and so everything takes on his own colouring'.⁵⁵⁶ This sounds like a rather subjective state of mind bordering on sentimental colouration.

⁵⁴⁹ John Middleton Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare: A Study of Keats' Poetic Life from 1816-1802* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), 45-53.

⁵⁵⁰ Feng, 72 and 137. Also see Adele Austin Rickett, *Wang Kuo-Wei's Jen-Chien-Tz'u-Hua (Wang Guowei's Ren Jian Ci Hua): A Study in Chinese Literary Criticism* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1977). Rickett traces Wang's aesthetic theories to the philosophical thoughts of Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Wang Kuowei is a variation of Wang Guowei, which is the current standardised Mandarin *Pinyin* spelling.

⁵⁵¹ Rickett, 71. Feng Zongpu uses the same quote to make her point that relates Mansfield's aesthetics with that of ancient Chinese poetry.

⁵⁵² The term is translated by Adele Austin Rickett as 'poetic state'; it is often used interchangeably with *Jingjie* (境界), which can be loosely translated as 'poetic landscape'. Rickett summarises Wang's *Jingjie* 'as the total excellence which makes a poem a truly fine creation. It is defined in its most basic aspect as the verbalization of the unique moments of reality that are manifested in one's heart and in the world outside'; Rickett, 25.

⁵⁵³ Rickett, 25-26.

⁵⁵⁴ *NN*, 289-90.

⁵⁵⁵ Rickett, 40.

⁵⁵⁶ Rickett, 40.

But in 'the impersonal state the poet views objects in terms of objects and so one cannot tell what is the poet himself and what is the object'.⁵⁵⁷ As Rickett suggests, this 'impersonal state' closely resembles the butterfly analogy of Chuang-tzu's (Zhuang Zi), the ancient Chinese Taoist philosopher.⁵⁵⁸ Zhuang Zi describes a state of immersing himself in the consciousness of a butterfly until he cannot tell the two apart. This is a process of losing one's identity in the Other—the object of appreciation.

The personal and the impersonal states can be used to describe Mansfield's own creative anxiety: she praises the 'poet's weather'—involvement from a personal angle—but also struggles to achieve the 'defeat of the personal'; she wishes to produce unaffected works that are not just 'pretty, pretty', but also wants to 'become' the objects—the duck, the apple, or the man at the wharf. Many critics describe this 'becoming' as part of Mansfield's well-known chameleon quality that also permeates her writings; I suggest that this tendency to impersonate can be related to John Keats' 'negative capability', an idea he develops in a letter about a conversation he had with his friends Charles Wentworth Dilke and Charles Brown:

... several things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties. Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason—Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetrarium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge.⁵⁵⁹

Keefer argues that a fundamental 'stylistic feature' of Mansfield's work is 'perceptualism, the exercise of sensuous apprehension to produce' defamiliarization.⁵⁶⁰ She also notes that 'sensuous apprehension, for Mansfield, was a source of delight and sometimes distress'.⁵⁶¹ This 'distress' is along the line of Mansfield's frustration with always hitting between the notes—the uncertainties and doubts to which Keats refers. The solution, then, lies in Keats' command to live contentedly with these 'uncertainties', for within this irresolute state that is opposite to an omniscient self lies a higher poetic power. The 'negative' in Keats' term is not to be understood as the opposite of 'positive', but rather 'convey[s] the idea that a person's potential can be defined by what he or she does *not* possess', explains Stephen Hebron.⁵⁶² 'Negative Capability', writes Hebron, thus equals surrender to the unknown, 'a willingness to let what is mysterious or doubtful remain just that'.⁵⁶³ Murry also believes that 'Keats [...] instinctively

⁵⁵⁷ Rickett, 41.

⁵⁵⁸ Rickett, 15.

⁵⁵⁹ *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. H. E. Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), I, 193-4.

⁵⁶⁰ Keefer, 93.

⁵⁶¹ Keefer, 94.

⁵⁶² Stephen Hebron, 'Keats and "Negative Capability"', accessed November 15, 2014.

<http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/john-keats-and-negative-capability>.

⁵⁶³ Hebron.

propounds [Negative Capability] as the absolute ideal, as the most vital quality of a kind of man to which he himself belongs'.⁵⁶⁴

'Negative Capability' is closely associated with another concept of 'the poetical Character', which Keats continues to explain:

As to the poetical Character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am any thing, I am a Member; that sort of distinguished from the wordsworthain or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is every thing and nothing—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it live in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. [...] A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body—The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute.⁵⁶⁵

Keats' description of and self-identification with the 'poetical Character' is a sacrificial immersion of the original self into a new, organic and 'impersonal' self. Murry interprets this immersion as a 'state of extreme and agonizing receptivity', a 'passive sensitiveness of the being': 'it is a condition essential to the nature of the pure poet. This is that moment in the unceasing process of the pure poet's being when he absorbs to his utmost capacity the material of 'sensation' out of which he creates both himself and his work.'⁵⁶⁶ This notion of abandonment of the self as the poet smudges the line between a conscious self and the external world bears a striking resemblance to Wang Guowei's 'impersonal state', as well as Mansfield's uncanny description of becoming the apple, the duck or Tolstoy's Natasha. Both Keats' 'Negative Capability' and Wang's 'impersonal state' of *Yijing* imply an absence of—and not just distance from—the self. While Mansfield does not form a systematic theoretical discourse upon either 'Negative Capability' and the disappearing 'poetical Character', I argue that these concepts are dissolved and infused quite organically into her fictional writing.

Smith argues that Walter Pater was among the writers 'who most evidently affected [Mansfield's] literary development', but the pupil exceeds her master in being able to better interpret and demonstrate Pater's 'shifting and impermanent' self.⁵⁶⁷ The crucial difference, according to Smith, lies in 'imaged' and not 'analysed' emotions.⁵⁶⁸ Mansfield's art involves not concealment of her own self but rather transformation of it. Whether we call her approach 'Negative Capability', poetical character, or the impersonal state of creating *Yijing*, there is little question that Mansfield's method is intuitive. Smith also mentions Arthur Symons as a clear influence on Mansfield;⁵⁶⁹ his works substantiate Pater's notion of

⁵⁶⁴ Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare*, 49.

⁵⁶⁵ *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of Keats*, ed. Harold Edgar Briggs (New York: Random House, 1967), 448.

⁵⁶⁶ Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare*, 53.

⁵⁶⁷ Smith, *Literary Life*, 32-33.

⁵⁶⁸ Smith, *Literary Life*, 33.

⁵⁶⁹ Smith, *Literary Life*, 33.

art which captures the ephemeral 'choice moments streaming by, each with some form or tone or mood to be cherished'.⁵⁷⁰ Hugh Kenner explains that Symons' art 'is a passionate attention to transient effects, and an attention which, rescuing them from the flux of time, will render them static, hence pictorial'.⁵⁷¹ By this kind of attention Symons is able to encapsulate a still moment in the play of dark and light, in his short poem 'Pastel':

The light of our cigarettes
Went and came in the gloom:
It was dark in the little room.

Dark, and then, in the dark,
Sudden, a flash, a glow,
And a hand and a ring I know.

And then, through the dark, a flush
Ruddy and vague, the grace
(A rose!) of her lyric face.⁵⁷²

The momentary, simplified, yet intense illumination of an image is also what Ezra Pound captures in his well-known Imagist two-line poem, 'In a Station of the Metro': 'The apparition of these faces in the crowd; Petals on a wet, black bough'.⁵⁷³ Pound's even shorter poem, like Symons', represents chosen images of a moment or mood. Pound, as discussed above, was indirectly informed by Chinese poetry and aesthetics, and he understood the illuminating and intense moment of mood and atmosphere that so many Chinese poets sought to capture. We may also recall Bergson's 'suggested' 'intense aesthetic feeling', which feeling echoes the sentiment expressed in both Symon's and Pound's poems. In both poems there is deletion of all surrounding details so that the central image can be illuminated. This method is analogous to the technique, seen in ancient Chinese watercolours, of leaving vast spaces untouched by paint. According to Kenner, 'Symons is using the darkness as an excuse for leaving things out, as on other occasions he and his allies used mist or twilight'.⁵⁷⁴ Excessive details are concealed in a surrounding atmosphere, so as to highlight a single image transfixed in life, which is 'an affair of quiet moments quietly cherished', writes Kenner. This approach is an '[elevation of] the glimpse into the vision'.⁵⁷⁵ This technique used by Symons and Pound resonates closely with the Chinese aesthetic principle of *Yijing*, and with Mansfield's process of lifting the veil momentarily; she proves that what is done in poetry can also be done in prose. Hiding details in a darkness that surrounds the subject is a method Mansfield frequently adopts, not to dismiss what is in the dark, or mist, or twilight,

⁵⁷⁰ Kenner, 182.

⁵⁷¹ 182.

⁵⁷² Cited in Kenner, 182.

⁵⁷³ Cited in Kenner, 184.

⁵⁷⁴ Kenner, 183.

⁵⁷⁵ Kenner, 183.

but as a means to imply much more that is unseen, unspoken, and untouched behind the curtain of *Yijing*.

Wang's concern with poetic creativity is similar to that of Keats, Pound and Symons, as well as Mansfield. What *Yijing* demands is a balanced state between poetic or prosaic empathy—the 'personal state'—and the self-sacrificial, distant state—the 'impersonal state'. The reward, to use Wang's words, is rich:

If a poet can really see things outside himself with imperturbability he will be able to make slaves of the wind and moon [sensual pleasures]. If, at the same time, he can also see things outside himself with deep concern he will be able to share sorrow and joy with all living things.⁵⁷⁶

The first 'imperturbable' state is the impersonal state. To shape natural elements in such a way that they transmit the poet's or the writer's message is the ultimate achievement of description. Yet Wang suggests that the poet has to simultaneously invest a piece of his/her own emotions into this impersonal representation, so that the kind of empathy produced can touch 'all living things'.

Wang elaborates on the relationship between a physical reality—nature—and a creative reality—literature—by arguing that literature and art are liberated from the restraints that govern the relations between natural objects, indicating that the poetic reality exists above physical reality. However, he also adds that the raw materials of any imaginative venture in literature and art must all come from the natural world, thus framing a mutually restrictive state between reality and creativity.⁵⁷⁷ Wang's idea of literary creation is along the line of what Gumbrecht says about the physical reality of *Stimmung*. Literary or artistic creations must be rooted in the text, which is nature in Wang's case, and written words in Gumbrecht's. *Yijing* includes a dimension of space or landscape, which is a shade of meaning *Stimmung* does not cover, while *Stimmung* emphasizes atmosphere together with musical references, of sound and tuning. *Yijing* in this case is a helpful term that can link external and internal realities in Mansfield's works, while *Stimmung* can further illuminate the musical undertones embedded in her stories. Using both *Stimmung* and *Yijing*, I will investigate Mansfield's tendency to move in and out of the 'personal' and the 'impersonal' states in her creation of mood and atmosphere. Thereafter, I investigate how she reaches 'a state of soul' in harmony or discordance with external realities. A sense of freedom enables her to roam between the descriptive and creative states of different moods and atmospheres, and between the empathetic and objective stances. All these elements, in combination and/or interaction, help give Mansfield's works a sense of 'shaking free', a *Yijing* of fluidity.

⁵⁷⁶ Rickett, 65.

⁵⁷⁷ Rickett, 41-42.

3. 'L'Incendie', 'Vignette: Summer in Winter', and 'Summer Idyll': Creation of *Stimmung* through Omission of and Selective Lighting

Leafing through Mansfield's stories, we encounter numerous appearances of weather in its most literal sense. Inclement, violent, surreal, or tranquil descriptions occur in some of her most well-known stories. But this is not something she adopts all of a sudden when she becomes a mature writer. In one of her early impassioned cries against her home country's aesthetic stagnation, it is as if she wishes a tsunami would come and erase New Zealand's colonial tradition and taste. This criticism appears in a letter to her sister Vera Beauchamp written in 1908, which has been frequently cited as an example of Mansfield's dissatisfaction with New Zealand's tardy cultural and artistic development, and her own awakening and thoughts about the cure for this developmental stasis:

I am ashamed of young New Zealand, but what is to be done. All the firm fat framework of their brains must be demolished before they can begin to learn. They want a purifying influence—a *mad wave* of pre-Raphaelitism, of super-aestheticism, should intoxicate the country. They must go to excess in the direction of culture, become almost decadent in their tendencies for a year or two and then find balance and proportion. We want two or three persons gathered together to discuss line and form and atmosphere and sit at the street corners, in the shops, in the houses, at the Teas.⁵⁷⁸

Mansfield's preoccupation with 'line and form and atmosphere' has already begun when she writes this letter, at the age of only nineteen. To reach this phase of discussing essential elements in art and culture, the young Mansfield argues, New Zealand must go through a decadent purification by going to the extreme by demolishing all colonial notions of art. Mansfield's emotional involvement is apparent: it is as if she wishes for her country to be razed to the ground, and then start completely anew. Only then will 'balance and proportion' be achieved. She expresses a strong sense of confinement by aesthetic and cultural borders; local themes and colours are restrictive and uninspired, and she longs for a metropolitan, a worldly stage upon which many aesthetic ideals will assert their influence. In a way this impassioned cry is an expression of her own declaration of crossing national and artistic borders, trudging into the unknown and experimental territories of creativity.

