

Katherine Mansfield: A Colonial Impressionist

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers Katherine Mansfield's development as a writer in relation to late nineteenth and early twentieth century developments and trends in the visual arts in New Zealand, England and France. Mansfield's notebooks, letters and stories evidence a definite response to developments in modern art and reveal that she aligned herself more closely with painters than with her literary colleagues; something Francis Carco hints at in his fictional account of her in *Les Innocents* (1916): he describes Mansfield as a predatory and exploitative woman with a detached manner, who "used him just the way a painter uses a model, studying character and movements" (cited in Mortelie 150). There exists in Mansfield's stories evidence of the influence of the Impressionist and, to a lesser degree, the Post-Impressionist painters. While this influence has been noted by a selection of critics or rather her work has been described as impressionistic, it has been neither explored nor substantiated from an art historical perspective. My methodology has entailed identifying the defining characteristics of Mansfield's stories that are also found in Impressionism, in as much as two different aesthetic forms can be compared. I then trace the exhibition history and contemporaneous criticism of modern French art in London and Paris alongside Mansfield's trajectory in adulthood to ascertain the degree of exposure she had to Impressionism. In addition to that which she encountered in Europe, much consideration has been given to the artistic milieu of New Zealand prior to and following her schooling in London. I have sought to identify which of the modern artists and styles Mansfield most closely identified with, and to determine how precisely and extensively she applied the Impressionists' painterly techniques and stylistic effects to her own prose. Broadly speaking, Mansfield's preferred subjects may be grouped under three titles: Domestic Interiors, Urban Landscapes and Rural Landscapes – these were also the Impressionists' favoured subjects. These categories, then, form the basis of my investigations.¹

This thesis also explores the degree to which Mansfield's colonial upbringing influenced, inspired and determined the themes and issues she chose to address, from the various forms of expression that were available to her to inherit and modify. My research reveals how both the cultural climate and the unique light and landscape of her own country made her susceptible to the ideas of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, even before she reached the more art-oriented cities of London and Paris. Mansfield's status as a foreigner in Europe allowed her greater freedom to experiment and greater licence to borrow from other cultural forms and traditions. Though strains of Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and

¹ The consequence of choosing to structure my material around Mansfield's three dominant subjects has resulted in some degree of repetition within this manuscript. This also means, however, that the individual chapters are strong enough to stand alone and thus this doctoral thesis should prove a valuable reservoir for future research.

Expressionism are all evident in Mansfield's modernist fiction, it is the impressionistic quality of her work – evident in the fleeting and evocative sketches of the everyday – that is the overriding feature. Her colonial heritage was not only a significant factor in this development, but to a degree, the enabling condition – allowing her to reconcile the lessons of Europe within a New Zealand literary context resulting in a unique brand of Colonial Impressionism.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

Mansfield's inconsistent and idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation have been retained within quotes in this thesis. In her letters she often dispensed with apostrophes and rarely used commas, instead preferring the dash. When citing, I have chosen not to follow these particular oddities with [sic] as these would be too numerous and would disrupt the flow of the text. I have instead followed the conventions of Mansfield's editors.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis considers Katherine Mansfield's development as a writer in relation to developments and trends primarily in painting and literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in New Zealand, England and France – her primary countries of residence. Specifically, my research involves an analysis of Mansfield's short stories within the context of French Impressionism, arguably the most dominant style of all the arts during Mansfield's life. There exists in her stories evidence of the influence of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters and writers held to be literary Impressionists. Passages within her notebooks and letters provide further evidence of her familiarity with their work and her knowledge of their aesthetics. My principal aim in this thesis is to reveal how Impressionism influenced and inspired Mansfield's painterly writing style. An investigation of the stylistic traits and defining qualities of both painterly and literary Impressionism, the latter of which Jesse Matz (2001) argues provided the foundations for Modernist literature, has revealed that Mansfield's favoured subjects, recurrent motifs, thematic concerns and pictorial effects are definitively an Impressionists'. I reveal how Mansfield adopted the stylistic principles of painterly Impressionism and modified them to suit her literary purposes. My findings offer new insights into Mansfield's work, provides a method by which any of her stories can be approached and interpreted and leads to a greater understanding of what Mansfield was aiming to achieve in her short stories. In bringing together a 'set' of images and a 'set' of texts I intend to show that there is a closer and more transformative relation between the two (especially *vis à vis* the primacy of the impressionist image) in Mansfield's work than has previously been acknowledged. Indeed, I believe that Mansfield's writing makes manifest the relationship of cause (painting) and effect (writing). While the influences which shaped her writing were diverse and numerous, and her creative process was unarguably more involved than merely looking at a painting and subsequently reproducing it in words, I have nevertheless found evidence to demonstrate that, in some cases, this occurred, and in some sense I can prove that it was deliberate. In other instances, 'proofs' are elusive and it would be unscholarly to argue the point regardless of how striking the evidence might seem. However, even then, the results of the influence of Impressionism might very well have been inadvertent or unconscious or even due to other factors and insights uniquely her own.

Arguably, Mansfield's relationship to the visual arts was instrumental to her literary development and yet I believe that it has previously escaped due scholarly attention.¹ In 2003 the University of Waikato, New Zealand, hosted an exhibition of work by London-

¹ Angela Smith is the exception. Smith thoroughly addresses Mansfield's relationship to Post-Impressionism, see Chapter 2.

based New Zealand artist Susan Wilson whose eleven paintings were directly inspired by Mansfield's prose. The illustrated talks which accompanied the exhibition aimed to reveal "something about Mansfield's visual aesthetic, and how this was related to a way of seeing cultivated by a particular style in contemporary painting": French Post-Impressionism (*Stories and Pictures* 7). Certainly the resultant essays are illuminating in respect to Mansfield's Fauvist leanings. However, Mansfield's aesthetic owes more to the Impressionist movement which preceded Post-Impressionism and ultimately proved more enduring. My interest lies in the letters, diary entries and stories which evidence her heightened aestheticism and point towards her congruent knowledge of contemporary developments in painting. Mansfield arrived in England at a momentous time in the development of western pictorial ideas. Critics argue that the era during which she lived and wrote was one of greater artistic experimentation and collaboration than had ever before been witnessed in the visual and literary arts with the transference of ideas transcending the media from which they originated. I concur with this evaluation and moreover, see Mansfield's oeuvre as concrete proof of this phenomenon.

While the pictorialism of Mansfield's short stories is immediately evident, it is their impressionistic quality particularly which resonates and thus demanded further investigation. As I will demonstrate throughout this thesis, certain passages within both her stories and her letters call to mind specific Impressionist paintings. Scholars including Frieder Busch (1970), Vincent O'Sullivan (1984), Ulrich Weisstein (1992), Kate Fullbrook (1986), Julia Van Gunsteren (1990) and Angela Smith (2000) have linked Mansfield to Impressionism and to limited degrees have shown that she took the key elements of that art – particularly the emphasis on light effects and shifting perspectives – and applied them to her own literature where often mere glimpses or 'slices of life' constitute the narrative.² Van Gunsteren has produced a comprehensive account of Mansfield's relationship to literary Impressionism, albeit one which denies the importance of painterly Impressionism. Overall, however, scholars have been reluctant to align Mansfield's texts with specific paintings or to make anything more than vague generalisations. To the best of my knowledge no one has attempted to demonstrate why Mansfield's work is 'impressionistic' or where she encountered Impressionism. In this thesis I have endeavoured to rectify this omission by answering both of these questions and have drawn links between specific paintings and texts based on Mansfield's exposure to Impressionism particularly during her early

² As have Edward Wagenknecht (1928), André Maurois (1935), Anne Friis (1946), Sylvia Berkman (1951) and Fern Corin (1956); criticism pertaining to Mansfield's association with Impressionism is discussed in Chapter 2.

formative years in England. Thus my research fills a significant void in Mansfield scholarship.

The failure to place Mansfield more concretely within Impressionism correlates with the general assumption that Impressionism is one thing or another and critics have difficulty in reconciling Mansfield's variable styles with the available definitions of Impressionism which in themselves are various and sometimes contradictory.³ Kathleen Adler and Tamar Garb, however, point out that within the work of the Impressionist painters there were greater "differences and dissimilarities" than have previously been acknowledged and that a "lack of cohesion and order ... characterized the Independent exhibitions of the 1870s and 80s" (Rouart 2, 1). Adler and Garb find John Rewald's *The History of Impressionism* (1961) "a falsely homogenous view of a movement which ... [was] varied and disparate in its aims and practices" (ibid. 1). In fact, Rewald's chronologically structured and biographically-oriented work remains a key Impressionist text which serves well alongside Belinda Thomson's more recent and succinct *Impressionism: Origins, Practice, Reception* (2000). Among my chief concerns in Chapter 1 (The Rise of Impressionism in the Arts), is to demonstrate how varied Impressionist practice was; to identify which artists warrant the title Impressionist – particularly those who Mansfield identified as such; to consider its relationship to the movements out of which it grew or ran parallel to, including Realism and Naturalism, and to those which followed in its wake, namely the Post-Impressionist branch of Fauvism, the influence of which Mansfield felt and responded to within her own stories. I consider the socio-historical context which gave rise to Impressionism and the political and cultural environment which subsequently allowed it to flourish and ultimately change the direction of modern art. The rise of Impressionism in the arts coincided with the rise of the bourgeoisie – a class which enjoyed increasing political and commercial leverage from the latter half of the nineteenth century. The majority of the Impressionist painters were either haut-bourgeois or of the middle-upper classes, the latter of which were established and moneyed families who in some cases, Degas's for example, had fallen on harder times and whose wealth (though not status) was being eclipsed by the new rank of bourgeois. The bourgeoisie were the Impressionists' greatest patrons. The implications of the shifting class structures brought about by social mobility and particularly social ascension in the Victorian

³ Mathilde Blind, for example, who translated Marie Bashkirtseff's *Journal* from French to English, is liberal and somewhat contradictory in her usage of the terms Naturalism and Impressionism, attributing both labels to Bashkirtseff and to Jules Bastien-Lepage in turn, 714. Because neither Bashkirtseff nor Bastien-Lepage exhibited in any of seven Impressionist exhibitions prior to their deaths, they cannot technically be considered French Impressionists. Norma Broude argues however, that Impressionism began around 1860 with Bastien-Lepage and then spread internationally (see Vial 18).

and Edwardian eras and beyond, not only facilitated the development and success of Impressionism but it also proved subject-worthy for the Impressionists – both literary and painterly. Novelists Gustave Flaubert and Émile Zola and painter Degas explored class disparity within their respective media, as did Mansfield, most famously in “The Garden Party” (1921) and “The Doll’s House” (1921). I shall of course address these issues within the course of this thesis.