Many of Mansfield's early stories and vignettes have a blanketing atmosphere, created by or blending with sensuous expressions presented in the tale. This is the young writer's intuitive grasp of atmosphere in its embryonic form. These atmospheric episodes either occupy the entire piece, or are collaged throughout the narrative. The pieces reflect the anxiety of a writer establishing her own creative self through interrogating the voices and eyes of her characters, as well as weaving mood and atmosphere inbetween. Three stories written in 1907 are most exemplary of such negotiations and interactions: 'L'Incendie', 'Vignette: Summer in Winter', and 'Summer Idyll'. All three titles are notably associated with weather or natural elements. These vignettes are often seen as 'Impressionistic', but I

⁵⁷⁸ CLKM, I, 44. My emphasis.

wish to challenge that notion by arguing that in fact mood and atmosphere, or *Stimmung* and *Yijing*, are more relevant concepts than the influence of Impressionism.

The first vignette '*L'Incendie*', describes a spreading fire from a first-person point of view: '[B]lue smoke' progresses like a serpent, and its flames march forward to a 'steady, strong destructive sound' hunger personified, forming a sort of line along which descriptive details are attached.⁵⁷⁹ The short piece resembles a cinematic synthesis of light, colour, movement, sound, and atmosphere. The narrator watches intently, 'fascinated and horrified', at the fast progression of the flames, and asks, 'Shall it be always from my window that I must watch the fire burning? May I not hold the flames in my hand, if only for a little while, and hold them against my heart—and laugh as they fiercely attack it?'⁵⁸⁰ This series of questions betrays the narrator's desire for symbiosis with an external force that is clearly naturalistic and invasive, and difficult, if not impossible, to manoeuvre. Yet she welcomes this force as it consumes her. This passion parallels Mansfield's early cry for a strong dose of 'super-aestheticism' to baptise the nation. Juxtaposed against the illuminating power of this seemingly destructive fire is the domestic scene, which, if read metaphorically, echoes New Zealand's reluctance to move beyond its colonial boundaries in all creative matters. 'From the yards come the piercing incoherent sounds of children at play, and at this evening hour their voices sound thin and old, their crying seeming full of protestation'.⁵⁸¹ Mansfield's desire to merge the self into the fire also prefigures, though in relative vague terms, what she will express to Dorothy Brett many years later of her wilful, creative metamorphosis of becoming the apple or the duck.

It is also worth noting that the 'little Colonial'—as Mansfield later addresses herself—calls her vignette '*L'Incendie*' when she could have easily used an English title. The title implies affinity with cosmopolitanism and Decadent aesthetics. Baudelaire also uses the same French term in the foreword to his *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857). A bush fire was a not uncommon sight in New Zealand's colonial days when settlers used flames to clear land in order to build farms and towns. Yet in Mansfield's version, or should we say subversion, the flames threaten the houses. Her concerns are completely opposite to the country's pragmatic ones. While New Zealand longs for artificial reproductions of England which was still very much her imperial 'home', Mansfield suggests putting not only the young country but also its wild nature at the centre of a creative map. Danger and destruction are welcome to Mansfield; they thrill her as a necessary passage to a higher poetical and creative state where new entities and thoughts can reign supreme.

On a personal level, '*L'Incendie*' may be read as an allegorical expression of the writer's anxiety as she recognises a new creative self preceded by the destruction of her old self. It also hints at an internalisation of, or rather the desire to become one with natural forces; the speaker's heart, to which she longs to cradle the flame of the bush fire, symbolises this internalisation. This desire, as I will show, proves to be the crux of Mansfield's creative power. Yet she also demonstrates in her mature writing an even balance between the voices of her characters and her authorial point-of-view, maintaining both creative and critical ambiguity. According to Daiches, Mansfield is neither liberal with authorial

⁵⁷⁹ CFKM, I, 66.

⁵⁸⁰ CFKM, I, 66.

⁵⁸¹ CFKM, I, 66.

commentary as her predecessors such as Fielding and Thackeray, nor aloof as her contemporary James Joyce.⁵⁸² Striving for *Yijing* tends to position Mansfield in a transient and unstable state. Becoming one with the subject has its advantages and dangers, just like the metaphorical bush fire.

In the same way as the speaker in '*L'Incendie*' identifies with the blaze, the central character of 'In the Botanical Gardens' delights in the native bushes in Wellington's botanical gardens rather than its trimmed edges. She breathes in an 'indefinable scent' that is an organic part of the wilderness, and the scent becomes a part of her. The sensuous trigger evokes imaginary associations with New Zealand's pre-colonial history, and the speaker puts on a new identity, that of 'savagery'. She recognises the artificiality of an 'enclosure' of flowers which appear to be 'too beautiful'.⁵⁸³ Mansfield's true allegiance lies with the wilderness:

And, suddenly, it disappears—all the pretty, carefully-tended surface of gravel and sward and blossom, and there is bush, silent and splendid. On the green moss, on the brown earth, a wide splashing of yellow sunlight. And everywhere that strange, indefinable scent. As I breathe it, it seems to absorb, to become part of me—and I am old with the age of centuries, strong with the strength of savagery.⁵⁸⁴

Still, it is significant that the speaker gains this access to 'the strength of savagery' via the artificiality of the botanical gardens. In her notebooks, Mansfield explains that she chooses for New Zealand the approach of artificiality because only then the country can 'give birth to an artist who can treat her natural beauties adequately'.⁵⁸⁵ 'She recognizes', writes Smith, 'from the beginning of her career that all representation is artifice, and that realism is no more natural than any other artistic mode'.⁵⁸⁶ This revelation leads Mansfield first to look for a Decadent excessiveness, which as we have seen in her early letter she demands of her home country. She transplants Nature into her fabricated settings, and allows fragmentary, incoherent impressions to inhabit her imagination.

The apparent disconnectedness in Mansfield's early vignettes communicates a desire for new creation. Although at this stage Mansfield is beginning to understand the suggestive power of weather, she has not quite mastered interlocking the corners of details—images, sounds, and other descriptive minutia—into a unified mood and atmosphere. Tracing her use of imagery is helpful in seeing the construction of her early work. 'Vignette: Summer in Winter' has a circular structure which begins and ends with the same image of Carlotta, a name she sometimes uses for Maata Mahupuku, projecting light and warmth with her impassioned love song, transforming the room into a symbolic chamber that encapsulates summer. Carlotta's voice conjures up images of 'sunshine and happy flowers'.⁵⁸⁷ As she sings, the narrator draws back the curtain momentarily, to disclose the external reality of winter denoted

⁵⁸² David Daiches, 'Katherine Mansfield, A Critical Essay,' in *The Critical Response to Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Jan Pilditch, 32-41 (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 39.

⁵⁸³ *CFKM*, I, 84.

⁵⁸⁴ *CFKM*, I, 85.

⁵⁸⁵ *Notebooks*, I, 81.

⁵⁸⁶ Smith, *Literary Life*, 31.

⁵⁸⁷ *CFKM*, I, 67.

by images of 'rotting leaves', 'skeleton trees [rattling] together' and 'the wind [tearing] a rose bush from the ground'. The narrator's gaze then returns to the interior 'summer', to Carlotta's singing at the piano.⁵⁸⁸

Mansfield writes of a season within another season by using representations of mental landscapes. Summer, epitomised by Carlotta, includes sensual imagery, while winter outside the window asserts its presence through the 'skeleton trees', representing a lack of passion. This juxtaposition of images that are readily associated with the two seasons brings out the contrasting weather elements. Mansfield repeats a single image—'Carlotta at the piano sang of love'—to begin and end the vignette, with only one word—'passionately'—inserted in the concluding image. This method also gives the tale a circular outline that holds the fluid and almost shapeless content within, granting it a certain degree of stability. The demarcation is further emphasized by the physical partitions of interior and exterior: it is a 'wild Winter afternoon', and the 'heavy curtains' shut out the winter scene outside.⁵⁸⁹ Spaces are separated by mood and light, strengthened via set physical boundaries. Inside the 'walls were hung with daffodil silk', which is reminiscent of warm weather, and 'a faint golden light seemed to linger on [Carlotta's] face.'⁵⁹⁰ As long as the contours of two seasons are clearly drawn, the narrator begins to liberally, or so it seems, dab descriptive details within the lines. But the interior is not completely free from the harsh exterior's influence, for although '[t]here was a little fire of juniper wood buring in the grate', 'the flames cast into the room strange grotesque shadows that leapt upon the walls, the curtains, that lurked under the chairs, behind the lounge', attempting to bring the shadows of 'skeleton trees' and wind-torn rose bush to the interior.⁵⁹¹ There is an undistinguishing fusion of objects, scent, light and shadow that all work together to fabricate an illusory summer within the chamber permeated by Carlotta's presence as she emits the Summer light, 'with almost a noble defiance in her voice', keeps singing the gloom away.⁵⁹² The narrator's weather is territorial and temporal. Mood and atmosphere are ignited by other more tangible sources of association such as sound or light , as well as temperature suggested through them.

In an early piece like 'Summer in Winter' Mansfield describes climate and suggests temperature rather obliquely. She does use 'warm' and 'sunshine' to communicate the temperature within the room, but no mention of such descriptive terms is used to render the winter outside, only Gothic compiling of objects in nature that assume cooler colours. Temperature is suggested through juxtaposition of interior and exterior, through human and domestic sounds and movements within and wild and natural motions without. Light and colour come into play in constructing this dichotomy of temperature: inside everything—even Carlotta herself—seems to emit light, while outside everything absorbs light. The vignette thus is an investigation of the territories of weather in its potent expression and its suggestive powers: the internalised as well as the externalised elements that are both called weather.

⁵⁸⁸ *CFKM*, I, 67.

⁵⁸⁹ *CFKM*, I, 66.

⁵⁹⁰ *CFKM*, I, 66.

⁵⁹¹ *CFKM*, I, 67.

⁵⁹² *CFKM*, I, 67.

Mansfield's concentrated use of weather contributes to the shapelessness of 'L'Incendie' and 'Summer in Winter', for what these vignettes try to capture are very brief moments in time, and it is difficult to adhere mood and atmosphere to pure descriptive writing. David Daiches dismisses Mansfield's early vignettes as merely 'descriptive sketches'.⁵⁹³ Yet Daiches also acknowledges the impact of the right descriptive details. He praises the beginning of 'At the Bay' for its 'adequate visual picture and a sense of atmosphere', and says that these 'descriptive details are informed with life by th[e] impinging of the human mind on their objective passivity'.⁵⁹⁴ To illustrate the vital connection between relevant, not idle descriptions in a story, Daiches remarks

We see the creation of atmosphere by the selection and arrangement of detail lit up by a touch of human imagination. Thus the emotional potentialities of the landscape are indicated. It is not enough for the story-teller to describe a scene for its own sake, leaving it as a passive background for the action. Some relation must be established between the setting and the action, human values must pervade *everything* in a story if it is to be really organic in structure.⁵⁹⁵

Daiches argues that Mansfield's descriptive narratives are 'integral' parts of her stories, though in different ways, compared to the blending of scenic descriptions into their narratives of Hardy and Conrad; Mansfield is especially aware of the emotive connections between the external world and their suggestive powers.⁵⁹⁶ By emphasizing the significance of such powers, Daiches is also stressing a story's atmospheric radiance. Efficient and effective story telling requires that not some but *all* details must be inter-connected; these details are minute 'lights' waiting to be illuminated by 'a touch of human imagination'. Between the details making up the visible action and setting, there is a sort of electrical space in which exists something invisible yet strongly-felt.

In a letter to S. S. Kotliansky Mansfield explains her enjoyment of the minutiae of living that also sheds light upon how she uses details to illuminate the 'larger whole' in her writing. The vitality that the details represent suggests a connectedness between all the minute aspects of life.

The queer thing is that, [...] I can't help living it all, down the smallest details—down to the very dampness of the salt at supper that night and the way it came out on your plate, the exact shape of the salt spoon...

Do you, too feel an infinite delight and value in *detail*—not for the sake of detail but for the life *in* the life of it. I never can express myself (and you can laugh as much as you please.) But do you ever feel as though the Lord threw you into eternity—into the very exact centre of eternity, and even as you plunged you felt every ripple that flowed out from your plunging—

⁵⁹³ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 33.

⁵⁹⁴ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 38.

⁵⁹⁵ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 38.

⁵⁹⁶ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 38.

every single ripple floating away and touching and drawing into its circle every slightest thing it touched.⁵⁹⁷

The details are only important if they are immediately connected to the ‘the life *in* the life of it’, to *joie de vivre*, and an action of full immersion into the centre of the *élan vital* increases the acuity of how everything touched by the ripple is brought closer to the centre of the original plunging force. Mansfield’s passion for the details of life echoes an earlier letter she wrote to her cousin Sylvia Payne, expressing the fascination writing holds for her: ‘Would you not like to try *all* sorts of lives—one is so very small—but that is the satisfaction of writing—one can impersonate so many people—’.⁵⁹⁸ Mansfield’s passion for life and writing feeds both her sensitivity to the smallest change in mood and atmosphere in ordinary life, and her need to create a rippling, enveloping *Stimmung* where the details are tiny yet indispensable steps on the road to a land of atmospheric imaginings.