The Impressionists witnessed the devastating effects of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. Similarly, Mansfield lived and worked in England and France during World War I. Neither the Impressionist painters nor Mansfield could deny the significance of the Wars and yet curiously they chose to represent them only implicitly or obliquely within their work; such representations are considered particularly within Chapters 3 and 5. Previously, in New Zealand, Mansfield had witnessed the effects of colonisation and the dispossession and displacement of the native Maori people which was particularly evident in the Urewera region (in the central North Island of New Zealand) through which she journeyed on a camping trip in 1907 with a group she loftily described as “ultra-Colonial” (CL1:32).⁴ As I will demonstrate throughout this thesis, Mansfield’s colonialism is not separable from her modernism; thus it goes without saying that that which she witnessed in modern colonial New Zealand partly informed her modernist colonial sketches. Significantly, though, the eye which she cast over the Urewera, Thorndon, Karori, London and Paris was an Impressionist’s; it was not an omnipresent gaze and nor was it objective; she was wholly immersed within this world, yet simultaneously remained aloof from it. She viewed her surroundings from elevated or oblique perspectives – in the Urewera for example, where she wrote from the top of the carriage (see NB1:137).

Within Chapter 1, I also discuss the importance of Charles Baudelaire’s seminal essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863) in respect to the development of Impressionism in painting. Baudelaire (1821-67) is one of a number of French authors whose writing partly informed Mansfield’s aesthetic tenets and whose style she, at times, emulated within her own writing.⁵ Mansfield’s debt to Baudelaire has been noted by Antony Alpers and well documented by Gerri Kimber within *The View from France* (Alpers 1982:554; Kimber 87).⁶ In *The Painter of*

⁴ Katherine Mansfield [hereafter referred to as KM] to her mother Annie Beauchamp, 20 November 1907, in *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Vincent O’Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 5 volumes; vol. 1: 1984; vol. 2: 1987; vol. 3: 1993; vol. 4: 1996; vol. 5: 2008), (referenced in this manner hereafter).

⁵ John [Jack] Middleton Murry [hereafter referred to as JMM], discusses his far reaching influence, particularly of *Petits Poèmes en Prose* upon Rimbaud, in “The Influence of Baudelaire” *Rhythm* 2.14 (1913). In the *Athenaeum*, 22 October 1920 and 29 October, Murry published a review essay in response to A. Van Bever’s critical edition of Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *Le Spleen de Paris* and *Journaux intimes*.

⁶ See Kimber Chapter 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.

Modern Life Baudelaire provided guidelines for the emerging modern artist whose purpose he stipulated was to paint modernity – to capture the people and the zeitgeist of their own epoch. He described a character he called the *flâneur* whose role was voyeuristic in that it involved covertly watching the actions and movements of those in the urban centres especially. He asserted that the artist must then remove himself (the *flâneur* was a male figure, just as the city was the masculine realm – the significance of which is discussed in Chapter 5) from this realm in order to paint, write or compose. Mansfield was the embodiment of Baudelaire’s *flâneur*: “I love to watch people [,] to know them [,] but I like to keep very very free.... aloof ... and rather fastidious.... j’ai mon travail [I have my work]” (CL4:113).⁷ Mansfield’s voyeurism informs her stories and informs this thesis but it is brought to light particularly in Chapters 3 and 5.

Finally, in Chapter 1 I have endeavoured to both explain and illustrate the relationship between painterly and literary Impressionism by way of textual and pictorial examples. This is a crucial chapter in that it acknowledges the inherent and seemingly inescapable vagaries associated not only with Impressionism but also within interdisciplinary fields of research and yet aims to elucidate the ways in which two different art forms – in this case painting and prose – might be compared and contrasted and how their shared aspects, whether that be thematic or technical or both, can be demonstrated. I also discuss the concept of Impressionist music and how Mansfield’s affinity for Debussy may have encouraged her attraction to Impressionism. Drawing on the criteria set out by Ferdinand Brunetière in 1879 and revised by J. Theodore Johnson Jr. (1973) I have endeavoured to reveal how Mansfield took the aesthetic principles of Impressionism and modified them to suit her literary purposes. Mansfield’s work unarguably shares technical, stylistic and thematic similarities with the novels of purported literary Impressionists including Flaubert and Zola, whose work she read, admired and emulated.⁸ However, while the connection between Mansfield and literary Impressionism is demonstrable and illuminating, my investigations reveal that the connection between Mansfield and painterly Impressionism is more extensive and more important than has been recognised.

Throughout this thesis I have endeavoured to provide pictorial examples which correspond with the motifs and themes Mansfield worked through in her stories. Reproductions of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works were affordable and readily available in London in the early twentieth century, especially from around 1910 when they were being advertised in modernist magazines such as *Rhythm* which Mansfield co-edited

⁷ KM to JMM, 15 November 1920.

⁸ A fuller analysis of Mansfield’s debt to Flaubert and Zola is regrettably outside of the bounds of this thesis and thus informs an independent article entitled “Significant Literary Influences: Katherine Mansfield’s debt to Marie Bashkirtseff, Gustave Flaubert and Émile Zola”.

and which carried in every issue an advertisement for the Gallery-Store owned by Franz Hanfstaengl situated on Pall Mall East, which sold colour and monochrome photographic reproductions of the works in European Galleries, and claimed to be “the only place in London where reproductions from representative works of modern art movements can be seen and bought, at prices ranging from 3d.” and where a catalogue of “The so-called Post-Impressionists”, containing “many thousands references” may be purchased for 2 shillings (2. 8, 1912: ii). Wherever possible, I have chosen images which were exhibited in London during Mansfield’s time there. This, though, has presented problems in itself. Alternative titles in both English and French of paintings (Morisot’s images of women in front of mirrors, for example), have meant that it has not always been possible to ascertain absolutely which of an artist’s works Mansfield might have seen exhibited in European cities in the early twentieth century such as at London, Paris and Bruges. Degas produced numerous images of women bathing, many of which share the same title. This is especially the case in regards to series-work; for example, in 1897 Monet painted numerous views of the Seine in or near Giverny several of which share the title *Morning on the Seine*, and several: *the Seine at Giverny*, *Morning Mists* (see fig. 1). Monet also painted eleven works which take the Gare Saint Lazare as their subject and while their full titles should distinguish the works from one another, early English cataloguing of French works was not always precise. However, where there is doubt, this had been made clear in a footnote with possible alternatives suggested.

Mansfield scholarship continues to grow exponentially, indicative of Mansfield’s legacy to Modernist literature. I have chosen to address particularly the critiques which have at least acknowledged, if not explained Mansfield’s particular impressionistic style. In Chapter 2, then, I privilege the criticism pertinent to my investigations into Mansfield’s relationship to visual art or other cultural production – such as the cinema. Alpers’s and Claire Tomalin’s biographies of 1980 and 1988 respectively, are key texts by virtue of more than just their recentness. Kathleen Jones’s new biography of Mansfield (the release of which coincides with the completion of this thesis in mid 2010) will no doubt prove itself to be the most comprehensive account of Mansfield’s life thus far. There exist also numerous well-informed works written from various critical stances, most recently from feminist (S. J. Kaplan 1991; Fullbrook 1994; Burgan 1994) and post-colonial perspectives (Stafford and Williams 2006). While I am indebted to the research of those who have gone before, including A. Smith, O’Sullivan and Van Gunsteren, this thesis aims to provide a new methodology for approaching and interpreting Mansfield’s shorts stories. Specifically, it looks at Mansfield’s literature through the visual image. This means that many of the assumptions that art historians make about their material (that there is a real painter, that the painting can be

said to reflect or embody the artist's intentions; that certain expressions – 'impressionist' for example, may mean something rather different than popular opinion assumes) are reflected in my analysis. I have chosen to respect a more biographical approach to my material, rather than a fictional one but this itself gives rise to a potential dilemma of interpretation. While I have respected the primary sources, both visual and verbal, and have attempted to reconcile them in historical terms, I cannot prove Mansfield's intentions. Nor can I assert that there is a 'real' voice somewhere behind the text. The most I am prepared to concede is that there is an 'implied' author and an 'implied' reader. Therefore, even though my argument is only a hypothesis, I attempt to demonstrate that it could have had historical validity; that Mansfield could well have been profoundly influenced by Impressionist painting. My proof consists in very close reading and viewing of paintings and of Mansfield's writing both fictive and autobiographical; and also on information retrieved from the socio-historical context. This, then, underpins my methodology.

In Chapter 3 I examine key early influences and Mansfield's exposure to the various styles of cultural production then permeating artistic and literary circles and vying for eminence on the avant-garde stage. I attempt to determine whether or not Mansfield could have been significantly influenced by the French Impressionists despite the movement having occurred ostensibly some three decades prior to her having commenced writing her now internationally acclaimed modernist short stories. And if so, when and where did she encounter Impressionism? My cross-disciplinary approach privileges neither existing literary methodology nor art historical protocols. An art historical background, however, provided me with the impetus to chart the emergence and development of Impressionism outside of France. Being familiar with historian Francis Pound's concept of 'cultural lag': "the time taken for an idea gently to diffuse from an art centre to the most provincial outposts", I endeavoured to ascertain the degree of familiarity colonial New Zealanders had with French Impressionism and whether traces of it existed in the nascent fine arts tradition in New Zealand (1983:26). A search of New Zealand newspaper and magazine archives revealed that Impressionism had a very real presence in the colonies from the 1890s and consequently a not insubstantial though not always favourable critical reputation. Furthermore, Impressionism emerged as the most dominant strain in New Zealand painting from the time of Mansfield's childhood and adolescence and arguably remained the most popular style through until the 1980s. Electronically accessible digital archives have greatly facilitated my research, making it possible to search New Zealand's newspapers from the time of Mansfield's birth in Wellington in 1888 and throughout her years there, and through various British and French publications during her residencies in England and on the Continent up until her death in 1923 at Fontainebleau.

Having established Impressionism's presence and critical reputation in New Zealand, I then follow the same strategy in respect to England around the time Mansfield came to live there, initially as a student from 1903-1906 and as an adult in 1908. I wanted to ascertain whether or not a demonstrable allegiance to French Impressionism could be detected within modern art practice in England; and if so, what the critical response was. To whom or what were her artistically-inclined contemporaries looking to for models, for instance? I soon discovered that despite its inception in Paris in 1874, in London it was not until the mid 1880s that Impressionism enjoyed any degree of visibility and coherent representation and it was not until 1905 that London had its first proper experience of French modern art. I cannot stress enough that its impact on the artists and writers based in London at this time cannot be underestimated. The diversity of critical opinion indicates that well into Mansfield's career, Impressionism, if not at the forefront of avant-garde practice in France, was still inciting debate in England. Even had she not been keenly attuned to the artistic styles and aesthetic trends of the time, even had she not been a voracious consumer of the newspapers and periodicals, Mansfield cannot have failed to absorb the tide of Impressionism sweeping London in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Unarguably, Mansfield's years at Queen's College opened her eyes to a wider range of cultural forms than she could ever have known had she remained in New Zealand. Having had a taste of that cultural life, upon her return to New Zealand in 1906 she struggled against the parental and societal constraints placed upon her. While she campaigned to be allowed to return to England during this eighteen month period which she perceived as enforced exile, Mansfield spent hours at the Parliamentary Library immersing herself in both the canon of English literature and in foreign texts. She developed "quite a mania for Walter Pater ... and Flaubert – oh, many others" (CL1:46).⁹ As O'Sullivan and Maria Kronegger show, Pater (1839-94) and Flaubert were writers whose work preceded Impressionism (O'Sullivan 1984, Kronegger 1973). Mansfield's identification with Flaubert and other French writers allowed her to distance herself from her colonial world and it simultaneously provided her with a means of modernising and internationalising her own writing. Impressionist paintings served her in precisely the same way.