Daiches’ analysis has a certain resonance to Mansfield’s own appreciation of the kind of writing process that seems to illuminate a story from within—much like Kezia’s little lamp in another story called ‘The Doll’s House’.⁵⁹⁹ ‘Her endeavour’, according to Daiches, ‘is to put the story in a position to illuminate itself; the parts throw light on the whole and the whole throws light on the parts so that, for example, the change at the end puts new meaning into what has gone before, putting everything into a new perspective which we had not been aware of until we arrived at the end’.⁶⁰⁰ This reading offers a much less abstract explanation of the kind of ‘light’ Gunsteren uses to relate Literary Impressionism to Mansfield’s works. Daiches’ attention to the separation as well as the need for unification of ‘parts’ and ‘whole’ also recalls Mansfield’s own flower-and-tree analogy, which is creating *Stimmung* by suggesting the existence of the unseen.

Descriptive details tailored to illuminate the *Stimmung* of a story must become merged with the writer’s emotional and imaginative concerns for the piece. Mansfield’s main criticism of Virginia Woolf’s *Night and Day* is that there is no emotional investment from the author into her story-telling, no ‘prosaic weather’, and no organic descriptive details that are so carefully selected that they turn into intricate, miniature story-telling organisms in themselves. Mansfield compares *Night and Day* to a ship, yet comments that it is inconceivable that it should sail through a storm; after reading it she finds herself perfectly composed, detached, ‘her air of quiet perfection’ with no evidence of any ‘scars’.⁶⁰¹

Her praise for Woolf’s *Kew Gardens* explains why *Night and Day* does not affect her. Mansfield describes *Kew Gardens* as having the air of being ‘bathed’ in a ‘sense of leisure’, ‘as if it were a light, still and lovely, heightening the importance of everything, and filling all that is within her vision with that vivid, disturbing beauty that haunts the air the last moment before sunset or the first moment after

⁵⁹⁷ *CLKM*, I, 192.

⁵⁹⁸ *CLKM*, I, 19.

⁵⁹⁹ In a review of Virginia Woolf’s *Night and Day*, Mansfield criticises the apparent deliberation of arrangement of characters and settings, saying that Woolf ‘traced a circle round them so that they exist and are free within its confines’. The author’s attentive ‘light’ ‘shine[s] at [the characters], but not through them.’ See *NN*, 108-09.

⁶⁰⁰ Daiches, ‘Critical Essay,’ 35.

⁶⁰¹ *NN*, 108.

dawn'.⁶⁰² *Kew Gardens*, according to Mansfield, has a sense of expectancy for the curious and unknown; the world Woolf recreates is 'on tiptoe', for '[a]nything can happen'.⁶⁰³ It is the moment so infinitely close to yet not quite arriving at utterance that charms Mansfield—the hesitations and the sound between audible notes—as well as specificity of details. Mansfield raises the question as to why in the wealth of details that life has to offer, particular images or impressions remain with us, and when revisited, place us in the exact same spot of memory and feeling—a space recreated by purified and pruned particulars.

It happens so often—or so seldom—in life, as we move among the trees, up and down the known and unknown paths, across the lawns and into the shade and out again, that something—for no reason that we can discover—gives us pause. Why is it that, thinking back upon that July afternoon, we see so distinctly that flower-bed? We must have passed myriads of flowers that day; why do these particular ones return? It is true, we stopped in front of them, and talked a little and then moved on. But, though we weren't conscious of it at the time, something was happening—something....⁶⁰⁴

The chosen flower-bed is an example of aesthetic intensity that illuminates while all else blurs and fades. Because of its intensity, this one image is capable of representing all flower-beds. And like Mansfield's aforementioned post-production *Stimmung*, the observers—readers—are not aware of the atmospheric potency until afterwards. The 'something happening' is also a writer's intuitive effort to attach select details to a larger whole. Specificity of detail can immediately recreate a scene of desired *Stimmung*. But instead of lighting up the entire garden, only the chosen flower-bed is granted the concentrated light.

The joy of walking through the kind of gardens described in Woolf's work, and also in the sense of a metaphorical, literary wandering in the seemingly directionless texts, Mansfield suggests, is not only that we can indulge in chosen details designed as centres of attention, but also in a greater hope that these details will lead to a final open space of much bigger and surprising proportions:

The tiny rich minute life of a snail—how [Woolf] describes it! the angular high-stepping green insect—how passionate is her concern for him! Fascinated and credulous, we believe these things are all her concern until suddenly with a gesture she shows us the flower-bed, growing, expanding in the heat and light, filling a whole world.⁶⁰⁵

Mansfield's appreciation of Woolf's *Kew Gardens* springs from her concern for the prosaic 'weather', and her conviction that a meander through the forest is for the purpose of reaching something larger—the surprising delight of the vitality hidden behind a series of details, as she tries to explain it to

⁶⁰² NN, 37.

⁶⁰³ NN, 37.

⁶⁰⁴ NN, 37.

⁶⁰⁵ NN, 37-8.

Koteliansky. Thus descriptive details, trivial as they may seem, should not be dismissed, especially in Mansfield's writing. But these details must not become quarantined, or loosely glued to the background and propped up so that they lose their atmospheric lustre. For Mansfield, 'there is no such isolation of the descriptive element', concludes Daiches.⁶⁰⁶ I would add, for Mansfield there is also no separation between 'weathers': the external phenomenon of nature, and the internal climate of perception and emotion.

Mansfield's appreciation for *Kew Gardens* also explains her *Stimmung*-illuminating process. Take 'Bliss' as an example. The story opens with an inexplicable sensation that Bertha Young experiences. Struggling to articulate the source and content of the sensation, Bertha compiles images that are close analogies for her feelings. We are then wrapped in numerous and seemingly insignificant details: fruit, colours, dress, and pretentious discussions of the arts. All the while Bertha's consciousness keeps referring back to her 'pear tree', which seems to suggest secret desires and warrant timely fulfillment. Yet Mansfield's illumination of the pear trees is as illusory as the dynamic symbol itself, even though Bertha ascribes emotional meaning to the tree. The moment of illumination of the pear tree as Bertha and Miss Fulton gaze at it is followed by the moment of true revelation: Bertha discovers that her husband Harry, contrary to his mocking of Miss Fulton all night, is having an affair with her. As he expresses his adoration, 'his lips curled back in a hideous grin while he whispered: "To-morrow"'.⁶⁰⁷ 'Bliss' thus seems to have the same kind of attention to detail as *Kew Gardens*, until the glimpse of a darkened moment occurs, which in contrast is more conspicuous and centralised than the glaring light and sparkling details that fill the narrative space. Mansfield uses a paradoxical illumination of darkness to create a sudden change of *Stimmung*. She makes great use of details to build up one specific mood only to withdraw it in an instant; all goes dark after a quick gleam, reminiscent of Pound or Symons, of revelation.

Even though the early vignettes do not have what Daiches calls 'organic' weaving of descriptive details and authorial imagination, they are embryos that explain Mansfield's fascination with weather elements that end up being one of her signature features. 'Summer Idyll' can be treated as an attempt to achieve a certain *Stimmung* through the unification of story-telling and illumination of descriptive details. In comparison, Mansfield's 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', argues Daiches, is a story in which '[e]very detail ... is relevant', and '[e]verything has reference to the *mood* of the story, everything is organised so as to bring "the deepest truth out the idea"'.⁶⁰⁸ 'Summer Idyll' differs from 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' in that the former story is hasty in its selection and presentation of details, which therefore are not always reflective of the central message. In 'The Daughters', however, as Daiches analyses, there is a much more reserved, internalised, and 'suppressed' way of arriving at meaning.⁶⁰⁹ Daiches dates the more mechanical use of description to Mansfield's first collection—*In A German Pension and Other Stories*—whereas I believe the experiment for the subtle radiance through

⁶⁰⁶ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 38.

⁶⁰⁷ *CFKM*, II, 151.

⁶⁰⁸ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 39.

⁶⁰⁹ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 39.

Stimmung and descriptive details starts with early vignettes such as 'Summer Idyll'. In fact, it may even be argued that the vignette bears no message at all, but only gestures towards meanings.

W. H. New compares the *German Pension* stories with Mansfield's later works, and introduces two concepts—'take' and 'fragmentation'—to describe two kinds of ending, which are characteristic of stories that possess *Yijing* and those that lack it. Here is where Mansfield's elliptical endings and her seemingly sporadic ellipses within the text come in. New argues that '[if] things cannot be resolved, or even completed for a duration, then they simply stop, and even if they appear to declare a grand truth, the fragmentation of form undercuts the likelihood of order as well as the grandness of vision'.⁶¹⁰ Meaning suggested in the empty spaces can bypass the 'overt comment' and 'reveal' the characters more directly.⁶¹¹ As in Mansfield's paradoxical statement regarding attainment of genuine naturalness through artificiality in representing New Zealand's beauty, her technique in creating *Stimmung* also has to reach a kind of vagueness in order to embrace the more potent irony of suggestive direction.

New's analysis helps to make sense of the vagueness ironically achieved via overt description and statement in 'Summer Idyll'. The short piece describes two young girls—Hinemoa and Marina—in a recognisable New Zealand sea-side setting. Their names are the reverse of their cultural identities: Hinemoa is pakeha and Marina is Maori. In the beginning of the story Hinemoa is presented as an Antipodean Venus experiencing a seaside 'awakening' in the morning, indicating both her inexperience and a sense of expectancy: 'A slow tranquil surrender of the Night Spirits, a knowledge that her body was refreshed and cool and light, a great breath from the sea that skimmed through the window and kissed her laughingly—and her awakening was complete.'⁶¹² From the beginning, the language is sensual and sensuous, with an emphasis on physical stimulus'.⁶¹³ Despite its bloomingly evocative descriptions, however, 'Summer Idyll' is almost too murky a mixture from which to extract clearer meanings, and by clearer I do not mean transparent, superficial, or definite. The story is often read as a parallel of Mansfield's attraction to Maata Mahupuku. According to this reading, which Smith champions, Hinemoa's awakening is manifold. The atmosphere and the sea—'surprisingly gendered as female'—even the manuka-flower infused air all suggest feminine presence, gesturing towards homoerotic attraction between Hinemoa and Marina.⁶¹⁴ I will describe Smith's reading, which certainly sharpens the focus on the sensuality of the story, but argue that the vignette overall seems more preoccupied with hiding than revealing meaning.

According to Smith, Hinemoa's awakening sexuality seeks expression in objects and actions: the manuka flowers, the open-eyed dive into the sea, and the bread and kumera. Smith reads into the colour contrast of the two characters' appearance: Marina is the dark haired initiator, while Hinemoa is called 'Snow Maiden', 'accentuating both their skin colour and Hinemoa's willed innocence in comparison with her friend'.⁶¹⁵ A moment of ecstatic pleasure also occurs, according to Smith, when

⁶¹⁰ W. H. New, *Reading Mansfield and Metaphors of Form* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999),

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⁶¹¹ New, 77.

⁶¹² *CFKM*, I, 67-8.

⁶¹³ Smith, *Literary Life*, 36-7.

⁶¹⁴ Smith, *Literary Life*, 37.

⁶¹⁵ Smith, *Literary Life*, 37.

'Marian throws manuka blossoms at Hinemoa, who cries 'O come quick, come quick' and Marina replies 'I come now', [and] the orgasmic intensity becomes overt.'⁶¹⁶ Marina instructs Hinemoa to plunge into water with her eyes open, yet, comments Smith, '[c]uriously Hinemoa then swims back to the shore and runs to kiss her own image in the mirror', trying to pacify the surprise or fright of the dive.⁶¹⁷ The dive, Smith notes 'seems to be a kind of birthing into both sexuality and Maori life'—an emergence out of symbolic amniotic fluid and baptismal water—'which [Hinemoa] then rejects by panicking and confirming her whiteness by kissing it'.⁶¹⁸ Hinemoa cannot eat the kumara, finding the blue colour it takes on when cooked unnatural, whereas Marina eats it because it turns blue; Smith argues that in this act 'desire for the other is expressed potently, its transgression emphasized by crossing racial and homoerotic boundaries'.⁶¹⁹

But if a story's hidden meanings only become transparent when a critic digs them up, then the writer has perhaps concealed them too well. These details do not immediately solicit association, at least not to an inexperienced reader who is unfamiliar with Mansfield's preoccupation during this early phase of her career. Mansfield's struggle to 'light up' 'Summer Idyll' does not succeed because of the overt nature of her descriptions, which render the details more decorative than suggestive. The story fails to find the right selection and arrangement of details, and therefore fails to construct the blanketing atmosphere of *Stimmung*. Instead it relies on excessive statement or description of theme by a character, consciously or unconsciously. Hinemoa '[loves] to watch [Marina's] complete harmony—it increase[s] her enjoyment', while explaining how she is not like that—'I lack that congruity'—she says.⁶²⁰ And Marina responds, 'It is because you are so utterly the foreign element'.⁶²¹ The resulting attempted *Stimmung* is a thin atmosphere that does not quite envelope the story, but remains vaguely attached to the corners of the page, ready to be wiped away at any moment. If Mansfield is really, as Smith suggests, implying sexual awakening via the reversal of ethnic identities, names, suggestive colours and symbolic actions, then she fails to achieve the right amount of suggestion; the thinner the *Stimmung*, the thicker the fog that conceals meaning. The details do not work clearly enough, but give the vignette an artificial appeal, which indicates that Mansfield is not in an impersonal, creative state. Thus the details, rather than gesturing towards meaning, block much of the light that should shine through the characters' movements and discourse.