A vignette entitled "In the Botanical Gardens" (1907), (analysed in Chapter 3), was written while Mansfield was back in New Zealand.¹⁰ It specifically references Impressionist paintings but is based in Wellington's public gardens. Thus, Mansfield represents the local and the specific within an international context. She continued to develop this technique and

⁹ KM to Vera Beauchamp, May-June 1908.

¹⁰ "In the Botanical Gardens", the *Native Companion*, Melbourne, 2 Dec. 1907. I have opted to work from the draft version of the story (contained within the first of the two *Notebooks*), as it is the fuller of the two.

in “Prelude” (1918) – begun in March 1915 under the title “The Aloe” and refashioned and finished in 1917 – Mansfield succeeded in representing Karori in a series of Impressionist vignettes.¹¹ This is partly what makes Mansfield a Colonial Impressionist as opposed to a colonial author merely writing in an impressionistic vein – she did not merely privilege colour and imbue her writing with a painterly quality for decorative purposes. Upon her exposure to Impressionism, Mansfield consistently, increasingly and insistently used an Impressionist’s tools and achieved Impressionist’s effects while simultaneously privileging colonial impulses, colonial characters, colonial settings, colonial motifs, colonial dialects and a colonial landscape – both cultural and physical.

In Chapter 4, *Domestic Interiors*, I consider Mansfield’s representations of femininity, particularly women’s rites of passage, and explore the theme of domestic entrapment alongside Impressionist paintings by Morisot, Cassatt, Degas and Manet, who depict these same motifs, subjects and themes, taking into account the gender implications in representations of domesticity by female versus male artists. Chapter 5, *Urban Landscapes*, represents an exploration of the non-domestic spaces which played host to and incited the imaginations of the Impressionist writers and painters at the *fin-de-siècle* and beyond. I consider how they chose to depict the entertainments and opportunities available to them or, in the case of the female Impressionists those to which they were denied access or permitted only limited access to; the city/country dichotomy; and the ambiguous relationship and interdependency of the working-class woman and the bourgeois man. In Chapters 4 and 5 I reveal how Mansfield’s observation of the aesthetic principles of Impressionism and her methodical implementation of their themes and techniques into her own narrative culminated in an innovative, highly pictorial prose style. I believe, however, that the unique light and landscape of Mansfield’s native New Zealand made her susceptible to the ideas of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, even before she reached the more art-oriented cities of London and Paris. In this, Pound’s theory pertaining to “geographical determinism” has proved important and is therefore brought into discussion in Chapter 6 within which the peculiarities of the New Zealand landscape and the problems it presented to native and immigrant artists is brought into consideration alongside a discussion of how Mansfield’s nascent aesthetic theories were influenced by these factors (11).

In order to prove my hypothesis that growing up in New Zealand made Mansfield more susceptible to Impressionist aesthetics I have spent some time researching the history and development of New Zealand painting particularly during Mansfield’s years in Wellington.

¹¹ Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press commenced printing the story in October 1917 and published it in July 1918.

My research has been facilitated by Gordon Brown and Hamish Keith's chronological study of the rise of a painting tradition in New Zealand.¹² In *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting 1839-1967* [1969] (1975), Brown and Keith discuss the precise problems facing academically-trained immigrant artists upon their arrival in New Zealand including the Pacific light which they found almost intolerably bright, the contours of the land with which they were entirely unfamiliar, the peculiar forms of the native trees and the ever changing wind and weather patterns. These, of course, are aspects which Mansfield addresses within her short stories including "Summer Idylle" (1906), "The Woman at the Store" (1912), "The Wind Blows" (1914) and "At the Bay" (1921) and which she made note of within her notebooks and letters – excerpts from which I have employed liberally throughout my thesis, in particular to substantiate my hypothesis about the importance of Mansfield's colonial background in her development as a literary Impressionist or more specifically, a Colonial Impressionist. Key themes explored in Chapter 6, Rural Landscapes, include the passage of time and the transience of life – both of which are integral to Impressionist aesthetics. Mansfield's development and particular painterly style is considered alongside other New Zealand artists, both immigrant and native-born. Here also, the importance of location and the role of memory in respect to identity are explored as is the idea that Mansfield re-accessed and reassessed New Zealand through the landscapes of the French Impressionists.

In addition to Mansfield's short stories and the paintings of the Impressionists, my primary resources are *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks* (1997) and *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield* (1984-2008) which provide traces of Mansfield's development as a writer in relation to the visual arts and evidence of her painterly sympathies, including her desired ownership of one of Cézanne's figures (see *CL4:278*).¹³ Within this thesis I endeavour to reveal possible painterly sources for Mansfield's short stories. However, no one story is a direct re-representation or an imitation of any one modern painting, but rather an amalgamation of several works, often from different schools (such as in the case of "Daphne" as demonstrated in Chapter 3), with certain features combined to create a new integrated composition which bears testament to the subjectivity of perception.

Mansfield's work contains an elusive quality and for this reason, both the artist and her short stories continue to elude critics and defy concrete categorisation. An avid reader of both classic and modern literature,¹⁴ music lover, amateur cellist, shrewd mimic, and

¹² Keith built on this research in *The Big Picture: A History of New Zealand Art from 1642 (2007)*.

¹³ KM to Dorothy Brett, 12 September 1921, cited in Chapter 1.

¹⁴ Parliamentary librarian, Dr. G. H. Scholefield provides a record of Mansfield's reading at the General Assembly Library in Wellington during her eighteen months back in New Zealand prior

indefatigable cynic, Mansfield in her early and formative years “just like a squirrel... gathered & gathered & hid away for that ... [time] when I should rediscover all this treasure ...” her observations, impressions, and experiences of “Life” (NB2:30). She diligently recorded these in her notebooks along with numerous quotes and passages from the texts of her favourite writers. Her notebooks were subsequently employed in much the same manner as an artist’s sketch book with Mansfield reusing, reinventing, and re-contextualising various motifs – her “copy” – within her short stories in her search for a style that best realised her aesthetic and literary aims (CL1:45).¹⁵ Strains of Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism,¹⁶ and Expressionism are all evident in Mansfield’s modernist writing.¹⁷ It is their impressionistic quality however which is the overriding feature.

From the fleeting glimpses – ‘slice of life’ – narratives within which time does not follow conventional or chronological linearity, to the highly pictorial, evocatively rendered domestic, urban and rural landscapes, within which weather and garden-imagery are used as tools to represent the passage of time and highlight the transience of life; from the emphasis on light, colour, and atmosphere – in fact, the three serve as subjects within her narratives – to the preference for seemingly insignificant detail versus any action or drama taking place; in the privileging of sense-oriented responses and of subjective, individual impressions; in the lack of both conventional plot or denouement; the unconventional characterisation and in her consistently modern subject matter, Mansfield’s vision closely corresponds with that demonstrated in the work of the Impressionist painters. While the prose of the literary Impressionists might indicate an early original source – a paradigm of sorts – from which Mansfield developed her own style, the paintings of the men and women who became known as Impressionists provide a more valuable resource for comparison. Such comparisons result in a better appreciation and a fuller understanding of Mansfield’s fiction.

to her final departure. The record, which includes Shakespeare, the Romantic poets, the Great Russian novelists and Nietzsche, demonstrates how advanced and diverse Mansfield’s reading was. See Harold Beauchamp, *Reminiscences and Recollections* (New Plymouth, New Zealand: Thomas Avery & Sons Limited, 1937) 194-5.

¹⁵ KM to Vera Beauchamp [?May-June 1908].

¹⁶ “Bliss” (1918) perhaps best shows Mansfield’s debt to and affinity with Symbolism; though “Prelude” and “At the Bay” serve equally as well. Fruit, food, and flowers in all three stories serve as potent symbols which reinforce the text’s themes.

¹⁷ See Julia Van Gunsteren, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990) 11.

CHAPTER 1

THE RISE OF IMPRESSIONISM IN THE ARTS

The era during which Mansfield lived and wrote was one of greater artistic experimentation and collaboration than had ever before been witnessed in the visual and literary arts. Linda Nochlin explains:

At no preceding time in the history of art had there been such a rapid succession of styles and movements.... Time and again, the most basic questions—about the relation between art and nature, perception and reality, about the nature of reality itself—were raised by the Impressionists and the painters who followed them and reacted against them (v).

Mansfield acknowledged this herself: “in all this division and confusion ... opinion is united in declaring this to be an age of experiment” (Murray, Katherine Mansfield: *Novels and Novelists* 107). And Mansfield was no exception. To her brother-in-law, Richard Murry, a painter, she writes:

... your longing for technical knowledge seems to me profoundly what an artist OUGHT to feel today. Its a kind of deep sign of the times – rather the Zeitgeist.... Your generation & mine too has been ‘put off’ with imitations of the real thing and we’re bound to react violently if we’re sincere.... You see I too have a passion for technique. I have a passion for making the thing into a *whole* if you know what I mean. Out of technique is born real style, I believe (CL4:173).¹

Her writing bears testament to the nature of these times as it evidences the influence of the various styles then permeating artistic and literary circles and vying for eminence on the avant-garde stage. She collaborated with an artist friend on an illustrated book of children’s verse and composed other poems to be set to Debussy-like scores.² Early jottings in the *Notebooks* reveal her Symbolist tendencies, “Summer Idylle. (1906).” for example. A vignette entitled “In the Botanical Gardens” (1907) shows a clear leaning towards Impressionism (NB1:70-71). “The Woman at the Store” (1912) contains Fauvist traits; “Je ne parle pas français” owes something to Naturalism (1918). Primarily, however, the themes and issues she chose to address, from the various forms of expression that were available to her to inherit and modify, find parallels in Impressionism. Like the Impressionists, Mansfield endeavoured to realise authenticity in her work and to create within her narratives valid pictorial metaphors for reality as she conceived of it resulting in stories which ‘speak’ the zeitgeist of this momentous time in the history of Western European culture.

The history of Impressionism in the visual arts including its precedents and precursors, leaders and practitioners, advocates and critics, methods, techniques, aesthetic principles

¹ 3 February 1921.

² See KM to Edith Bendall, c. 22 July 1907, CL1:22-23; re. Debussy, see KM to Garnett Trowell, 6 October 1908, CL1:66 and 29 October 1908, CL1:80.

and legacy continues to fuel international scholarship. In addition to the aforementioned works of Rewald and Thomson, the most reputable sources in English include Linda Nochlin's *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1873-1904: Sources and Documents* (1966); T. J. Clark's *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (1990); and, more recently, James J. Rubin's *Impressionism* (1999). Kate Flint's *Impressionists in England: The Critical Reception* (1984) is a valuable resource that includes both general articles and reviews of Impressionism, and artist-specific pieces on Manet, Degas, Monet, Pissarro and Morisot, that were published in mainstream British newspapers and art journals between 1873 and 1905, and as such, would have been accessible to Mansfield and her contemporaries.³ This thesis attempts to provide neither a comprehensive account nor a potted version of the history of Impressionism, but rather an overview of those issues and features of Impressionism most pertinent to my investigations into the influence of modern art on Mansfield's aesthetic ideas, particularly those which informed her writing.