Smith comments that the vignette has 'a rather prurient sense of childish sexuality'.⁶²² This is a story where Mansfield relies heavily on physical surroundings to create mood, and where she trims the details too evenly, and leaves them too subdued to be able to reach the kind of bold revelation of sexuality she achieves in 'Bliss' or '*Je ne parle pas français*'. Yet we must remember the Mansfield who wrote 'Summer Idyll' is not the same writer who four years later catches herself '*preening* her feathers', and tells herself: 'Calm yourself. Clear yourself. [...] One must learn, one must practise, to *forget*

⁶¹⁶ Smith, *Literary Life*, 37.

⁶¹⁷ Smith, *Literary Life*, 38.

⁶¹⁸ Smith, *Literary Life*, 38.

⁶¹⁹ Smith, *Literary Life*, 38.

⁶²⁰ *CFKM*, I, 68.

⁶²¹ *CFKM*, I, 68.

⁶²² Smith, *Literary Life*, 37.

oneself. I can't tell the truth about Aunt Anne unless I am free to look into her life without self-consciousness.'⁶²³ This effort to wilfully abandon her conscious self and enter into her character's consciousness recalls both Keats' 'poetical Character' and Wang's 'impersonal state'. Mansfield's later practice of 'forgetting oneself' allows her to stay in unlit territory while giving her subject the most prominent light. The reason why 'Summer Idyll', unlike the other stories discussed in this chapter, is more opaque in its indication of *Stimmung*, may be because of the erotic and personal nature of its suggestions. By the time she wrote 'Bliss' and '*Je ne parle pas français*', Mansfield has gone through her own bohemian, super-aesthetic purification and her fair share of sexual encounters with both genders, and her greater ease about depicting sexuality is shown by how skilfully she reveals only a measured number of erotic details.

One example of this erotic detail will suffice. In both 'Bliss' and '*Je ne parle pas français*' Mansfield uses mirror images that build towards enhancing the overall mood and suggest desire and/or sexual ambiguity. Bertha 'hardly dared to look into the cold mirror', and yet still does look.⁶²⁴ The woman in the mirror is barely recognisable to Bertha herself: 'radiant, with smiling, trembling lips, with big, dark eyes and an air of listening, waiting for something ... divine to happen ... that she knew must happen ... infallibly'.⁶²⁵ Raoul Duquette, too, sees himself in the mirror, wearing 'a blue kimono embroidered with white birds and my hair was still wet; it lay on my forehead, wet and gleaming'. He calls this image a '[p]ortrait of Madame Butterfly [...] on hearing the arrival of *ce cher* Pinkerton'.⁶²⁶ Both mirrored reflections suggest a moment of pause; they offer images with no clear meaning; even though Duquette makes an explicit and appropriate association, his ambivalent attitude towards Mouse complicates this homoerotic image adapted for Dick Harmon. That moment of pause is an open, inviting space for *Stimmung* to reside. The mature Mansfield, unlike in 'Summer Idyll', is no longer rushing things, or packing her narrative with details at every turn.

Similarly, if we read 'Summer Idyll' next to mature pieces such as 'At the Bay' and 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', we see rather clear contrasts between how *Stimmung* is constructed in the later stories. As I discuss above, 'At the Bay' opens with descriptive details that build up until the reader is 'enwrapped in the appropriate atmosphere'.⁶²⁷ A process like the gradual movement of fog soon dictates the exclusive domain of our imagination, so much so that we can plunge into the present-ness of Crescent Bay. The use of the fog is crucial in initiating the *Stimmung* of 'At the Bay'. In 'Summer Idyll', in contrast, Mansfield chooses to start with the abstract awakening of a character, yet in the attempt to layer the opening scene with implication of sexual awakening, the details become distracting.

'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' also has a more mature and relevant construction of details. The story, remarks Daiches,

⁶²³ JKM, 269.

⁶²⁴ CFKM, II, 142.

⁶²⁵ CFKM, II, 142.

⁶²⁶ CFKM, II: 122.

⁶²⁷ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 38.

... shows Katherine Mansfield in another mood, but is equally typical of her method of creating atmosphere. ... Here again the main feature is the quiet arrangement of detail, and purely by means of effective arrangement every ounce of meaning is squeezed out of slight and casual incidents. Nothing is superfluous, nothing is mere decoration or trimming, everything has its part to play in producing the required effect.⁶²⁸

Details in 'The Daughters'—food, surroundings, resurrected images of past, and the sisters' discussion of action yet never performing it—contribute to the overall mood of the story. It is precisely because of the *necessity* of these details that 'At the Bay' and 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' are able to produce their respective atmospheres, a changing one for the first story and a stable one for the second. But a close reading of 'Summer Idyll' leaves a troublesome impression of not necessarily meaningless specifics, but details that are closer to 'decoration or trimming'. Other than Smith's reading of homoerotic suggestions embedded in the vignette's decorative details, there seems to be no coherent or memorable *Stimmung*. Without a covering net of such *Stimmung* that enables Mansfield's mature works to awaken the senses in the reader, we see merely a direct and almost forced revelation of the awakening of the characters.

When she wrote 'Summer Idyll', therefore, Mansfield was yet to learn the paring-down process that Matisse and Fergusson exemplify in their work: the fundamental Modernist approach, which I have discussed before, of ultra-simplification of details that focuses the light upon the essential lines and features of a piece. An original drawing by Matisse dated 1901 was exhibited in 'Rare Works by Bloomsbury and Others' at Aidan Meller Gallery in Oxford in July 2014.⁶²⁹ This exhibition put on show rarely seen sketches, lithographs and prints by both leading figures of the Bloomsbury group, as well as their European counterparts. Matisse's drawing does not look at all like his mature works, with which I was more familiar. There are two images on each side of this paper: on the front is a head of an African man in detail, and next to it a simplistic rendering of the essential lines that capture the man's main features. On the other side a nude female figure drawn in the classical style, and next to her the same figure, except all descriptive details are removed to leave behind what is still very much the recognizable lines of the same figure. I began a discussion with the curator. My main question was whether this drawing signifies a transition from Matisse's classical training to the utterly simplified, Fauvist style, deliberately childlike in its representation, that we associate with him. The curator agreed, saying that this particular rare drawing by the artist demonstrates a thinking process that gives supremacy to deletion rather than addition, and so exemplifies a sophisticated Modernist style.

Entailed in this simplifying process is also the notion of defamiliarization, a technique that artists such as Matisse and Fergusson use to extract the strange from ordinary everyday imagery, and transform the hackneyed into something shockingly simple and fresh. Mansfield's abandonment of 'trimmings and decorations' as she develops her own art form is as much an emulating of these Fauve

⁶²⁸ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 39.

⁶²⁹ Original Drawing by Henri Matisse, item 41 (1901), Aidan Meller Fine Paintings. Visited 19 July 2014. The images are available at <http://www.aidanmeller.com/> under 'Artists—Matisse, Henri—Original Drawings'. Accessed: 7 April, 2015.

artists as it is a re-creating process. Sydney Cox comments that when reading Mansfield, '[y]ou have to see the things she shows as if you had never encountered the class of things to which each belongs, or you don't see what she is showing you at all. Your organism has to *invent* responses continuously as you read'.⁶³⁰ Tracing Mansfield's maturing treatment of mood and atmosphere, it becomes clearer that her work gradually assumes more confidence as she replaces full representation—the overt piling up of details and exclamations—with omission and suppression. This may be another way of explaining how the Mansfieldian 'light' works: if we liken such omission to a darkening of things that need not yet be visible, then the light of attention falls only where Mansfield truly wants us to look. Cox appreciates that Mansfield 'was able to make her stories disciplined in making sense of random details because she went beyond most writers of fiction in identifying herself with the fragmentary perceptions out of which her imagination was composing a cosmos, and generating the microcosmic samples that were her stories'.⁶³¹ The 'random details' that Mansfield harvests from the world of experience are specific nerve ends that are designed, placed at calculated positions in a body of work; they receive and transmit impressions, feelings and sensuous data which they always 'reinv[en][t]' for the readers of her specified designs. Mansfield's writing process is a 'sampling' of the most stimulating details, personal and fastidious, behind which a much larger whole is screened. Illumination of atmospheric light does not involve placing individual light bulbs upon the head of each character, or each object, but rather selecting what to highlight and what to hide. Contrast of light and dark is more meaningful and effective than pure brightness. A balance of omission and presentation, of suppression and expression is also a much appreciated approach to poetic *Yijing* in Wang Guowei's discourse.

What Mansfield aims to achieve with the early vignettes is aptly summarised by another Modernist, Joseph Conrad, who equally excels in creating mood and atmosphere. He explains the aim of writing is 'by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see!'.⁶³² The early vignettes have their merits even if sometimes we miss what Mansfield wishes to show us. But as W. H. New argues, the '[e]xternal description, dialogue, symbolic imagery, plot' in these early pieces 'became trial structures on which to hang possibilities'.⁶³³ Thanks to these experimentations, which are like Michelangelo's unfinished carvings, Mansfield's evolving practice is revealed. 'Throughout she is concerned with the effects of phrasing', writes New, 'and the stories rapidly (if not consistently) show the writer learning the suggestiveness of nuance, the restrictions of conventional form, and the limits of wit'.⁶³⁴ These early writings, according to New, 'provide a ready example of the preliminary ways that Mansfield acquired the craft of prose, and a glimpse of words in the process of becoming writing'.⁶³⁵ But at the same time they also demonstrate a process of tuning half sounds and indiscernible notes into pertinent mood and atmosphere. *Stimmung* is crucial in accessing multiple

⁶³⁰ Sydney Cox, 'The Fastidiousness of Katherine Mansfield,' *The Sewanee Review* 39, no. 2 (1931), 158-169 (p. 162). My emphasis.

⁶³¹ Cox, 168.

⁶³² Joseph Conrad, Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1979), 147.

⁶³³ W. H. New, *Reading Mansfield and Metaphors of Form* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 43.

⁶³⁴ New, 43.

⁶³⁵ New, 43.

sensory channels because of its all-encompassing elasticity. The story teller needs to amalgamate elements of weather with character, yet still maintain a stabilising contour, and access each sphere's suggestive gestures without overtly explicit expressions. Mansfield's early vignettes have traces of all these elements that are to be more masterfully wielded in her later stories.

4. Impermanence and Sudden Changes of *Stimmung*: 'The Singing Lesson' and 'The Wind Blows'

Mansfield's more mature attempts to create *Stimmung* are marked by two particular aspects: capturing the evanescence of mood, and unexpected transitions from one atmosphere to another. Vincent O'Sullivan sums up the first outstanding feature of Mansfield's writing as 'impermanence, that flickering of mood and atmosphere which, in the majority of the stories, prevents any feeling or perspective from lasting more than a short time in the narrative, or more than a few paragraphs in the text.'⁶³⁶ The 'flickering of mood and atmosphere' represents an important aspect of Mansfield's *Yijing*. As David Daiches notes, she writes about rather small things, yet these things almost always suggest larger visions.

There is always this ultimate reference to life in its wider aspect, though it does not take the form of the description of the most impressive or superficially the most 'significant' elements in life. It is not the course of the action itself that has this connection, but, in so many cases, this element of *change* which links up her stories with general human activity.⁶³⁷

Flickering of mood or change of atmosphere often find their way into Mansfield's best stories, those that synchronise description to the narrative pulse. As Mansfield confesses herself, she tries to achieve an effect similar to a momentary lifting of the veil, and to capture change in its most memorable instant. Mansfield's veil analogy includes movement, and capturing the still in the moving or vice versa is essential to *Yijing*, because each approach seeks to extract the less visible world in order to present it to the visible. The momentary revelation, in its suppressed descriptive method, suggests to the mind's eye more mysterious imaginings beyond the visible. *Yijing* or *Stimmung* is created by what is revealed, but more so by what is hidden; the visible and the invisible are connected via suggestive details that are all included within the *Stimmung*—the larger whole. If 'prosaic weather' is a representational means to render scenes and complete atmospheric impressions, then the impermanence and change are alternate routes subtly setting up track lights that provide guidance to meaning, creating an atmosphere that elevates and covers the whole story.

Daiches categorises Mansfield's early pieces from *In a German Pension and Other Stories* as sarcastic sketches that employ 'mechanical' change. 'The Sister of the Baroness', for instance, ends with the arrival of the actual Baroness, revealing that her 'sister', whom the pension staff and guests

⁶³⁶ Vincent O'Sullivan, 'The Magnetic Chain: Notes and Approaches to K.M.' in *The Critical Response to Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Jan Pilditch, 129-155 (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 139.

⁶³⁷ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 33.

have been wooing and pampering ,is in fact the daughter of her dressmaker who travels with the Baroness's son. 'The change comes suddenly' remarks Daiches, and the melodramatic concluding comment, 'Tableau grandissimo!' does not offer 'further insight into the reality of the situation'—something that never occurs in Mansfield's mature fiction.⁶³⁸ W.H. New calls this a 'take', by which he means an inserted authorial comment or the overt expression of theme by the character or narrator at the end of a story. Other examples in Mansfield's earlier stories is the 'I wondered' that closes 'The Modern Soul'. Longer, but bearing the same function, is the final line of 'A Truthful Adventure': 'Oh, a very different light indeed,' I answered, shaking my head at the familiar guide book emerging from Guy's pocket'.⁶³⁹ This method may work well with the satirical tone of the *German Pension* stories, but because of its form of closure assumes security via a narrator's point of view, it seals off other possibilities and further associations.⁶⁴⁰ The mechanical change is not transformation or transition of *Stimmung*. Instead, it repeats the mistake of 'Summer Idyll' in a different way, filling out imaginative and descriptive space with comments or descriptions too densely to leave any air for *Stimmung*. A number of stories in the *German Pension* collection generally reflect this mechanical feature of movement that expels or cancels the presence of mood and atmosphere. Such creative contention is consistent with Mansfield's anxiety over related artistic concerns, discussed in my previous chapters: her struggles with colours as the stories transmit a sense of colourlessness, and with 'mechanical' and not 'rhythmical' repetitions.