The Rise of Impressionist Painting

The term 'Impressionism' in relation to the arts has been used vaguely and variously since the exhibition of Claude Monet's painting, entitled *Impression: Sunrise* (1872), at what became known as the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874.⁴ Increasingly frustrated by both the exhibition monopoly exercised by the French Royal Academy and the jurists' preference for classical or historical subjects, a group of thirty artists, including Edgar Degas (1834-1917), Berthe Morisot (1841-95), Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), Camille Pissarro (1830-1903),⁵ Alfred Sisley (1839-99), Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), and Claude Monet (1840-1926), formed the *Société Anonyme Coopérative d'Artistes-peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs, etc.*, with the intention of exhibiting independently at venues other than the Salon and showcasing their contemporary subject matter and radically modern painterly techniques. The core of this group continued to exhibit independently with a further seven shows in 1876, 1877, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882 and 1886. Other participants over this period included Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) and Gustave Caillebotte (1848-94). Grace Seiberling notes that within a short time the term Impressionism was used generically in art criticism to describe any work which was avant-garde including those exhibited at the Salons (156).⁶ As early as 1877, works that depicted modern subjects in an outdoor setting with relatively indistinct

³ In the early 1870s the *Athenaeum*, *The Times* and the *Art Journal* all carried reviews of what would soon be known as Impressionism. The *Magazine of Art* and the *Artist*, established in 1878 and 1880 respectively, provided new and progressive forums for art criticism in English.

⁴ Monet, *Impression, Sunrise* (1873), [postdated 1872], oil on canvas, Musée Marmottan, Paris.

⁵ Pissarro was the only member to exhibit in all eight shows.

⁶ Similarly, Flint writes, "By the turn of the century, the word 'Impressionism' was being used so widely, so loosely, that it was tending to forfeit its original meaning", Kate Flint, ed. *Impressionists in England: The Critical Reception* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henly: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) 11, (see Flint 11-12 for examples of this tendency).

backgrounds were regarded as impressionistic and any artist working in a high-key palette was linked to Impressionism. Realist Édouard Manet (1832-83), who then-contemporary art criticism located as the father of Impressionism – and certainly Mansfield understood him as such – neither accepted the title nor exhibited with the group during his lifetime.⁷ He was in fact the link between Romanticism and Impressionism. Degas disliked the term ‘Impressionist’ ascribed them by the Press insisting that, if anything, they should be known as the *Indépendents*. Zola used the term *les actualistes* owing to the painters’ pledge to depict the peculiarities of the modern times in which they lived (Thomson 162).

The French Impressionists favoured scenes from everyday life as opposed to grand scenes from ancient history. Their subjects were taken from their immediate locale and were the result of close observation of the people within that environment and of those activities with which they were occupied, both at work and at leisure. Their subjects included the opera and the ballet and modern phenomena, such as rail travel. They painted the bourgeoisie – an increasingly powerful class both politically, following the revolution in 1848, and commercially, heralding a new era in mercantilism and consumerism. The working class and those who existed on the fringes of society and on the streets of Paris itself were also worthy subject matter in the eyes of these new painters of modern life. They paid heed to seasonal changes and to weather effects with either or both serving as the subject of a painting in place of a traditional motif. Their paintings were sometimes characterised by a sketchy quality, more obviously in Monet’s work than in Degas’s, and both the critics and the gallery-going public felt many of them to be either unfinished works or merely preliminary drawings unfit for exhibition, as one of the first reviews demonstrates: [“upon] examination [Impressionism] does not fail to upset all one’s conventional ideas about level of finish, about chiaroscuro, about what makes an attractive site” (cited in Thomson 125).⁸

⁷ See KM to Brett, 29 August 1921, *CLA*:270.

⁸ Philippe Burty’s first review appeared in *La République française*, 16 April 1874; the second (from which I quote), featured in the same paper 25 April 1874. Probably the most famous of these initial responses is Louis Leroy’s hostile review in the satirical journal *Le Charivari*, oft quoted in Impressionist texts. Using the fictional character of Mr. Joseph Vincent to comment on various works at the first Impressionist exhibition, he describes Pissarro’s *Ploughed Field* as “palette-scrappings uniformly laid on a dirty canvas”; Sisley’s *An Orchard*: “it’s neither here nor there”; and the figures in Monet’s *Boulevard des Capucines*: “black tongue lickings...slap-dash...appalling”, cited in Rewald, 319-20 (partially cited by Thomson, 125, 28).

The Development and Dissemination of Impressionism

Prominent Parisian Art Dealer Paul Durand-Ruel's (1831-1922) role in the development and dissemination of Impressionism cannot be underestimated.⁹ Between 1870 and '71, having fled Paris during the Franco-Prussian war Durand-Ruel opened galleries in London and Brussels respectively. And at this time he discovered the work of Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, Degas, Renoir and Manet – the former two also having sought temporary refuge in London. Between 1870 and 1875 Durand-Ruel held twelve exhibitions in London of pictures brought from Paris, all of which featured a healthy representation of the modern landscapes of the Barbizon School, if only a limited number of Impressionist works.¹⁰ In 1876, he hosted the 2nd Impressionist Exhibition at his Paris gallery and continued to support the artists morally and financially. His New York show of 1886 entitled "Works in Oil and Pastel by the Impressionists of Paris" introduced Impressionism to America where it was received with greater enthusiasm and attained greater popularity than in Europe.¹¹ Between 1890 and 1914 Durand-Ruel held exhibitions worldwide including London, Boston, Rotterdam and more than ten cities in Germany. Those held in London culminated in an Impressionist exhibition in January 1905, with over three hundred works on display at The Grafton Gallery. It was the first time since Impressionism's inception thirty years prior that such a representative collection of Impressionist works had been available to Londoners (*Times* (London) 17 Jan. 1905, 6). In a comprehensive if not entirely informed review, the journalist cites the Impressionists' links to Zola and Baudelaire, discusses Manet's faults and achievements, is mostly appreciative of Renoir, acknowledges Monet's international reputation and influence, thus importance, but finds his work "monotonous"; disparages Degas's achievements, acknowledges Morisot's "lightness ... and delicacy" and passes quickly over Boudin, Cézanne, Pissarro and Sisley (*ibid.*).¹² The *Standard*, the *Sunday Times*, *Referee*, the *Manchester Guardian* and *Nineteenth Century* followed suit with equally revealing if not altogether informed reviews.¹³ The 1905 show proved influential upon that generation's artists, writers and poets, one of whom might have been Mansfield. Surprisingly, the 1905 show has been completely ignored by contemporary literary critics for whom the 1910

⁹ Upon his father's (Jean Durand's) death in 1865, Durand-Ruel assumed management of the store-gallery – a popular meeting place for artists and collectors – and further grew the business.

¹⁰ See Cecil Gould, "An Early Buyer of French Impressionists in England", *The Burlington Magazine* 108. 756 (March 1966): 141-42.

¹¹ The Impressionists rather despaired of their popularity in America. In 1888 Monet confessed to Durand-Ruel "It breaks my heart to see all of my paintings leave for America", *Monet and The Impressionists*, George T. M. Shackelford, ed. (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2008) 15.

¹² The reviewer cites Morisot as Manet's daughter-in-law when in fact she was his sister-in-law.

¹³ The reviews have been reproduced in Flint as follows, *Manchester Guardian* 203-06; *The Times* 207-11; *The Standard* 211-14; the *Sunday Times* 214-17, 217-18 and 219-220; *Referee* 218-19; and *Nineteenth Century* 220-25.

'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' exhibition – also held at the Grafton Gallery – which was organised by Roger Fry and attended by Virginia Woolf, represented the first significant exhibition of modern art outside of France;¹⁴ both exhibitions are brought into discussion in upcoming chapters.

The Influences which Inspired and Shaped Impressionism

Thomson reveals that contrary to initial contemporary beliefs, while the artists flouted academic conventions, Impressionism was not revolutionary. Thomson's findings help to elucidate why Impressionism remains difficult to define. Contemporary critic, Jules-Antoine Castagnary, in a review of 1863, locates Monet and "the whole idealistic and realistic younger generation" under the umbrella of Naturalism but later explained that Impressionism was a primarily a modification of existing artistic practices and that the Impressionists, as they were to be known, looked to the past and the present in equal measure – just as Mansfield who was both an imitator and an innovator would also do in due course (Castagnary cited in Rewald 148). Initially, the Impressionists were primarily influenced by the landscapes of the Barbizon School (circa 1830-70), the name given to a group of painters who following in the footsteps of Corot (1796-1875), gathered at Barbizon and painted scenes of nearby Auteuil and Fontainebleau, drawing inspiration straight from the physical properties of nature.¹⁵ Though their works were strongly landscape-oriented, rural rather than urban, and generally less figural, whereas the Impressionists were drawn to the urban centres and bourgeois pastimes, the Barbizons' habit of working *en plein air*, their refreshed colour palette, looser brush-work and mood-evoking scenes provided much inspiration to the next generation of artists as these aesthetic principles were to underpin Impressionism – and not only in France; late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand painters were also influenced by the landscapes of Corot *et al* (see Chapter 6). The Impressionists also admired French Realist painters including Gustave Courbet (1819-77) who was unconventional in both his subject matter and his raw, gestural painterly style, portraying peasants and labourers unromantically, in less than picturesque settings;¹⁶ and London-based James-Jacque Tissot (1836-1902) with his everyday subjects. Degas particularly admired the draughtsmanship of Neo-classicist Ingres (1780-1867), and as a group, the artists shared a deep respect for the richly coloured and sensual paintings of the

¹⁴ Presumably, the majority of literary critics whose interests lie outside art history are not aware of the 1905 show and have instead been guided by Woolf's comments about the 1910 show (discussed in Chapter 2, see n. 1).

¹⁵ The Barbizon School: Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867), Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878), Johan Barthold Jongkind (1819-1891) and Eugène Boudin (1824-1898).

¹⁶ Prime examples from Courbet's oeuvre include *The Peasants of Flagey* (1849), oil on canvas, the Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon; *The Stonebreakers* (1850), oil on canvas, destroyed during WWII.

Romantic artist Delacroix (1798-1863).¹⁷ Manet in particular expressed an affinity for the colour and exoticism of Spanish subjects, within compositions that drew on his own experiences of Spanish culture and which demonstrated the influence of Spanish Masters Velázquez (1599-1660) and Goya (1746-1828).¹⁸ Monet and Pissarro were greatly influenced by the atmospheric (*plein-air*) cloud studies of English Romantic painters John Constable (1776-1837) and J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851) which they had seen in England in 1870.¹⁹ They continued working in both the well established landscape and nude genres, albeit, in radically new ways.²⁰

In their quest to represent modernity within their paintings, the Impressionists, and later Art Nouveau artists and Cubists looked to popular imported aesthetic trends, incorporating the reductive design elements of Japanese wood-block prints – *ukiyo-e* – an art form which had only recently (and incidentally) become visible on the European stage.²¹ Characterised by areas of bold, flat colour with bold outlines which lent the works simple elegance and executed with a disregard for conventional rules of perspective,²² *ukiyo-e* were perceived as entirely modern and were immediately popular with European artists seeking new design inspiration, including American-born, British-based artist James Abbot McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), Degas, Manet, Monet, Cassatt and Post-Impressionist Vincent van Gogh (1853-90).²³ A pavilion at the World Fair in 1867 and an exhibition of Japanese art held at the *École des Beaux Arts* in 1890, cemented the desirability of Japanese arts and fashions. Far from waning, the popularity of all things Japanese – clothing, textiles, furniture, ornaments and other curios – surged in 1910 when London's Shepherd's Bush played host to a significant

¹⁷ Evidenced in Henri Fantin-Latour's *Homage to Delacroix* (1864), oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

¹⁸ *Lola de Valence* (1863), oil on canvas, Jeu de Paume, Louvre, Paris, of the Camprubi Troupe whom Manet and his associates saw at the Hippodrome and *The Balcony* (1868-69), oil on canvas, Jeu de Paume, Louvre, Paris, were based on compositions by Goya; cp: Francisco Goya, *Portrait of the Duchess of Alba* (1797), oil on canvas, Hispanic Society of America, New York.