From the analyses of Daiches and New we can distinguish the different effects between overt statement of theme and the suppressed, elliptical undertone of *Yijing*. A close reading of two stories written at about the same time—'The Singing Lesson' and 'The Wind Blows'—will further illustrate this opposition, and make sense of Mansfield's success in creating *Stimmung* in her more subtly suggestive stories such as 'Prelude' and 'At the Bay'. Both 'The Singing Lesson' and 'The Wind Blows' centre around one main character's altering state of mind, yet the first story has a more mechanical and superficial representation of change bordering on the sentimental.

Miss Meadows, a music teacher at a girls' school, has received a note from her fiancé Basil, ending their engagement. The entire story is rendered via Miss Meadows' projection onto her surroundings of her emotions, first distressed and then enlivened when a telegram arrives expressing Basil's change of heart. Thus for the majority of this story, the everyday details are filtered through Miss Meadows' tinted emotional lenses. Objects are delineated through Miss Meadows' eyes, and the story uses New's 'take' technique (mentioned above), even though it does not have the same kind of closed ending as some of the *German Pension* stories:

Every note was a sigh, a sob, a groan of awful mournfulness. [...]

Music's Gay Measure, wailed the voices. The willow trees, outside the high, narrow windows, waved in the wind. They had lost half their leaves. The tiny ones that clung wriggled

⁶³⁸ Daiches, 'Critical Essay,' 33.

⁶³⁹ New, 76.

⁶⁴⁰ New, 76.

like fishes caught on a line. ‘... I am not a marrying man....’ The voices were silent; the piano waited.

‘Quite good,’ said Miss Meadows, but still in such a strange, stony tone that the younger girls began to feel positively frightened.⁶⁴¹

The willow trees form a particularly empathic distraction, in their withering and limping movement. The excessive extent of Miss Meadows’ emotional colouring completely erases any narrative subtlety. Mood and atmosphere are created not in the personal state, but externally through descriptions that ‘clutter the lines’ where the centre has already been illuminated. Even her pupil’s ritual chrysanthemum that she usually receives with graciousness and ‘tuck[s] into her belt’ is completely ignored, and Miss Meadows instructs her students ‘in a voice of ice’.⁶⁴² Emotions are very artificially reproduced. As Bergson would intimate, such descriptions are ‘caused’, and not suggested, or mirrored.

It seems an obvious and easy thing to do: facilitating change through a character’s emotional ups and downs, and enhancing this effect by the element of music. Yet complete reliance upon such a technique easily leads to sentimentalism, and not to an inductive *Stimmung*. By entrusting excessive portions of the character’s feelings to description of the emotions, Mansfield runs the risk of shedding light only temporarily upon her character and plot. Once her pen is removed, she leaves the story in motionlessness and darkness. No mood and atmosphere can be created by measuring a narrative space and occupying it inch by inch with solid descriptive substance; there is no air, no ‘charm’, and no electric spark in-between actions to solicit the light of imagination. What happens in ‘The Singing Lesson’, in terms of subjectively tinting the narrative, is very close to Wang’s idea of the overly-personal poet, who views everything in terms of himself until everything ‘take[s] on his own colouring’.⁶⁴³ Rickett further explains this ‘personal state’ in the context of Chinese poetics: ‘[poets] used objects of nature to express their emotions but because they were so wrapped up in their own problems they looked on everything around them as an extension of their feelings. Thus everything they described had something of their own “colouring” in it. Their own presence dominated any description of the scene.’⁶⁴⁴ This pathetic fallacy, Rickett points out, is also a major concern in Wang’s disapproval of overt use of metaphor, allusion and personification. In Wang’s critique of a poem centred on the beauty of lotus flowers, for example, images such as ‘dancing gowns’, ‘green umbrellas’, and ‘jade-like faces’ are used.⁶⁴⁵ These ‘may be lovely images in themselves but, according to Wang Guowei, they obscure the reader’s view of the lotus’—the real thing on which the poem should focus.⁶⁴⁶ Rickett comments that the reason behind Wang’s disapproval is that ‘excessive use of metaphors and allusions clutter[s] up the lines and prevent[s] the reader from seeing the object directly’.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴¹ *CFKM*, II, 236-37.

⁶⁴² *CFKM*, II, 236.

⁶⁴³ Rickett, 41.

⁶⁴⁴ Rickett, 15.

⁶⁴⁵ Rickett, 29.

⁶⁴⁶ Rickett, 29.

⁶⁴⁷ Rickett, 29.

Music is often used in Mansfield's works to indicate transitions of the character's emotional states. Yet as music in 'The Singing Lesson' directly reflects Miss Meadows' mood, the metaphorical 'lotus' is not obscured by layers of personification but only made too visible, so visible that it loses the mysterious lustre of *Yijing*. 'The Singing Lesson' employs the more literal sense of *Stimmung* with its implication of 'Stimme' and 'stimmen'. And like the final comment in 'The Sister of the Baroness', 'The Singing Lesson' loses its 'charm' because no extended imaginary space is left. The change of atmosphere also comes in a predictable way: Miss Meadows receives Basil's telegraph which expresses his regret of yesterday's message. And Miss Meadows, '[on] the wings of hope, of love, of joy', '[speeds] back to the music hall, up the aisle, up the steps, over to the piano.'⁶⁴⁸ Affective gestures and details end the story in a seemingly upbeat tone as Miss Meadows picks up the same yellow chrysanthemum and puts it to her lips to cover her smile.⁶⁴⁹ Her voice also changes from icy to 'full, deep, glowing with expression'. The more adjectives used, the more atmospheric changes are described and not implied, the less the story impresses with *Stimmung*.

All these descriptions led by Miss Meadows' magnified inner thoughts easily obscure a significant point of irony. If we focus on it more closely, without the distraction of the story's decorative details, the letter Basil writes to Miss Meadows suggests that he is homosexual:

'I feel more and more strongly that our marriage would be a mistake. Not that I do not love you. I love you as much as it is possible for me to love any woman, but, truth to tell, I have come to the conclusion that I am not a marrying man, and the idea of settling down fills me with nothing but—' and the word 'disgust' was scratched out lightly and 'regret' written over the top.'⁶⁵⁰

Another truth is revealed in atmospheric darkness and solitude, when things are not so brightly lit by narrative lights. Miss Meadows begs for a minimum amount of affection: 'I don't mind how much it is. Love me as little as you like.'⁶⁵¹ She realises that Basil does not love her, yet she still willingly compromises her happiness for a lie in order to keep up appearances. Everything explicitly illuminated—Miss Meadows' mood changes, the musically expressed turns of *Stimmung*, and the girls' affection towards their teacher—are a façade hiding, perhaps too well, that the life Miss Meadows' envisions for her and Basil cannot truly exist. Yet this poignant realisation drowns in a sea of banal decorations. Of course we could argue that it is precisely because Mansfield hides this crucial message so well in the cluster of distracting descriptions that the revelation of the truth is so painful; the darkened moments of truth paradoxically stand out more against the array of deliberately, artificially bright details.

Overall, however, 'The Singing Lesson', through its mechanical change of mood, lingers in what Wang Guowei calls a 'descriptive state' and not a 'creative state'. In a way Mansfield almost needs to make darkness brighter than the spurious glitter surrounding Miss Meadows in order to defamiliarise

⁶⁴⁸ *CFKM*, II, 239.

⁶⁴⁹ *CFKM*, II, 239.

⁶⁵⁰ *CFKM*, II, 236.

⁶⁵¹ *CFKM*, II, 238.

expectation of a usual conception of mood and atmosphere. The subject of 'The Singing Lesson' is not fecund material for the creation of *Stimmung* because the story line is predictable, and perhaps it will be an illustration of how *Yijing* does not work for all subjects. If we recall 'The Woman at the Store' and similar stories, we can see her success in purposefully highlighting insignificant details and leaving other perhaps essential information or imagery with the scantiest illumination. This is the 'decentralisation of design' that Sadler detects in Rice's paintings, decentralisation that throws off a preconceived notion of *Stimmung* and directs more unexpected attention to places where we do not normally look.⁶⁵² Though 'The Singing Lesson' may not be among the best of Mansfield's works rich in elements of *Stimmung*, it illustrates her working method. The story makes a good companion for the more successful and *Stimmung*-infused stories, and instead of demonstrating what does work, sheds light upon dead ends. 'The Singing Lesson' not only lacks the kind of sudden turn of *Stimmung*, but also it needs an element of 'impermanence'. When descriptions fully occupy the canvas of the imagination, everything is grounded and more tangible so that no momentary 'flickering' can be allowed. What is lacking is organic synchronicity of 'weather' with the characters and the story's alterations of mood.

But when Mansfield shifts just enough away from a purely affective, mechanical and descriptive mode, and finds the right balance of suggestion where hidden meanings can be endlessly explored and savoured, a more intact *Stimmung* covers the story. There is no better example of the kind of change subordinating and seamlessly blending with the overall *Stimmung* than 'in The Wind Blows'. This story not only has a weather element that simultaneously resonates and conflicts with the main character Matilda's inner mood, but also a sudden switch of atmosphere from violence and exaggeration to tranquillity and nostalgia, as Matilda's adolescent anxiety is restored to normal proportions. The story is characterised by a prevailing sense of instability, in Matilda, an anxious young girl who is experiencing constant change herself, and in the wind, which brings with it a strong sense of the present with its unpredictable and immediate interruptions. 'The Wind Blows' weaves natural and external weather seamlessly with the psychological and internal adolescent turbulence of Matilda.

The story opens with Matilda's sudden awakening, but without lingering too long upon her consciousness. The wind then sweeps in, creating a series of snapshots of people and objects all under its influence: 'shaking the house, rattling the window, banging a piece of iron on the roof and making her bed tremble. Leaves flutter past the window, up and away; down in the avenue a whole newspaper wags in the air like a lost kite and falls, spiked on a pine tree.'⁶⁵³ And Matilda, 'not daring to look in the glass', 'begins to plait her hair with shaking fingers.'⁶⁵⁴ Traces of Mansfield's early techniques from the vignettes are found in 'The Wind Blows', for example, the contrasting atmosphere of the weather inside and outside the house, built up by associations and juxtapositions of temperature and sound, recalls 'Summer and Winter'. Outside is the virulent wind, and echoes of her mother's reprimanding shouts, but inside Matilda's piano teacher Mr Bullen's place are familiar and comforting smells and his kind voice. For Matilda, her home appears more foreign and hostile compared to Mr Bullen's, so much so that the former location is almost assimilated to the wind outside, and filled with the same commotion. Mr

⁶⁵² Sadler, 17.

⁶⁵³ *CFKM*, II, 226.

⁶⁵⁴ *CFKM*, II, 226.

Bullen's house, on the contrary, is a warm, quiet 'cave' where Matilda's own mood becomes calm with the hypnotising atmosphere within the closed windows and half-drawn blinds.

Instead of taking on the author's own colouring of things, 'The Wind Blows' allows the character's consciousness to be viewed in terms of her own surroundings, and refrains from excessive description or statement. Matilda's heightened senses transform the reality around her, and in her anxious and rebellious state she demonstrates a teenage defiance towards authority. Although Matilda thinks that life is 'hideous' and 'revolting, simply revolting', she very rarely states her thoughts in the way the characters in the *German Pension* collection do. Matilda's adolescent distress is blown out of proportion, which is manifested in the weather synchronised with her mood. Sensuous borders are crossed, from the auditory to the visual, as Matilda rehearses the Beethoven 'minor movement' in her head; the text is broken by an elliptical space; and then

... Marie Swainson runs into the garden next door to pick the 'chrysanthus' before they are ruined. Her skirt flies up above her waits; she tries to beat it down, to tuck it between her legs while she stoops, but it is no use—up it flies. All the trees and bushes beat about her. She picks as quickly as she can, but she is quite distracted. She doesn't mind what she does—she pulls the plants up by the roots and bends and twists them, stamping her foot and swearing.

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The images of Marie's skirt lifted by the wind and her cursing and stamping fit well with Matilda's own indignation. It is as if the wind—Matilda's externalised weather—is blowing away all domestic decencies, those rules and trammels against which Matilda struggles so impatiently. As she is ready for her music lesson, and tries to leave wearing her 'old tam and slip[ping] out the back way', Mother tries to stop her:

'Matilda. Matilda. Come back im-me-diatly! What on earth have you got on your head? It looks like a tea cosy. And why have you got that mane of hair on your forehead.'

'I can't come back, Mother. I'll be late for my lesson.'

'Come back immediately!'

She won't. She won't. She hates Mother. 'Go to hell,' she shouts, running down the road.⁶⁵⁶

Both Marie's billowing skirt and the 'tea cosy' hat are featured in the film production *Bliss: The Beginning of Katherine Mansfield*. Perhaps the producer also recognised these details as appropriate for depicting Mansfield's own struggle as she wishes a Decadent storm would take over New Zealand.

Matilda's adolescent crush transforms her surroundings again as she enters Mr Bullen's class. Music is used to suggest the movement from her impatience to her stormy affection which seems so

⁶⁵⁵ CFKM, II, 226.

⁶⁵⁶ CFKM, II, 227.

insignificant to Mr Bullen. Beethoven, for instance, is chosen to match the weather. But the same music takes on different moods as Matilda's physical and psychological state changes from unease to relaxation and release. The same musical notes take on atmospheric colours: in the howling wind Matilda hears the minor movement of the Beethoven playing in her head, 'the trills long terrible like little rolling drums', but at Mr Bullen's, they sound only like 'little drums', and the 'crotchets and quavers are dancing up and down the stave like little black boys on a fence'.⁶⁵⁷ To her amplified senses, all physical details and actions take on a subjective hue, and she chooses to focus on details that can most intensify her emotions as I have underlined below:

Mr Bullen looks over at her and half smiles.

'Sit down,' he says. 'Sit over there in the sofa corner, little lady.'

How funny he is. He doesn't exactly laugh at you ... but there is just something. ... Oh, how peaceful it is here. She likes this room. It smells of art serge and stale smoke and chrysanthemums ... there is a big vase of them on the mantelpiece behind the pale photograph of Rubinstein ... *à mon ami Robert Bullen* Over the black glittering piano hangs 'Solitude'—a dark tragic woman draped in white, sitting on a rock, her knees crossed, her chin on her hands.⁶⁵⁸

The ellipses suggest both an interruption of thoughts and Matilda's reluctance to acknowledge that Mr Bullen is overtly kind to her because he is aware of her crush, and therefore adopts a patronising attitude. Matilda must have been conscious of her own feelings and how they may have appeared to Mr Bullen, for as she observes Mr Bullen leaning over the other female student, who becomes embarrassed, Matilda thinks: 'The stupid—she's blushing! How ridiculous!'⁶⁵⁹ Mansfield acutely captures the moment of irony when a character despises the same traits in another which she possesses herself. In 'The Tiredness of Rosabel', Rosabel also demonstrates impatience towards both the romantic novel and its reader, while her own fantasy consists of a scenario nearly identical to the one she dismisses.

What happens in 'The Wind Blows' is the creation of silence within the ellipses; this silence points towards *Stimmung* and prevents complete suffocation of association. For Mansfield could have filled these spaces with proclamations, descriptions and statements of Matilda's feelings. But everything is suggested through the trembling notes, fingers and lips which then resonate with Matilda's emotions, with what she registers with her eyes, and with the overall tone of this story. The wind is repeatedly referred to, between descriptive details, interior monologues and actions, to further highlight a prevailing sense of weather. These details are not obvious or obtrusive awnings that shelter the story, but rather flickerings of a golden thread that are woven into the fabric of the story's *Stimmung*, making appearances only at the command of the 'larger whole'.

⁶⁵⁷ CFKM, II, 228.

⁶⁵⁸ CFKM, II, 227.

⁶⁵⁹ CFKM, II, 227.

The ending is a calming flash forward as Matilda descends from her windswept adolescence, and adjusts her pubescent anxiety to fit a steadier perspective. Up until this point 'The Wind Blows' has consistently conveyed a sense of immediacy that is fuelled by the wind, yet the ending diffuses this violent impetus and replaces it with a normative view and nostalgic tone:

A big black steamer with a long loop of smoke streaming, with the portholes lighted, with lights everywhere, is putting out to sea. The wind does not stop her; she cuts through the waves, making for the open gate between the pointed rocks that leads to⁶⁶⁰

It is as if the wind has blown the intervening time away. The wind passes, as transient as Matilda's adolescent emotions; it is more important as an atmospherically expressive and flexible structural device, to build up mood for the story, than a symbol. The wind 'does not stop' the 'big black steamer', nor does it stop Matilda from coming through her exaggerated youthful storm which once seemed all too overpowering.

The focus of the story shifts from the discordant chaos of the internal and external weather to a moment of near blankness, of vulnerability and interpretive potential. The ending is suggestive as it communicates a sense of 'impermanence'. In this tranquil moment the ship in sight is lit by lights from within herself, and the story concludes with an immediate arrival of darkness that 'stretches a wing over the tumbling water'. Change of *Stimmung* happens both suddenly and subtly, in this unexpected, almost stealthy intrusion of a time and place removed from Matilda's once 'dreadful' reality. The arrangement is analogous to a concluding *diminuendo*, the fall of the curtain, or the final gleaming of light seen through the clouds driven across the sky; the ship is finally left alone in quiet solitude as all else goes dark.

In others of Mansfield's stories, mood and atmosphere are not in accordance with characters' states of mind, as they are with Matilda's. Sudden changes of *Stimmung* are used to produce discordance and sometimes even humour, as well as harmony. In stories such as 'The Stranger' and 'The Man without a Temperament', *Stimmung* is communicated through a sudden halt of all conversational or active movement. These stories both end with an exclamation; in 'The Stranger' the last line is Harold's thought, and 'The Man' closes with Robert's ambiguous 'Rot!' uttered under his breath. These endings recall the 'Tableau grandissimo!' of 'The Sister of the Baroness'—which New calls a 'take'—but they are essentially different. These closing remarks are gradually darkened moments of despair and ambiguity, and neither comes from a narrator who is only too eager to close the scene. In 'Miss Brill', we can almost hear the texture of *Stimmung* snap as Miss Brill is suddenly pulled out of her own illusory play, and all her bright internal light recedes into darkness, including her beloved fox fur. In 'The Garden Party', the glittering sunny light suddenly transforms into death's sombre hue. And in 'Feuille d'Album', Ian French the painter indulges his imaginations in clusters of carefully aligned details associated with a girl who lives in the building across the street, and constantly fantasises about their future life together. Finally he follows her home one night, and the encounter is only described to the point of subtle humour where Ian says, 'Excuse me, Mademoiselle, you dropped

⁶⁶⁰ CFKM, II, 229.

this', and hands her an egg. All authorial comment is refrained from, leaving us to recall and supplement the final strokes that finish the story's *Yijing*.

As these examples show, Mansfield's prosaic weather can take on sophisticated and varied forms; it is not restricted to naturalistic weather, nor does she rely on climate phenomena alone to create atmosphere. I am not arguing that Mansfield has one universal formula for setting up mood and atmospheric changes, but rather that one of her finest skills is the delicacy with which she navigates different types of *Stimmung*. Sometimes her stories have inconclusive endings with lingering impressions of her created *Yijing*, where, as in the case of the ellipses in 'The Wind Blows', everything retreats into silence, darkness, or simply vanishes—'A bend in the road and the whole place disappeared'.⁶⁶¹ But on the other hand she on occasion also chooses short, sharp words or sentences to draw a concluding parenthesis, while ensuring that these pauses are not final enough to curtail all imaginings built along the creation of mood and atmosphere. There are many ways to achieve an enveloping atmosphere in her best stories, but almost all of these stories cannot do without the fine tuning of *Stimmung*, or the constant check of balances between her 'descriptive state' and 'creative state'. In unexpected reverses of mood and atmosphere, Mansfield creates transitions from one *Yijing* to another, giving us memorable alterations of *Stimmung* at every sudden turn, yet still manages to safely land our expectations in the end.

5. A 'State of Soul': Contrarities and Harmonies between the Creative/Descriptive State and the Personal/Impersonal State

Creation of varied yet specific *Yijing* requires more than a superficial impression of a covering atmosphere. If this atmospheric or mysterious covering were Mansfield's sole creative concern, then her works could be appropriately described as Impressionistic or as falling under the banner of Literary Impressionism. This is not the case, however; there is much more involved than the ephemeral mist of mood and atmosphere. Deeply rooted in Mansfield's creative impulse is the recognition of multiple selves, as well as anxiety over balancing these selves. In a journal entry from April 1920, Mansfield responds to the clichéd use of Shakespeare's famous dictum of 'To thine own self be true': 'True to oneself! which self? Which of my many—well really, that's what it looks like coming to—hundreds of selves?'⁶⁶² This quote is used by many Mansfield scholars to support arguments for her chameleon nature, seen in her ability both to be a 'born actress and mimic'—as Ida Baker puts it—and to transfer this ability into her writing. Creatively speaking, Mansfield acknowledges two selves that need balancing and merging: an impermanent or becoming self and a permanent or essential self. Both serve in the process of achieving *Yijing*, which as discussed above entails a personal and an impersonal state.

In her notebook Mansfield writes about the contrariety between the ideal and the real, and between an artist's vision and creation:

⁶⁶¹ *CFKM*, I, 276.

⁶⁶² *JKM*, 205.

... reality cannot become the ideal, the dream, and it is not the business of the artist to grind an axe, to try and impose his vision of Life upon the existing world. Art is not an attempt to reconcile existence with his vision: it is an attempt to create his own world *in* this world. That which suggests the subject to the artist is the unlikeness of it to what we accept as reality. We single out, we bring into the light, we put up higher.⁶⁶³

Mansfield acknowledges the distance between the ideal and the real, and also, more importantly, the artist's ability to extract the strange from the commonplace and then recreate a higher artistic reality. The artistic collective, as Mansfield's metaphor suggests, selects and illuminates. Here Mansfield seems to anticipate Daiches' argument that not only choosing the right details, but also arranging them in appropriate sequence, is crucial to the creation of mood and atmosphere in Mansfield's works.⁶⁶⁴ Her seemingly contradictory statement can be further illustrated via Wang Guowei's distinction between the 'creative state' and the 'descriptive state'. The 'descriptive state' is close to the artistic practice Mansfield rejects, namely imposing or directly transferring the artist's vision onto the existing world. In contrast, the 'creative state' has more in common with what Mansfield sees as the productive or renewing visions of an artist, which are rooted in reality yet distorted and re-presented in a different light. Smith refers to the first type of practice as characteristic of Impressionism, and the second as Fauvist, concluding that '[b]oth writer and painter discover mundane things by singling them out, "putting up higher", revealing vital similarities and rhythms'.⁶⁶⁵

Smith suggests that upsetting the usual hierarchy of perceived reality in order to grasp life's essential lines and then transform them into art is what links Fergusson's and Mansfield's aesthetic principles, for 'Mansfield sees as Fergusson paints'.⁶⁶⁶ What Smith argues as 'an essential link between the surface and the profound self which preoccupies Post-Impressionist painters' may also be connected to Bergson's two selves, which Smith also comments upon in terms of the idea's influence on Fergusson, Fauvism and Mansfield.⁶⁶⁷ In *Time and Free Will* Bergson explains the dynamic of our two selves in relation to duration: one self is accessed 'by deep introspection, which leads us to grasp our inner states as living things, constantly *becoming*, as states not amenable to measure, which permeate one another'. In the other self, 'we live outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own ghost ... we live for the external world rather than for ourselves; we speak rather than think; we "are acted" rather than act ourselves. To act freely is to recover possession of oneself'.⁶⁶⁸ I wish to call the first the introspective or becoming self, and the second the external or passive, projected self.

⁶⁶³ *Notebooks*, II, 267.

⁶⁶⁴ Daiches, 39: 'It is not only the selection of right detail that matter, but the *order* in which it is presented to the reader.'

⁶⁶⁵ Smith, *Literary Life*, 13.

⁶⁶⁶ Smith, *Literary Life*, 8.

⁶⁶⁷ Smith, *Literary Life*, 10.

⁶⁶⁸ Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, 231-2.

Mansfield's sense of a transferable self is further explained in a letter to Brett, in which she speaks of an uncanny resurrection of the dead in her writing of 'At the Bay'. She mentions a feeling, or a moment when she loses herself in her own creation:

I've [sic] been at it all last night. My precious children have sat in here playing cards. I've [sic] wandered about all sorts of places—in and out. I hope it is good. It is as good as I can do and all my heart and soul is in it—every single bit. Oh God, I hope it gives pleasure to someone ... It is so strange to bring the dead to life again. [...] I feel as I write, 'you are not dead my darlings. All is remembered. I bow down to you. I efface myself so that you may live again through me in your richness and beauty.' And one feels *possessed*. And then the place where it all happens. I have tried to make as familiar to 'you' as it is to me. You know the marigolds? You know those pools in the rocks? You know the mousetrap on the wash house window sill? And too, one tries to go deep—to speak to the secret self we all have—to acknowledge that.⁶⁶⁹

That the story has her 'heart and soul' in it is consistent with her concern for prosaic weather, discussed above, especially how much the writer's own care is invested in her work. Simultaneously, the letter's confession implies an abandonment of the self, which is followed by her being '*possessed*' somehow by her own creation, and a resurrection of the dead. The very telling 'effacing' of herself so that the characters can 'live again through [her]' recalls Keats' Negative Capability and the non-identity of a poet. The self is tuned down, faded out, so that a more transparent picture of the subject can fully emerge. In Keats' case the erasing of the self is also a form of extreme empathy. He describes feeling as though someone else's identity is 'pressing upon' him.⁶⁷⁰ As mentioned above, Murry interprets this feeling as a result of Keats' being 'in a condition receptive to the point of agony. Every nerve is tingling with awareness. [...] This is the moment in the unceasing process of the pure poet's being when he absorbs to his utmost capacity the material of "sensation" out of which he creates both himself and his work.'⁶⁷¹ This 'negative moment' involves the vanishing of one self—the Bergsonian impermanent self that prevents the uncanny crossing from a self-conscious state to an 'impersonal' and receptive state. In this moment of Keatsian reconciliation, the poet has confidence to stay in the unknown, and become the 'positive' and inseparable counterpart' of that which he observes, thus creating 'a more complete sense of identity and a richer poetic creation' and accepting 'self-annihilation as a means to self-achievement'.⁶⁷² Mansfield's letter to Brett quoted above as well as her desire to become one with the bush fire in '*L'Incendie*' indicate an awareness of 'self-annihilation' as a crucial step to 'self-achievement'.