¹⁹ Evidently Manet was too. Eugène Manet in a letter of 1879 to his wife Berthe Morisot, writes, "Edouard ... has begun a picture.... Not a drop of black; Turner must have appeared to him in a dream", *The Correspondence of Berthe Morisot*, ed. Dennis Rouart (London: Camden Press, 1986) 110.

²⁰ For example, Renoir, *Nude in Sunlight* (1875), oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

²¹ The first *ukiyo-e* prints arrived in Paris not as art works in the own right, but as packaging around Oriental porcelain. In 1862, a store opened by Madame Desoye on Rue de Rivoli called La Porte Chinoise and selling *ukiyo-e* and other oriental curios, in addition to supplying the bourgeois with their trinkets, attracted artists such as Degas and Whistler.

²² The work of Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) and Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), artists of the Edo-period, proved most popular with the Impressionists, particularly images from Hokusai's series: *Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji* (1826-1833); and Hiroshige's series: *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* (1856-1858), from which van Gogh borrowed.

²³ See: Cassatt, *Woman at her Toilette* (1891), colour print with drypoint and aquatint, Chester Dale Collection, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.; Monet, *Japonnerie* (1876), oil on canvas, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Whistler, *Caprice in Purple and Gold, No. 2: The Golden Screen* (1864), oil on wood, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

Japanese exhibition – attended by Mansfield – which included over 2000 arts and crafts items including prints and porcelains, architectural models, shrines, acrobats, sword dancers, sumo wrestlers, and there was even a Formosan village.²⁴ The phenomenon extended further than Europe though its impact was greatest in Paris and London as the bourgeoisie sought to fill their homes with exotic treasures from the Orient. Mansfield was no exception. She began reading and recommending Japanese poetry, often dressed Japanese-style in kimonos, took to sitting on mats on the floor while drinking tea from bowls, and installed a large Buddha figure in her flat.²⁵ It is possible that she understood Japan and New Zealand as having similar traits – both were relatively newly ‘discovered’, both were archipelagos and both had earlier tribal histories. However, it was primarily the *ukiyo-e* prints – popularly dubbed ‘pictures of a floating world’ – which intrigued the avant-garde artists. Perhaps coincidentally, having determined to “write recollections of my own country” Mansfield declares that “I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the old world. It must be mysterious, as though floating – it must take the breath” (*NB2:32*).²⁶ In “Psychology” (1919/20) her female protagonist is an artist who produces her own “wood-cuts” (118). *Ukiyo-e* artists depicted urban landscapes within which trees and bridges forming bold verticals and horizontals were juxtaposed with delicate cherry blossom, thus contrasting modernity and the ephemeral. The prints offered the Impressionists more than just new compositional or design possibilities; the subject matter also corresponded with their aims in that they were primarily scenes of city life, particularly drawn from the entertainment sector and included popular actors, sumo wrestlers and courtesans – some of which were sexually explicit images.²⁷

Painters of Modern Life

The Impressionists’ self-consciously modern choice of subject matter was significantly indebted to Baudelaire’s *The Painter of Modern Life* within which he asserted that if art was to be relevant, it must concern itself with modernity. Courbet had, of course, made similar claims early in his professional career. Since his *Salon of 1846*, Baudelaire had championed modernity and his call to artists to paint modern subjects, particularly the urban variety of Paris, was met with enthusiasm from painters such as Manet and his close associates. In *The Painter of Modern Life* Baudelaire describes a character called the *flâneur*, a casual man of leisure, who might “set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of

²⁴ The British-Japanese Exhibition ran from May – October 1910 and saw 8 million visitors including 500,000 on one Sunday in September.

²⁵ During his Pacific travels, Gauguin, inspired by primitive native sculpture in the City Art Gallery, Auckland, painted *The Grand Buddha* 1899 which depicts a scene not dissimilar from that Mansfield was aiming to create.

²⁶ 22 January 1916.

²⁷ See Hokusai’s *Dream of the Fisherman’s Wife*.

movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite" (9). He insisted that the modern artist should aspire to the position of the *flâneur* and henceforth experience the city as a detached spectator – as one able “to see the world, to be at the centre of the world and yet to remain hidden from the world” (ibid). Manet’s *Music in the Tuileries Gardens* (1862), within which he pays tribute to modernity and to Baudelaire specifically, including his figure along with other contemporary writers and artists within the composition, evidences the influence of Baudelaire’s entreaty.²⁸ The Impressionists utilised smaller-scale canvases primarily because they proved more portable, allowing them that mobility championed by Baudelaire, but also because they represented a further move away from the academic tradition of Salon-typical large-scale landscapes. As Thomson also notes, the painters had in mind a new patron – the private collector who required works suitably domestic in scale (15). Even this small detail corresponds with Mansfield’s preference for the short story over the novel. Stylistically, her modern, painterly vignettes (promptly published and thus readily accessible via periodicals) are the literary equivalents to the rapidly executed sketches of modernity produced by the Impressionists.

The Impressionists were not only painting modern subjects, they were doing so via modern materials. Significant scientific advances in the manufacture of synthetic colours in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made available a greater variety of pigments which became increasingly affordable during the Impressionists’ careers; this led to a lightening and brightening of the palette which coupled with finer, dappled brush-strokes enabled them to recreate the appearance of rippled water, filtered sunlight and shadow. Determinedly modern in both their technique and subject matter and working *en plein air*, Pissarro, Monet, Renoir, Sisley and others progressed to painting at seaside resorts and other popular bourgeois leisure sites. Both Manet and Degas were increasingly drawn to scenes of café life where, in addition to the captivating effects of artificial lighting and reflections which preoccupied many of the Impressionists, the café patrons – a stratified segment of society consisting of lower-class women and middle and upper-class men – provided them with further inspiration and impetus. Their shared interest in the class of women who either worked at or frequented the cafés extended to those whose occupations included prostitution and laundering.²⁹ Morisot and Cassatt were far less able to meet Baudelaire’s injunction. Both their gender and their upper-middle-class status meant that neither was able to go about unchaperoned, and far from assuming the role of detached spectators they were very much a part of the spectacle for the voyeuristic *flâneur’s*

²⁸ Manet, *Music in the Tuileries Gardens* (1862), oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.

²⁹ See Manet, *At the Café* (1878), oil on canvas, Oskar Reinhard Collection, Winterthur; *Nana* (1877), oil on canvas, Kunsthalle, Hamburg. Manet’s and Degas’s images of working class women and bourgeois entertainment is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

consumption. Furthermore, both remained unarguably aware of the type of paintings they must produce in order to please (and appease) the Salon jury.³⁰ Their domesticated subject matter illustrates the restricted sphere in which they moved; for example, Morisot's *The Cradle* (1872-3) and *Mme. Morisot and Her Daughter Mme. Pontillon (The Mother and Sister of the Artist)*, (1869-70), (see Figs. 2 and 3).

Following Napoleon III's appointment of Baron Haussmann as Prefect of the Seine in 1853, Paris underwent unprecedented redevelopment resulting in a modern city which outshone many others in Europe.³¹ London, by contrast, was dirty and crowded – a testament of its status as the capital of industry and trade. In the wake of the Franco-Prussian war, however, which saw the Hôtel de Ville, the Tuileries Palace and parts of the Rue de Rivoli reduced to rubble, Parisians struggled to make sense of their now dramatically altered physical surroundings. While Haussmannisation quickly resumed, the effects of the Siege of Paris were everywhere evident.³² Modern artists attempted to express this within their respective media, either explicitly, indirectly, or by avoiding political subjects altogether as the Impressionists chose to do.³³ One generation later, this was also the case for Mansfield and her colleagues during and following World War I. In February 1918, she writes of her “horror of the way this war creeps into writing ... oozes in – trickles in” (CL2:70).³⁴ In a letter of 1921, Mansfield concludes:

It seems to me like this. Here is painting, and here is life. We can't separate them. Both of them have suffered an upheaval extraordinary in the last few years. There is a kind of tremendous agitation going on still, but so far anything that has come to the surface seems to have been experimental or a fluke – a lucky accident. I believe the only way to *live* as artists under these new conditions in art and life is to put everything to the test for ourselves (CL4:173).³⁵

Ostensibly, Mansfield's assertions separate her from her Impressionist predecessors who in their own work denied explicit reference to the devastation brought about by the Franco-Prussian war, as she forcibly insists on the great gulf between pre-war and post-war life, a

³⁰ Although male artists also tailored their subjects and style to better their chances of selection. Émile Zola in *L'Événement*, 27 April 1866 writes, “If I were a needy painter, my greatest concern would be who I might have for a judge, in order to paint according to his tastes”, cited in Kimball 51.

³¹ Monet captures something of the gleaming opulence of the urban renewal of Paris in *Garden of the Princess* (1867), (see fig. 17).

³² See Thomson 20-26.

³³ Excluding Manet; for example, *The Execution of Maximilian* (1868-69), (dated 19 June 1867), oil on canvas, Kunsthalle, Mannheim; and *The Civil War* (1873), lithograph, Photo Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Paris. However, though Manet associated closely with the Impressionists, he never exhibited with them during his lifetime and his ideals were not entirely in keeping with many of their own; for example, he still held fast to the idea that the Salon was the only place at which to exhibit.

³⁴ KM to JMM, 12 and 13 February 1918.

³⁵ KM to Richard Murray, 3 February 1921.

gulf she believes must be applied in art – as her review of *Night and Day* (1919) makes very clear.³⁶ And yet, Mansfield also denies explicit reference to the war, instead using metaphors in “The Fly” (1922) and hinting at it in the terrifying authority figure of the recently deceased Colonel in “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” (1920).

Mansfield’s belief that everything must be put to the test corresponds with the actions and methodologies of any great artist in any century but in the context of her own times, it aligns her particularly with the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists who denied the legacy of the academic tradition. Monet and Renoir for example, when working closely together at the popular riverside resort of La Grenouillère during 1869, made many discoveries pertaining to colour and shadow which provided them with the impetus to further experiment; these led ultimately to the establishment of a set of aesthetic principles upon which Impressionism was founded. Light particularly served to unify experiments in both figure and landscape painting. Monet’s *Bathers at La Grenouillère* (1869) and Renoir’s *La Grenouillère* (c.1868) bear testament to such endeavours.³⁷ Mansfield’s use of light and colour within the landscape may be similarly characterised. From Menton she writes, “The colour and the movement everywhere make you continually happy. Its all ruled by the sun” (CL3:231).³⁸ Her observations filtered into stories such as “At the Bay” with the effects of sunlight and shadow informing whole sections of the narrative:

The sun had set. In the Western sky there were great masses of crushed-up rose-coloured clouds. Broad beams of light shone through the clouds and beyond them as if they would cover the whole sky. Overhead the blue faded; it turned a pale gold, and the bush outlined against it gleamed dark and brilliant like metal (238).