More specifically, in Mansfield's craft, the dissolving of self begins with a toning-down of overt description and statement of theme by her characters. The difference is quite obvious if we compare

⁶⁶⁹ CLKM, IV, 278.

⁶⁷⁰ Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare*, 52.

⁶⁷¹ Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare*, 52-3.

⁶⁷² Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare*, 53.

Mansfield's early vignettes with the organic, interconnected details of 'Prelude'. A sublime example is the appearance in the story of the beheaded white duck, the same cooked duck in 'basted resignation' carried by Alice, the servant girl, and then the description of Alice's rich colour, which echoes that of the duck: 'Alice was fiery red and the duck a Spanish mahogany'.⁶⁷³ Instead of depicting the exterior for its own sake as she did in 'Summer Idyll', Mansfield now focuses on the defamiliarising details that are trans-sensuous to say the least. Another example occurs when Linda turns to the wall, and traces 'a poppy on the wall-paper with a leaf and a stem and a fat bursting bud. In the quiet, and under her tracing finger, the poppy seemed to come alive'.⁶⁷⁴ Linda can 'feel the sticky, silky petals, the stem, hairy like a gooseberry skin, the rough leaf and the tight glazed bud. Things had a habit of coming alive like that.'⁶⁷⁵ It is as if Linda herself, through her transformational imaginative action of touching, becomes one with the inanimate wall paper. Mansfield focuses our attention first on specific details directed and circled by Linda's finger, and then through Linda's consciousness convinces us of the aliveness of these objects. In this way we gain a deep insight into Linda's consciousness, sharing her creator's experience of becoming the objects she views. This effect is maintained as Mansfield moves the focus gradually onto the various things moving around, distinguished by their own self-possessing characteristics:

Not only large substantial things like furniture but curtains and the patterns of stuffs and the fringes of quilts and cushions. How often she had seen the tassel fringe of her quilt change into a funny procession of dancers with priests attending For there were some tassels that did not dance at all but walked stately, bent forward as if praying or chanting. How often the medicine bottles had turned into a row of little men with brown top-hats on; and the washstand jug had a way of sitting in the basin like a fat bird in a round nest.⁶⁷⁶

These details, created by an imaginative mind, transmit an uncanny atmosphere. Mansfield is a long way from 'Summer Idyll' and its clumsy externalisation of the character's state of mind through obvious details such as the heavy scent of manuka sprays, ritualistic diving and the consumption of food. Her characters have become more complex, because by carefully concealing her personal self—in other words, assuming the Keatsian poetical self—Mansfield allows Linda and the others each to present a slice of her world without interruption. The same method is used in the depiction of Alice; the point of view is hers, as she goes to tea at Mrs Stubbs' feeling that someone is watching her, but switches then to the point of view of the person watching her, namely Beryl.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷³ *CFKM*, II, 85.

⁶⁷⁴ *CFKM*, II, 68.

⁶⁷⁵ *CFKM*, II, 68.

⁶⁷⁶ *CFKM*, II, 68.

⁶⁷⁷ *CFKM*, II, 358-9.

Mansfield's personal philosophy could arguably be summed up in the phrase 'the defeat of the personal'.⁶⁷⁸ Yet, while we have seen that she is acutely aware of the self as multiple, as changing or *becoming*, she also seems to sense an *essential* self penetrating the superfluous realities of life:

Is it not possible that the rage for confession, autobiography, especially for memories of earliest childhood, is explained by our persistent yet mysterious belief in a self which is continuous and permanent; which untouched by all we acquire and all we shed, pushes a green spear through the dead leaves and through the mould, thrusts a scaled bud through years of darkness until, one day, the light discovers it and shakes the flower free and—we are alive—we are flowering for our moment upon the earth? This is the moment of direct feeling when we are most ourselves and least personal.⁶⁷⁹

This 'moment of direct feeling' seems to be Mansfield's version of Bergson's intuition. As I suggested at the opening of this section, Mansfield arguably shows the two selves Bergson discusses: the becoming self and the essential self. As I have suggested, the first self is closely akin to Wang's personal state, where 'complexes and repressions and reactions and vibrations and reflections' intersect and interact, creating a moving state.⁶⁸⁰ The second self resembles Wang's impersonal state where 'quietude' and harmony prevail and the poet or artist is not flustered by her external self. The impersonal state is not an equivalent of an objective observational stance, but a state of freedom that gives the poetic mind agency to roam free in and out of her consciousness.

Mansfield's belief in a fluid, mobile and changeable self forms the ultimate rationale of her artistic crossings; like her own characters, from the Child-Who-Was-Tired, to Kezia, Beryl and Little B., Mansfield also constantly moves towards and beyond boundaries. Yet her conviction of an eternal, substantial self is as strong. Maurizio Ascari interprets the journal entry I quote above in terms of both 'the external self and the inner self' as prescribed by Bergson. Ascari also points out a contrast in approaches that complement each other in Mansfield's method: 'Mansfield regarded the act of writing', argues Ascari, 'as combining two different dimensions—on the one hand, *gardening*, which encapsulates both her dedication to observation and her passion for technique, and on the other *flowering*, which puts the writer in touch with a form of wisdom that cannot be achieved by conscious means, being rooted in a deeper dimension'.⁶⁸¹ The first 'dimension' is indicative of the accumulation of writing experience, and of conscious cultivation, whereas the second belongs with intuition, with a spontaneity and release of control. Mansfield cannot do without either.

In an important sense, however, Mansfield's essential self, her flowering, is not like Wang's impersonal state. According to Rickett, this 'impersonal state' is one where 'the poet does not intrude upon the scene', for '[he] has attained such perfect harmony with the external world that in describing

⁶⁷⁸ JKM, 195.

⁶⁷⁹ JKM, 205.

⁶⁸⁰ JKM, 205.

⁶⁸¹ Ascari, 78.

any object his own personality has lost its identity'.⁶⁸² Rickett's reading suggests a merging of the external poetic self into the external reality. Such a poet, observes Rickett, is someone that the '[o]bjects of nature do not disturb ... because nothing can disturb him. He can therefore enjoy the beauty of any scene that appears before his eyes and can also through words convey that serene enjoyment to others. Such an understanding has clearly Taoist overtone'.⁶⁸³ Here Mansfield departs from Wang; her state of 'flowering' is not a complete departure from the personal and empathic state, but a moment of striking the middle note, of finding the perfect balance of the personal/impersonal dichotomy and fine-tuning her descriptive and creative states.

This balance is clear in her famous letter to Dorothy Brett where she discusses the necessity for art to 'become' what it wants to recreate; I quote the passage again, in full:

What can one do, faced with this wonderful tumble of round bright fruits, but gather them and play with them—and *become them*, as it were. When I pass the apple stalls I cannot help stopping and staring until I feel that I, myself, am changing into an apple, too—and that at any moment I may produce an apple, miraculously, out of my own being like the conjuror produces the egg. [...] When I write about ducks I swear that I am a white duck with a round eye, floating in a pond fringed with yellow blobs and taking an occasional dart at the other duck with the round eye, which floats upside down beneath me. In fact this whole process of becoming the duck [...] is so thrilling that I can hardly breathe, only to think about it. For although that is as far as most people can get, it is really only the 'prelude'. There follows the moment when you are *more duck*, *more apple* or *more Natasha* than any of these objects could ever possibly be, and so you *create* them anew. [...] Forgive me. But that is why I believe in technique, too (you asked me if I did.) I do, just because I don't see how art is going to make that divine *spring* into the bounding outlines of things if it hasn't passed through the process of trying to *become* these things before recreating them.⁶⁸⁴

Three steps in this process of 'becoming' are clearly discernible in the quotation. Apparently when Mansfield sees the apple, she observes via the external self that is motivated by a personal state likened to a painter's passion for the subject. 'Staring' is then a transitory stage, which takes her beyond this personal self. Finally, she arrives at the 'becoming' stage itself, and in this quieter, more stable, impersonal state, she, like Wang's poet, observes 'objects in terms of objects'. In this way the transformation from external to internal is completed, and there is no telling which is the writer and which the apple. What Wang calls the two states of *Yijing* operate on in very similar way. But as Mansfield herself indicates, this is only the 'prelude', the beginning of 'recreating'.

Mansfield's creative metamorphosis, her journey from personal to impersonal, can also be compared to well-known story about the ancient Taoist philosopher Zhuang Zi and the butterfly, which I mentioned in this chapter's first section. The story goes as follows:

⁶⁸² Rickett, 15.

⁶⁸³ Rickett, 15.

⁶⁸⁴ *CLKM*, I, 330.

Once upon a time, I dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was myself. Soon I awaked, and there I was, veritably myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man.⁶⁸⁵

Zhuang Zi's butterfly dream is a state of supreme harmony between the imaginative and the analytical selves; the former allows consciousness's sauntering into a dream terrain, while the latter is still aware of the essential if upgraded self after entering this space. His analogy is essentially Keats' 'Negative Capability' expressed as a physical metamorphosis. The entry point for Mansfield's transformation is gazing, and for Zhuang Zi dreaming, yet both movements communicate a sense of becoming one with what used to be the external world until the demarcation line between the external and the internal spheres is eliminated by the conscious and intuitive effort of the artist. Harmony is the result of this unification of the seeing self and the sensing self (if we can ever truly separate the two), of the personal and the impersonal state. Art exists in a place that is 'up higher', to use Mansfield's phrase. Rickett notes that this spatial sense of the term *Yijing* appears in Buddhist texts, where the word is used 'as a translation for *visaya*, which is defined as "a region, territory, environment, surroundings, area, field, sphere, e.g. the sphere of mind, the sphere of form for the eye, of sound for the ear, etc.; any objective mental projection regarded as reality"'.⁶⁸⁶ Daiches also compares the 'state' of the reality that we find in art to a space in his reading of 'At the Bay': the reader is 'gradually enwrapped in the appropriate atmosphere', he says, and before long the mist merges with the surroundings until '[we] are caught in the atmosphere *now*, it is all around us', and the fictional reality becomes a place more real than the physical.⁶⁸⁷ Indeed Mansfield has 'lifted up' an artistic rendering of life above hackneyed expressions. She may not be consciously raising a philosophical question, but a philosophical answer does illuminate the darkened territory of her description of *becoming* the apple.

What Mansfield seeks, through this delicate play of artist-subject harmony, is *Stimmung*, her particular, momentary way of revealing the story's real subject. This becomes clear in her letter to Brett, as she continues her thoughts and speaks of how she created 'Prelude'; again I quote the relevant passage fully:

What form is it? you ask. Ah, Brett, its [sic] so difficult to say. As far as I know its more or less my own invention. [...] I tried to catch that moment—with something of its sparkle and its flavour. And just as on those mornings white milky mists rise and uncover some beauty, then smother it again and then again disclose it. I tried to lift that mist from my people and let them

⁶⁸⁵ Zhuang, Zi. *Zhuangzi*, ed. Han Shuwen (Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House, 2004), 30.

⁶⁸⁶ Rickett, 24.

⁶⁸⁷ Daiches, 'Critical Essay', 38.

be seen and then to hide them again. [...] Its not a case of keeping the home fire burning for me. Its a case of keeping the home fire down to a respectable blaze and little enough.⁶⁸⁸

'Prelude' is perhaps first of the most mature expressions of Mansfield's unique style, and this quotation reveals her secret. In balancing the acting and the becoming selves, the descriptive and the creative, and the personal and impersonal states, Mansfield creates *Yijing* that are abbreviated, unaffected, real and fantastical at the same time. Nothing remarkable happens in 'Prelude': Kezia walks through the bushes, Linda daydreams, and Beryl watches Alice as she goes out. Yet in the microcosm of Crescent Bay, Mansfield is playing the trick of giving only glimpses of a larger whole—the flowers yet never the entire tree—by allowing small details to betray paranoia, insecurity, and vanity. The power of suggestive *Stimmung* is at its most potent in this story. Mansfield has mastered the art of minimal description and maximum *Yijing*.

All of Mansfield's creations of *Yijing* begin with poetic 'weather', or as Bergson calls it, 'aesthetic feelings', and her creative venture into what is not visible or tangible also ends in an 'elevated' form of such poetic emotions. The 'becoming' process is 'thrilling', but it is only the beginning, the 'prelude'. Here she agrees with Bergson, who in the conclusion of 'The Aesthetic Feelings' describes the intricate workings of art that occur by means of but beyond mood and atmosphere:

If the art which gives only sensations is an inferior art, the reason is that analysis often fails to discover in a sensation anything beyond the sensation itself. But the greater number of emotions are instinct with a thousand sensations, feelings or ideas which pervade them: each one is then a state unique of its kind and indefinable, and it seems that we should have to relive the life of the subject who experiences it if we wish to grasp it in its original complexity. Yet the artist aims at giving us a share in this emotion, so rich, so personal, so novel, and at enabling us to experience what he cannot make us understand. This he will bring about by choosing, among the outward signs of his emotions, those which our body is likely to imitate mechanically, though slightly, as soon as it perceives them, so as to transport us all at once into *the indefinable psychological state* which called them forth. Thus will be broken down the barrier interposed by time and space between his consciousness and ours: and the richer in ideas and the more pregnant with sensations and emotions is the feeling within whose limits the artist has brought us, the deeper and the higher shall we find the beauty thus expressed. The successive intensities of the aesthetic feeling thus correspond to changes of state occurring in us, and the degrees of depth to the larger or smaller number of elementary psychic phenomena which we dimly discern in the fundamental emotion.⁶⁸⁹

Bergson's conclusion echoes Kandinsky notion, discussed in my introduction, of the sensational or physical effect that colour produces, except that for Bergson each 'sensation' or 'feeling' corresponds

⁶⁸⁸ *CLKM*, I, 331.