The expression “Western sky” with its European implications works both with and against the Southern Hemisphere’s “bush” and is highly indicative of the tensions inherent in Mansfield’s work. Stylistically, Impressionism allowed Mansfield to distance herself from her colonial world and it simultaneously provided her with a means of modernising and internationalising her own writing; this is ultimately why the term Colonial Impressionism serves so well.

As has been demonstrated, there exists great diversity within Impressionism. Degas and Caillebotte, for example, were as close to Realism as to Impressionism in that they maintained accuracy in proportion, scale and colouring, and their works often demonstrated a high level of finish – particularly Caillebotte’s. However, their themes and everyday subjects align them with Impressionism. Degas’s intention was not to launch an anti-

³⁶ See KM to JMM, 10 November 1919, CL3:82 and Mansfield’s review in *Novels and Novelists*, ed. J. Middleton Murry (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1930) 107-111.

³⁷ Monet, *Bathers at La Grenouillère* (1869), oil on canvas, National Gallery, London; Renoir, *La Grenouillère* (c.1868), oil on canvas, Oskar Reinhart Collection, Am Römerholz, Winterthur.

³⁸ KM to Richard Murry, 24 February 1920.

academic enterprise, but rather to establish an independent exhibition forum. Manet saw himself as neither an Impressionist – he died some three years before the last of the Impressionist exhibitions – nor a Post-Impressionist; and yet it was his name that Roger Fry attached to the seminal 1910 exhibition, an association that was perpetuated within art criticism. Post-Impressionism was neither a strict continuation of Impressionist practice, nor an absolute revolt against it. Although the Post-Impressionists employed a bolder brushstroke and utilised more vivid colours, the Impressionists were no less expressive; both terms are synonymous with heightened subjectivity. David Britt finds the “multiplicity of visual styles” emerging, developing and filtering throughout the modern era, from about 1850 until 1975, and which gathered real impetus during the Impressionist period, as nothing short of confusing (7). This confusion is exacerbated by the fact that several of the modern painters moved between styles; Derain for example, whose paintings Murry admired, vacillated between Impressionism and Fauvism.

Post-Impressionism

Fauvism, a branch of Post-Impressionism to which Mansfield temporarily responded and the style in which her friends, painters J. D. Fergusson (1874-1961), and Anne Estelle Rice (1879-1959) worked, was according to Sarah Whitfield “of all twentieth-century art movements ... the most transient and ... the least definable” (11).³⁹ Although without a common doctrine, the Fauves, namely Henri Matisse (1869-1954), Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958) and André Derain (1880-1954), were united by their endeavours to go beyond what the Impressionists had done in freeing painting from established modes of representation, and to realise harmonies in pure colour. Their unnaturalistic use of bold and bright colours bore testament to the heightened subjectivity which they brought to the gestural exercise of applying paint to canvas. Whitfield demonstrates how following their flirtations with Fauvism Vlaminck and Derain soon returned to an aesthetic which evidenced a clear debt to Impressionism. She aligns Vlaminck with Pissarro and Derain with Monet and explains how they reworked and reinterpreted the respective Impressionists’ compositions and subjects, if not their themes which in some cases they dispensed with, instead assigning colour a thematic role within their paintings of 1905-06. The Fauvist style proved particularly influential on the painters referred to as the German Expressionists and on the four artists who became known as the Scottish Colourists⁴⁰ – three of whom were associated with *Rhythm*.

³⁹ Mansfield’s association with Fergusson and Rice and their possible influence upon her work is discussed in Chapter 2 within which I also address the implications of their association with *Rhythm*.

⁴⁰ German Expressionism is associated primarily with two groups of artists: the Dresden group who went by the name of *Die Brücke* (the bridge) (1905-1913) and a Munich Group which called

Although their style remained diverse, the Impressionists shared and demonstrated an interest in the momentary effects of light, atmosphere and movement within landscapes both rural and urban, and favoured pure, vibrant colours. They manipulated conventional spatial perspectives and disregarded hierarchies of form ensuring that their works were true to their own observations and perception. Above all, the artists who became known as the Impressionists aimed to convey what Seiberling calls: “individual sensation” (151). Castagnary provided a succinct explanation in his 1874 review of painterly Impressionism: “They are *Impressionists* in the sense that they render not the landscape but the sensation produced by the landscape” (cited by Seiberling 148.).⁴¹ Because the emphasis was on subjectively evoked impressions, on the mutable mood of a scene as opposed to a permanent and tangible reality, and because the tendency was to suggest rather than depict, the term seemed equally as suited to music and literature and was soon freely used in association with each.⁴²

Beyond Painting: Impressionism in Music and Literature

French Composer Claude Debussy (1862-1918), produced musical scores which came to epitomise Impressionism within his medium.⁴³ Stylistically, his compositions represent the transitional phase between late Romanticism and early twentieth-century modernism in that they pay homage to the natural environment and privilege the role of the senses but do not follow conventional modes of composition. Like the painters of the period, he found that academic convention allowed him little room for experimentation; consequently, he bore the consternation of the majority of his teachers.⁴⁴ According to his biographer Oscar Thompson and evident in extant exercise books, Debussy blatantly ignored the laws of both composition and syntax – just as the Impressionists did in paint and Mansfield did in prose.⁴⁵ Thompson’s findings strongly echo the recollections of Mansfield’s teachers at Miss Swainson’s. Mrs. Smith despaired at Mansfield’s prolificacy most of which she found was

itself *Der Blaue Reiter* (the blue rider). The Scottish Colourists, S. J. Peploe (1871-1935); J. D. Fergusson, G. L. Hunter (1877-1931) and F. C. B. Cadell (1871-1935) never formed a group or school as such and in fact the name was not attached to their work until 1948.

⁴¹ Published originally in the republican daily *Le Siècle*, 3 May 1874.

⁴² See Brad Bucknell, *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics: Pater, Pound, Joyce and Stein* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2001) 40, 44, 131 regarding Impressionism specifically. While Bucknell does not mention Mansfield, owing to its interdisciplinary context, the book is generally useful.

⁴³ Although he denied an allegiance to Impressionism and claimed to be directly influenced and inspired by developments in the realm of literary Symbolism. See Carl Dalhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) 334.

⁴⁴ Debussy’s formal training at both the Paris Conservatoire and the Académie des Beaux-Arts included a four year period in residence at the French Academy in Rome following his victory in the *Prix de Rome* in 1885.

⁴⁵ See Oscar Thompson, *Debussy: man and artist* (New York: Dover Publications, 1967) Chapter II: “At the Conservatoire” 38-44.

poorly written and full of spelling errors, and of her tendency to “put *herself* in too much” (cited in Alpers 1982:19); another complained of Mansfield’s compositions which were “never on the subject given” (ibid.) – an idea which corresponds with Impressionism’s privileging of a theme as opposed to narrative.

Various terms associated with the Impressionism in painting became interchangeable with those applied to Debussy’s music. Romain Rolland (1908) finds, “Like the impressionist painters of his time he [Debussy] paints in pure colours, though with delicate sobriety” (cited in Thompson 19). Similarly, René Peter (1931) notes that the titles of Debussy’s works read like the titles of paintings and that he describes his compositions in artistic terms: “[Debussy] is a painter ... he calls his compositions pictures, sketches, engravings, arabesques, masques, studies in black and white. Plainly it is his delight to paint in music” (ibid.). Thompson concurs and elaborates: “there can be no such thing as absolute impressionism; it can only be a tendency—a tendency to draw near to pure sensation or pure emotion—to present illusion rather than bald fact. If there are artists who have followed that tendency—whatever their medium—they may be called ‘Impressionists.’ Claude Debussy is one of them” (ibid.). Debussy requested his *Nocturnes* (1892) be understood not merely in terms of their context as a musical score, but appreciated for “all the impressions and the special effects of light that the word [nocturne] suggests” (cited in Thompson 21). Similarly, Verlaine (1844-96) referred to music as “colored hearing” (ibid. 102) – a form of synaesthesia particularly explored by Baudelaire in *Correspondences* (1857), and later popularised by Arthur Rimbaud (1854-91) in *Vowels* (1871).

Debussy’s oeuvre epitomises the interrelationships and interdependencies of the arts at this time in history. Thompson cites the influence of Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Sisley and Renoir, van Gogh, Degas, Gauguin and Whistler. Writing for *Rhythm*, Rollo H. Meyers, who had heard and seen the composer conducting some of his works in London between 1909 and 1910, situates Debussy within Impressionism but with Fauvist leanings owing to his interest in “impression[s] of things as they are” as well as “their psychological effect on the mind of the observer” (1.2, 1911: 34).⁴⁶ A. Smith argues a similar case for Mansfield (see Chapter 2). Meyers explains that “The outstanding feature of ... [Debussy’s music] is the absence of any ‘leading note’—and it is probably this that produces at first on the listener a feeling of incompleteness ... it is unfamiliar” (31). Effectively, Mansfield’s stories lack a leading note in that she dispensed with the omniscient narrator and employed multiple points of view – a technique which Pierre Bourdieu asserts was first instituted by Manet (31). Furthermore, her stories begin abruptly and end without conventional resolutions, the result of which may be perceived as incompleteness – something Thomas Hardy (1840-28)

⁴⁶ “The Art of Claude Debussy”, *Rhythm* 1.2 (1911).

struggled with in “The Daughters of the Late Colonel”: “Even dear old Hardy told me to write more about those sisters. As if there was any more to say!” (CL4:316).⁴⁷ Thompson also links Debussy’s technicality to Impressionism:

The plein-airists were technicians, first of all; theirs was a method as well as a manner.... Debussy’s impressionism similarly had a technical as well as interpretative basis; he achieved with chord successions much what the painters achieved when they placed color strokes side by side (21).

Mansfield’s unorthodox grammar and punctuation achieved similar effects as will be demonstrated shortly.

Letters to Garnett Trowell in October 1908, show that Mansfield was at that early stage aiming to emulate Debussy’s effects within prose. She most likely first encountered his work at the music halls she attended when she was still at Queen’s.⁴⁸ Her appreciation was no doubt heightened by performances of the Ballets Russes in London, the effect of which was magnified when coupled with the dancers’ costumes.⁴⁹ Mansfield evidently understood Debussy’s language because she responded to it with a series of poems “to be set to ... Debussy’s chords” (CL1:80).⁵⁰ Critics pay little attention to Mansfield’s poetry, and certainly those she asked be set to Debussy’s music are unremarkable pieces, probably imitative and other than the thematic treatment of the passage of time they are not indicative of the impressionistic style she would assume in her prose.⁵¹ They do, however, demonstrate that Mansfield was thinking along cross-disciplinary or synaesthetic lines. Debussy’s work was regularly mentioned within the modernist art periodicals which she read and contributed to. Meyers explains that within his chosen medium, Debussy is “aiming to express the ever-increasing complexities of life as a whole, and the ever-varying sensations of individual experience” (*Rhythm* 1.2, 1911: 30). Meyers’ summation proves useful in that it touches on the pre-war ethos in Europe, but was written without the hindsight afforded Debussy’s biographer, writing in 1932. It also corresponds with Mansfield’s literary aims: “... that is

⁴⁷ KM to Brett, 11 November 1921. She explained her conclusion in a letter to William Gerhardi, see CL4:249.