⁶⁸⁹ Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, 17-18. My emphasis.

with an inimitable emotional state. The artist tries to capture this emotion in her own delicate net of words, so that the same effect, the same emotions will be 'imaged' and suggested to us. Through the veins of the writer's text the original impressions flow to our senses. Bergson's analysis sums up the two dimensions of Mansfield's creativity: one motivated by emotion, by the prosaic weather which transfers sensations directly to the reader, and the other motivated by a deep concern for not immediacy but impact and lasting impression—that 'something happening' Mansfield mentions when reading *Kew Gardens*. For Mansfield, it is as important for us to see her prosaic 'weather' as it is to *feel* and remember it. Her preoccupation with atmospheric weather evolves from pure addition of description to the evocation of maximum suggestion. Like the cigarette in Symons' poem that lights a momentary spot in the dark, Mansfield's *Stimmung*—her atmospheric revelation—becomes as instantaneous as it is intense.

We may recall the black shawl in 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding'—the one Rosa inherits from her mother—plain and minimal in meaning and colour. In comparison, the Chinese shawl is detailed with colours and reiterated images that also communicate a subtle rhythm. Mansfield's two black shawls, placed at the beginning and the end of her career, are analogous and allegorical of her evolving art: one is fictional and the other real, and one strives for colour and design, while the other is complete and beautiful, an emblem of her craftsmanship.

Conclusion

Mansfield's older contemporary Joseph Conrad defines art as 'a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect'.⁶⁹⁰ He writes specifically regarding his own chosen art form of fiction in terms of its power to cross sensuous boundaries, and reaching the utmost 'appeal' and effect.

Fiction—if it at all aspires to be art—appeals to temperament. And in truth it must be, like painting, like music, like all art, the appeal of one temperament to all the other innumerable temperaments whose subtle and resistless power endows passing events with their true meaning, and creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time. Such an appeal, to be effective, must be an impression conveyed through the senses; and, in fact, it cannot be made in any other way *All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses*, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeals through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions. It must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music—which is the art of arts. And it is only through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting, never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences, that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour; and the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage.⁶⁹¹

Like Pater and the French writers mentioned in previous chapters, Conrad also endorses inter-art transformations and hybridisations, and praises music's supremacy over the imaginative arts as well as art's ability to transfer and impress emotions via the senses. Pater argues that 'the sensuous material of each art brings with it a special phase or quality of beauty', and such quality should be 'translatable' into other artistic forms; this 'is the beginning of all true aesthetic criticism'.⁶⁹² Conrad echoes Pater's aesthetic principle by advocating multi-directional movements between the arts. Conrad's philosophy on art perfectly corresponds with Mansfield's trans-art approach which I have analysed throughout my thesis. By saying that the fundamental channel to convey truth through the art of fiction is via transportation of emotions and impressions through feelings, which are simultaneously universal and specific, Conrad argues for the free exchanges and access between senses and between all art forms. Both Conrad and Mansfield gain license to other artistic territories through refining their own craft, and in return, the 'plasticity of sculpture', 'the colour of

⁶⁹⁰ Joseph Conrad, Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 145.

⁶⁹¹ Joseph Conrad, Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, p. 146. My emphasis.

⁶⁹² Pater, "The School of Giorgione" in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1986), 83.

painting' and the 'magic suggestiveness of music' respond and reward the artists by elevating their craft above the common word. Conrad's extraordinary care in shaping the form and resonance of sentences also recalls Mansfield's crafting of words, sounds and mood. If music has a 'magic suggestiveness' that resides above and connects all arts, then the art of fiction is a synthetic form that aims to melt and bind sensuous effects of music, painting, vision, and light to their utmost capacity within the written form.

The 'perfect blending of form and substance' is crucial to Mansfield's artistic synaesthesia as well. In Mansfield's case, craft is not only blending one form with one substance, but also carving out a higher reality in the hybridisation of multiple 'forms' and 'substances'. Mansfield always identified herself as an artist, and recognised that an artist's mission is to 'create [his/her] own world in this world', to 'single out', 'bring into the light', and 'put up higher'.⁶⁹³ Mansfield's understanding of 'the unspeakable thrill of this art business' is the pleasure to be able to catch that evanescent moment, and the creative authority to 'lift that mist from my people and let them be seen and then to hide them again ...', as she explained to another artist Dorothy Brett.⁶⁹⁴ As I have shown in my thesis, Mansfield, as an artist of this Conradian kind, demands that the full cloth of aesthetic experience be accessible to her, together with any useful material in order to complete her own literary weaving. Her *métier* is not in borrowing from a single source of artistic influence, but in the capability of 'blending multiple artistic expressions as represented by colour, rhythm, vision—the innocent eye—and role-playing, as well as *Stimmung* and *Yijing*.

C. K. Stead notes the vital connections between Mansfield's sensuous acuity and her writing. He appreciates 'the immediacy of [Mansfield's] contact with the natural world and her facility in representing it, her extraordinary visual memory, the acuteness of her ear both for speech and for indiscriminate sounds (like 'the *panting* of a saw') ... all these qualities together with an indefinable all-pervasive freshness in her writing, as if every sentence had been struck off first thing on a brilliant morning, make her natural talents in fiction superior'.⁶⁹⁵ Mansfield's 'extraordinary visual memory' includes both images and colour, and also refers to a strong sense of internal vision. What Stead terms her ability to discern and creatively transcribe unheard notes indicates how she could lift the strange out of the ordinary and to feel the pulses and hear the rhythms buried deep. The 'all-pervasive freshness' recalls Mansfield's own definition of a 'covering atmosphere' as discussed in chapter five: the *Yijing* of her work intoxicates with a fresh glow.

Vincent O'Sullivan maps Mansfield's development from 'a colonial' to a 'Modernist', which is a process that 'exemplifies ... rejection of the centre, rejection of the borders as well'.⁶⁹⁶ Mansfield's 'decentralization of design', to use Sadler's phrase, has been noted by critics like O'Sullivan and Stead as a kind of fluidity. But more than that, the fluidity is the natural result of her artistic synaesthesia, which enables her to move between borders and generic territories. 'That sense of flow which Mansfield so admired in painting', comments O'Sullivan, 'the quick fluidity in what she

⁶⁹³ *Notebooks*, 2: 267.

⁶⁹⁴ *CLKM*, 331, to Dorothy Brett, 11 October, 1917.

⁶⁹⁵ C. K. Stead, *Katherine Mansfield: Letters and Journals* (London: Penguin, 1977), 19.

⁶⁹⁶ O'Sullivan, *Finding the Patterns, Solving the Problem: Katherine Mansfield the New Zealand European* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1989), 5.

called 'the flowing shade and sunlight world' [letter to Dorothy Brett, 26 December 1921] is also the flow that insists finally on isolation, on the nostalgia at the centre of all impressionist art—the realisation, as John Berger says in writing of Monet, that we know as we look at such pictures, that what we look at can never happen again".⁶⁹⁷ But this ephemeral fluidity can also be interpreted in relation to the Post-Impressionist conception of the rhythmical line, which not only connects the accents of colours within a painting, but also extends and suggests a musical quality beyond the canvas. The same fluidity can be examined in the momentary vision obtained via the eye of innocence, and in the atmospheric state of *Yijing*. Fluidity licenses Mansfield's access to sensuous and artistic territories. Instead of viewing Mansfield through a singular artistic lens, we need to see her works through the layering of multi-sensory lenses. Mansfield's works appeal to our senses, and seek to evoke and resonate with a common 'temperament' within her readers. Just as Modernism encourages us to look in the marginalized, in the peripheral, art like that of Mansfield's also invites us to step away from normative views.

It is therefore in this less-explored and un-contoured territory of 'interartistic transformations' that I stake my argument. Acknowledging Mansfield's trans-art approach is not only apropos to Modernism's trans-sensuous and trans-border artistic milieu, but also contributes to contemporary Mansfield studies that move towards inter-disciplinary scopes. As I have mentioned in my introduction, my interest has been behind the phenomenon of correspondence between artistic expressions, as well as artistic discontent when confronted with disciplinary borders. And Mansfield's writings demonstrate similar interests and concerns. While in the past decade Mansfield scholarship with particular interest in the arts has been mainly preoccupied with her creative ties to a specific area—Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, or Modern music—I have endeavoured to show that it is with emotions, craft, vision and suggestion that Mansfield's creative impulses lie.

By choosing very specific concepts, I hope to have contoured my discussion with better demarcation lines and contexts, and have evoked, to borrow Conrad's phrase, 'responsive emotions' and connections. The aspects of Mansfield's trans-art craft discussed in my thesis are what I believe a few of the most representative yet by no means the only connecting points to Mansfield's artistic synaesthesia. For future research I will continue to look for formerly neglected links between Mansfield's writing with the arts.

Two particular concepts interest me as I come to the end my PhD thesis: one is that of 'line', which Patricia Laurence addresses in her study of Chinese Modernism, and the other is what James Joyce calls an 'aesthetic stasis'. The former concept has close ties with Chinese aesthetics, particularly in revived interest in Chinese painting and its aesthetics during and after Mansfield's time. The idea of 'line' can translate to poetical, painterly and, as we have seen, to what can be called the rhythmical line. Mansfield, according to Ida Baker, 'hated 'fuzzy edges''.⁶⁹⁸ Virginia Woolf also remarked that Mansfield "like 'to have a line around her'".⁶⁹⁹ Line can especially be approached from the angle of painting. Angela Smith interprets the 'obsessions with line and design' in relation

⁶⁹⁷ O'Sullivan, *Finding the Patterns, Solving the Problem*, 7.

⁶⁹⁸ *The Memories of LM*, 85.

⁶⁹⁹ Cited in Smith, 15.

to Mansfield's appreciation of Fauvism, and to her affinity with Fergusson's art.⁷⁰⁰ The idea of expressive line was also mentioned in a letter written to Rice, in which Mansfield praises Rice as 'a marvellous painter', and appreciates 'the beauty of [her] line—the *life* behind it'.⁷⁰¹ I wish to position the idea of expressive lines—how the variation of arranged structural stops and expressions—can be used to elicit emotive responses. Such explorations need to be made in connection with Modernism as a transnational movement. Unlike Laurence's study, in which Mansfield features as a minor character in the margins of a trans-cultural and trans-art movement pioneered by Bloomsbury, I wish to focus on the Chinese view and reception of Mansfield, particularly why some of the early twentieth century Chinese scholars and translators immediately associated her work and person to that of Chinese aesthetics and history. Mansfield, more than other Bloomsbury writers and artists, seemed to have woken a common aesthetic echo in her contemporary Chinese readers.

The second idea of 'aesthetic stasis' comes from Stephen Dedalus' argument in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. He proposes that art should not aim to evoke physical responses alone, but to generate an 'aesthetic stasis', 'a stasis prolonged, and at last dissolved by [...] the rhythm of beauty'.⁷⁰² This 'aesthetic stasis' is reminiscent of dance, particularly Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes that swept the early twentieth century Paris. Vaslav Nijinsky's half-second pauses in mid-air are moments that symbolize the kind of gathering and then 'stasis', which is then followed by the release of artistic forces. If Joyce's analogy of beauty and rhythm rest on an abstract expression, then Nijinsky's performance is an embodiment of the 'kinetic' and rhythmic movement intertwined with beauty.

Joyce also speaks against form even though he acknowledges 'rhythm' as the 'first formal aesthetic relation in art'.⁷⁰³ Art in his definition is a progressive motion of understanding, expressing, and 'press[ing] out again, from the gross earth or what it brings forth, from sound and shape and colour which are the prison gates of our soul, an image of the beauty we have come to understand—that is art'.⁷⁰⁴ Art therefore becomes an endlessly renewing process that relies upon the vehicles such as colour, sound, shape, mood and contained by the frames of expression, until we see and feel its essential and intensely spiritual aspect. Joyce's interpretation of rhythm can be treated as an extension of both Pater's and Conrad's understandings of music as the purest form of art, but with an added layer of reference to dance, especially to the deliberate pauses in-between movements. If it is worth investigating whether such 'aesthetic stasis' or choreographed pauses also find their way into Mansfield's works.

The more I focus on Mansfield's artistic crossings, the more I discover about her method, and understand her abstract, trans-sensuous expressions. But this search for the sources of Mansfield's artistic synaesthesia—why she uses colours, light, image, sounds and mood as she has—is simultaneously focused on her written texts as well as the larger artistic context. The wonder and

⁷⁰⁰ Smith, *A Literary Life*, 74.

⁷⁰¹ *CLKM*, IV, 152.

⁷⁰² James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 238.

⁷⁰³ Joyce, 238.

⁷⁰⁴ Joyce, 239.

pleasure Mansfield offers us spring from this deliberate mis-placing of sensuous faculties: putting the eye in the ear, so to speak. Mansfield's artistic transgressions, synthesisations, blending and borrowing do not always achieve the desired emotive response or effect, yet when they do position the desired faculty in the correct place, enveloped in the right atmospheric harmonies, we, too, sense the same kind of 'incredible', incomparable 'thrill of this art business'.

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