⁴⁸ So-called Impressionist music gained popularity in the early 1900s. A news item in *The Times* notes Mme. Yvette Guilbert’s performance at Haymarket Theatre at which she sang Impressionist poems (24 June 1905): 14. At a concert held at The Lyceum Club, Mme. Blanche Marchesi sang ten songs, five of which were impressionist (the others were descriptive): “her object was to show that there can and should be, in music as in painting, an ‘impressionist’ school”. The distinction between the two types of song is explained as follows: “the essence of descriptive music being change and contrast, which ... were fatal to impressionism.” Impressionist songs sung by Marchesi included Schubert’s *Der Leiermann* (1827), and Debussy’s *Roundabouts* (c.1883) and *Mandoline* (c.1883), *The Times* (28 November 1905): 2.

⁴⁹ In 1912, Debussy wrote a large-scale orchestral piece entitled *Jeux*, for Serge Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes.

⁵⁰ KM to Garnett Trowell, 29 October 1908. See also CL1:66.

⁵¹ These are “In the Church”, “On the Sea Shore”, “The Lilac Tree” and “A Sad Truth”, October 1908, CL1:81-83.

what I tried to convey in *The Garden Party*. The diversity of life and how we try to fit in everything ..." (CL5:101).⁵²

Thompson takes into account the range of artistic developments to which Debussy was exposed and which aligns him most closely with the Impressionists. His conclusive findings merit quoting in full, so entirely do they correspond with my understanding of Mansfield's achievements in prose:

Debussy was no miniaturist, but neither did he attempt to fill canvases of heroic proportions. There was nothing of the panorama in his painting. He seized upon some aspect of the sea, the sky, the season, the dream; and this he converted to a state of feeling communicable in music. Much else might have been in view besides that particular aspect, but he was concerned with what he felt and this was what he gave out. In a sense it is music of a detail, but not music of details. There is a limitation of the scene, but little or no delineation of its particularized parts (309).

In defining Debussy's methods Thompson alights on the essential characteristics of Impressionist works: the reduced scale, the privileging of feeling or sensation within that composition; the fragmentary. These are the aesthetic qualities that Mansfield was inherently attuned to – as demonstrated in "*The Garden Party*" for example – and those which she subsequently modified to suit her literary purposes.

Literary Impressionism

Throughout Europe, but particularly in England and France, artists strove for a greater unity in the arts than had hitherto been sought.⁵³ Baudelaire who believed that "color and sounds [should] follow the same principles as words", envisioned an art work which appealed to all of the senses simultaneously (Kronegger 30). In keeping with such trends, various writers endeavoured to produce the literary equivalent to what the Impressionists were doing in paint. Dushan Bresky writes, "Many realist, naturalist ... or Symbolist narratives radiate the same luminous mood as landscapes by Monet, Manet, [and] Seurat" (298). Critics have since this time attempted to categorise the results of these endeavours and to define the nature of literary Impressionism. However, as Bresky points out, the Impressionist painters never produced a manifesto and, likewise, no body of writers subsequently advertised themselves as literary Impressionists (298).⁵⁴ In his survey of the term, Johnson suggests that

⁵² KM to William Gerhardt, 11 March 1922. See also NB1:103, June 1907 which reveals how early Mansfield had set these goals.

⁵³ Regarding the Pre-Raphaelites collaborations see Marion C. Lochhead, *The Victorian Household* (London: John Murray, 1964), Chapter 12: "Artists at Home", 170-181. Debussy, in addition to the music he wrote for Ballets Russes, produced musical scores in response to the poetry of Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Verlaine; an opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1901), based on the play by Maurice Maeterlinck and music for Gabriele D'Annunzio's play *Le martyr de St. Sébastien* (1911).

⁵⁴ Whereas the artists associated with, for example, Surrealism, articulated their aims and ideals in the *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) and in *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1924).

Impressionism in the arts is a cultural phenomenon rather than a movement, and he concludes that neither an absolute definition of what constitutes literary Impressionism exists, nor a consensus as to which writers warrant the title.⁵⁵ To exacerbate matters, despite extensive international scholarship, conflicting opinions continue to exist as to which painters were in fact Impressionists, and to precisely what constitutes painterly Impressionism. Because Impressionism in the arts developed in phases and varied depending on geographical origin, Kronegger, like Johnson, arrives at a similar conclusion stating, “there is no general formula for impressionism that is valid for all artists and for all times” (23). Phenomenon, movement or otherwise, pictorial, thematic, technical and stylistic similarities comparable with the effects achieved in Impressionist paintings became increasingly evident in the work of various writers at the *fin-de-siècle* and beyond. Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939) writes that he and his colleague Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), “accepted without much protest the stigma: ‘Impressionists’ that was thrown at us.... we accepted the name because ... we saw that Life did not narrate, but made impressions on our brains. We in turn, if we wished to produce on you an effect of life, must not narrate but render ... impressions” (182).⁵⁶ Ford’s explanation, like others offered by writers and painters associated with Impressionism evidences a seemingly inescapable vagueness. While the characteristics of writing which were initially perceived as impressionistic came to define Modernist fiction, precisely what constitutes literary Impressionism remains a debatable topic and a concrete definition will always prove elusive.

The Development and Dissemination of Literary Impressionism

Impressionism is, at best, an umbrella term under which regional and national varieties in painting, poetry, prose and music developed from around the mid nineteenth century. Johnson observes that the term Impressionism, though not used in criticism or reportage prior to the 1874 exhibition, was in private circulation well before this date (271). Scholars point particularly to Pater’s use of the term in *The Renaissance* (1873) in reference to the role of the aesthetic critic (Beckson and Ganz 88, Kronegger 23, O’Sullivan, *CL1*:xiii). Paris acted as a magnet to artists of various persuasions at the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Many of these, Kronegger notes, were writers whose early work is impressionistic including Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), George Moore (1852-1933), James

⁵⁵ A 1985 review of works at the Connaught Brown Gallery, London, reveals that there is still as much confusion over which artists warrant the title ‘Impressionist’: Manet, Degas and Matisse are all called Post-Impressionists, *The Times* (6 July 1985): 18.

⁵⁶ The last set of ellipsis is Ford’s own. Like Mansfield, Ford and Conrad were influenced by Flaubert and Maupassant. Ford Madox Ford, *Joseph Conrad* (London: Duckworth, 1924) 36.

Joyce (1882-1941),⁵⁷ Stefan George (1868-1933), Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) and Anton Chekov (1860-1904). Citing the short story *The Unknown Masterpiece* (1831, 1846), Kronegger holds Balzac to be if not a forerunner, at least someone who anticipated the phenomenon of Impressionism as early as 1832. She demonstrates that both Flaubert (1821-80) and the Goncourt brothers Edmond (1822-96) and Jules (1830-70), employ contemporary subjects and impressionistic techniques (particularly in their narrative innovations) prior to Impressionism's general acceptance as a movement. In fact, Balzac and the Goncourts, like Zola, are Naturalists. Kronegger's inclination to place them within the context of Impressionism is again indicative of its flexibility as a term – and indeed of the mutability of other terms – the 'isms' – by which twentieth and twenty-first-century cultural developments are defined. Nevertheless, Balzac – who Mansfield considered of “colossal” importance – the Goncourts, Flaubert and Zola to lesser and greater degrees, employed the techniques which came to characterise literary Impressionism (*CL1:46*);⁵⁸ furthermore, the novels of the latter two partly informed Mansfield's aesthetic tenets.

Kronegger observes that although

... after 1880 impressionism became an international movement, literary and musical as well as artistic. [And while] Paris is indisputably the cradle of French impressionism.... impressionism ranges further than culture, transcends it, and thus cannot be linked to any national group... (31-32).

Kronegger's assertions for the movement's internationalism are well founded.⁵⁹ In New Zealand literature, Lawrence Jones argues that up until the 1970s critical realism and Impressionism were the two dominant styles employed by writers (primarily novelists), (175). Jones cites Mansfield as one of the creators of literary Impressionism. He lists a number of New Zealand writers who throughout the twentieth century employed 'impressionistic' techniques within their narratives, including Robin Hyde (1906-39) and Janet Frame (1924-2004), two of New Zealand's most celebrated female authors.⁶⁰ This may suggest that Impressionism provided female artists in particular with a vehicle for their representations of New Zealand in the late colonial period and beyond; or perhaps that they felt less hampered by literary traditions than did their male counterparts and were instead

⁵⁷ Having both read *Ulysses* (1922), (initially published serially 1918-20) in preparation to review it in the *Nation* and the *Athenaeum*, Mansfield and Murry took tea with Joyce at their Paris hotel 29 March 1922 (see Norburn 84, Alpers 1982:417).

⁵⁸ KM to Vera Beauchamp, [?May-June 1908].

⁵⁹ E. H. McCormick (1940), Brown and Keith, Pound and Vial have all shown that in New Zealand, painters were practising an attenuated version of Impressionism from the 1890s and that it became the dominant style in painting at the turn of the century (discussed briefly in Chapter 3 and in depth in Chapter 6).

⁶⁰ See Lawrence Jones, “The Late Colonial Period, 1890-1934”, 134-150; “The Provincial Period, 1935-1964”, 150-178, *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, Ed., Terry Sturm (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998); in particular, Jones, ‘Modes: critical realism and impressionism’ 169-178, 175.

more receptive to new modes of expression. Although Kronegger mentions Mansfield only in passing, positioning her alongside Woolf, she does at least note Mansfield's Impressionist sensibility and describes her stories as "moment[s] of time" (48). Matz whose purpose and argument follows similar lines to Kronegger's, fails to locate Mansfield within literary Impressionism – an oversight which in both cases I can only suppose relates to a critical bias towards novelists and thus excludes short story writers.

Unarguably, the influence of Impressionism extended far beyond the period during which the painters were active. Kronegger finds impressionistic tendencies in the work of a number of French writers including Flaubert, André Gide (1869-1951), Marcel Proust (1871-1922), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80), Claude Simon (1913-2005) and Alain Robbe-Grillet (1922-2008); Prague-born writer Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926),⁶¹ who was based in Paris from 1902-10, but who spent prolonged periods in Germany, Russia and Switzerland; and Japanese writer Osamu Dazai (1909-48). Although the respective prose works, poems, essays, plays and scripts of these artists are as different from one another as they are alike, Kronegger finds them categorically impressionistic and explains

Impressionist creations in various countries are different expressions of the same basic idea. The common denominator of these various literary and artistic expressions is the impressionist style. It refers to a manner of suggesting reality. It is a manner in which a given artistic effect is achieved (13).

Similarly, Matz argues that the literary Impressionist's primary goal is to represent "perceptual totality" and thus they seek to "suggest atmosphere and mood" over reality (1). Mansfield's alights on these ideas in a letter to William Gerhardi (1895-1977):

I think your novel is awfully good.... It is a living book.... There is such feeling, such warmth, in those chapters. Nina's 'whimsical' voice ... the sofa with broken springs, the 'speck of soot on your nose'.... they seem to convey to the reader just the 'mood' you wished to convey.... you take the reader into that family; and how *real* you make the life, the ways, the surroundings. Fanny Ivanovna is *very* good. I *see* her (CL4: 318; KM's emphasis).⁶²

Her critique reveals what she strove for within her own writing and supports both Kronegger and Matz's claims. Furthermore, Mansfield's commentary parallels Conrad's enduring literary aim, which was "before all things to make you see" (Ford 168).⁶³

Phillipe Burty (1830-1890) in *Grave Imprudence* (1880), Edmond Duranty (1883-1880), in two short stories published in *Le Pays des Arts* (1881), include characters who are

⁶¹ Mansfield may have met Rilke at the Hôtel Château Belle Vue, Sierre, in June 1921 (see Alpers 1982:416).

⁶² 12 November 1921.

⁶³ In *Conrad and Impressionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) John G. Peters explores literary Impressionism from a philosophical perspective rather than in relation to the visual arts, 1.

Impressionist painters, indicating that writers at this time, if not personally influenced by the aesthetic theories of Impressionism and not necessarily attempting to achieve an effect in their literature commensurate with that achieved by the Impressionist painters, were at least significantly interested in the Impressionists' experiments and progress to address them within their own fiction. American novelist and short story writer Stephen Crane's (1871-1900) impressionistic impulses are well documented – which is perhaps unsurprising in light of the fact that America accepted the Impressionist movement more readily than either France or Britain initially.⁶⁴ Though thematically Crane's work shows a greater allegiance to Realism and Naturalism – idealism versus reality, spiritual crises, rejection of sentimentality – his contemporary subjects and demonstratively heightened response to colours and atmosphere align him with the Impressionists. In England, the Irish writer and art critic, George Moore's affinities for contemporary French naturalist literature, particularly Zola's, and for the Impressionists, including Manet, informed and influenced his writing. Moore had met both Zola and Manet in 1879 (Robins 2007:52). Moore's novels *A Modern Lover* (1883) and *Confessions of a Young Man* (1888) – the latter of which Mansfield recalled when in Paris – feature insightful descriptions of Impressionist paintings and partly-fictional, hybridised accounts of both the artists producing them and the exhibitions at which they were shown, and (in Moore's own words) they “render modern life in all its poignancy and fullness” such as he felt was epitomised in Impressionist canvases (cited in Robins 54).⁶⁵

Like Mansfield, Moore travelled back and forth between London and Paris and in addition to his literary subjects, the ideas and theories pertaining to modern art discussed in his novels mirror those of his Impressionist associates. Anna Gruetzner Robins suggests that Moore sought “a novelistic form appropriate to the revolutionary nature of the painting[s]” which he so enthusiastically responded to, notably in his attempt to mimic the fragmentary composition of a characteristic Degas within what is otherwise a coherent narrative structure (54).⁶⁶ In this thesis I of course make the same argument for Mansfield's innovations within the short story genre. Mansfield read Moore's novels and she reviewed Moore's *Esther Waters* (1884), a novel which appears to draw heavily on Zola's example, particularly *Zest for Life* (1883) – one of Mansfield early favourites. Mansfield finds *Esther Waters* admirably descriptive of London at “that particular time ... a London of theatres, music-halls, wine-shops, public-houses”, but is disappointed that all is described without

⁶⁴ See Bert Bender, “Hanging Stephen Crane in the Impressionist Museum”, *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, (35, 1976): 47-56.

⁶⁵ Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man* no doubt draws from Flaubert's *A Sentimental Education* in addition to Zola's *The Masterpiece*. In a letter to Murry, 19-20 March 1915, Mansfield implicitly refers to Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man*, CL1:157.

⁶⁶ Ulrich Weisstein makes a similar claim for Mansfield's “Her First Ball”, see Chapter 2.

“the faintest stirring of the breath of life” (*Novels & Novelists* 235).⁶⁷ Like her response to Gerhardi, Mansfield’s commentary here reveals quite simply what it was she was aiming for in her own prose. Despite her belief that Moore had failed to accurately capture the true living atmosphere of the environment he wrote about, both writers were active conduits of the artistic into the literary.

Mansfield’s Literary Impressionism: a Symbiotic Development

Pamela S. Saur, whose article “Viennese *Fin-de-Siècle* Impressionism in International Context” lends further weight to Kronegger’s claim for the internationalism of Impressionism, highlights the diversity that exists in Impressionism: “some equate impressionism with or identify overlapping qualities with decadence, symbolism, aestheticism, naturalism, *Jugendstil*, mannerism, neo-romanticism, and, in American poetry, imagism, all of which have their own distinct definitions and histories ...” (3). Mansfield’s work demonstrates an affinity with several of these movements. At the time when Wilde held her most tightly, Mansfield called for “a mad wave of ... super-aestheticism” to “intoxicate” New Zealand (*CL1*:44).⁶⁸ Her belief that her fellow colonials should “go to excess in the direction of culture, become almost decadent in their tendencies for a year or two” in order to “then find balance and proportion” demonstrates her allegiance to the Decadents (*ibid.*). Both Sydney Janet Kaplan and Kimber discuss the influence of the Symbolists and the Decadents, which Mansfield’s reading of Arthur Symons (1865-1945),⁶⁹ Colette (1873-1954) and Baudelaire facilitated.⁷⁰ Kimber shows how Mansfield’s impressionistic prose in “Spring Pictures” (1915),⁷¹ for example, grew out of her knowledge of French Symbolist literature and is a direct response to the French culture in which she was then immersed (2007:91). When describing the lower classes Mansfield tends towards Naturalism, employing colloquial language and foregrounding images of dirt and grease (rather like the image of the waiter in “Je ne parle pas français”). Alpers discusses Mansfield’s familiarity with the Munich illustrated magazine *Jugend* (1896-1940), from which the name *Jugendstil* (Germany’s version of art nouveau) developed. According to writer and colleague, C. E. Bechhofer-Roberts, Mansfield would “take a picture out of *Jugend*, and have a story round it in no time” (Alpers 1982:137). Her manipulation or exaggeration of proportion and perspective – the baby’s head in “Prelude” for instance is a feature of Mannerism. Her love of rural landscapes, the sense of place she associated with them, and her early preoccupation

⁶⁷ “Esther Waters Revisited”, *Athenaeum*, 6 August 1920; reproduced in *Novels & Novelists* 233-37.

⁶⁸ KM to Vera Beauchamp, [?April-May 1908].

⁶⁹ Specifically, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), republished in 1919 with additional material.

⁷⁰ See Kaplan 1991:83; Kimber 2007:85.

⁷¹ Published posthumously in *Something Childish* (1924).

with death aligns her with the Romantics. And finally, the insightful psychological portraits and the economy of prose are indicative of her Modernism; all of which illustrates how varied were her allegiances, how complex her formula and her literary development, and why past criticism has failed to place Mansfield more definitely within the realm of literary Impressionism.

Mansfield's debt to Flaubert – a Proto-Literary Impressionist

Mansfield's letters reveal a lifelong affinity for Flaubert; no doubt she was also influenced by Murry who wrote at least ten articles on Flaubert.⁷² She refers to few specific titles, though these include *Madame Bovary* (1857) which is famous for its use of free indirect discourse, which Van Gunsteren cites as a particular trait of literary Impressionism, primarily in that it serves as a vehicle for stream-of-consciousness, bi- and poly vocality and sometimes epiphany – defining characteristics of Mansfield's writing (109).⁷³ While Kimber concurs with Van Gunsteren, she argues specifically that free indirect discourse is a key defining feature of Modernist short stories – which is essentially at the core of both Matz and Wood's argument (2007:115).⁷⁴ Wood cites Flaubert more specifically as the founder of free indirect style which, while it characterises literary Impressionism, also came to define “modern realist narration” (39). I think it highly likely that Mansfield also read *A Sentimental Education* (1869). Both are modern in that the narrative takes place in cafés, on the street, in homes, at parties and at the theatre. The prose is highly pictorial and privileges the sensual aspects of the environment – colour, the effect of natural and artificial light and atmosphere – effects which Mansfield privileged within her own prose.

Because Flaubert likens what he is doing to “painting a ... picture”, Douglas Parmée points to Flaubert's depiction of “the surface of the lovely Seine, gleaming as in a future Impressionist painting” (Introduction to *A Sentimental Education* xix). Certainly, Flaubert's descriptive passages resonate with Impressionist feeling:

Suddenly damp air came swirling round him and he realized he'd reached the river. The lights of the street-lamps stretched out into the distance in two straight lines, and long red flames shimmered in the depths of the slate-grey water while the paler sky above seemed to be resting on great shadowy masses rising up on either side of the river.... Beyond, over the roof-tops, hovered a luminous haze; all sounds were hushed into one single hum; a light breeze was blowing (ibid. 55).

⁷² See for instance, KM to JMM, 25 May 1921, CL4:239.

⁷³ Mansfield mentions both *Madame Bovary* and *A Simple Heart* (1877) in a letter to JMM, 12 November 1922, CL5:322.

⁷⁴ Kimber also shows how this technique is weakened in translations from English to French, particularly where the punctuation has been altered, 2007: 208-09. However, Mansfield probably read Flaubert's novels in French.

Mansfield's description of the street in "The Tiredness of Rosabel" (1908) is not dissimilar: "Westbourne Grove looked as she had always imagined Venice to look at night, mysterious, dark, even the hansoms were like gondolas dodging up and down, and the lights trailing luridly—tongues of flame licking the wet street—magic fish swimming in the Grand Canal" (514). In this style of narration, Mansfield clearly looked to Flaubert (and Zola) as literary models. In fact, in some respects *A Sentimental Education's* main protagonist is not Frédéric Moreau, but the "intoxicating city" of Paris – "a flawed heroine" – and its environs, Auteuil and the Fontainebleau forest, locations favoured by and made famous by the Barbizon painters and Impressionists (xxiii).⁷⁵ Throughout the novel Flaubert privileges the urban, providing a fleeting description of seemingly insignificant details, but which evoke the essence of the modern bourgeois urban lifestyle: "The steel stirrups, the silver curbs and the brass buckles glistened amongst the breeches, the white gloves and the fur rugs dangling over the coats of arms on the carriage doors" (26). This is precisely the subject matter Baudelaire advocates as merit-worthy: the *flâneur* "delights in fine carriages and proud horses, the dazzling smartness of the grooms, the expertness of the footmen, the sinuous gait of the women, the beauty of the children, happy to be alive and nicely dressed – in a word, he delights in universal life" (10). By rejecting the hierarchy of objects in view and focusing on the miniature of the composite image, Flaubert captures a larger corporeal reality: the ornamental nature of bourgeois culture – a theme central to Impressionist aesthetics, and integral to Mansfield's "The Garden Party", "Sun and Moon" and "New Dresses" amongst others. Flaubert's descriptive accounts of the leisurely pursuits that were the privilege of the moneyed classes, highlighting particularly their conspicuous consumption, lends the narrative a sense of unease as the celebratory and vulgar aspects of a privileged existence are juxtaposed; for example, Flaubert exposes the immorality inherent in the increasingly idle bourgeois lifestyle, as evidenced at the Alhambra – "a recently opened dance-hall at the top of the Champs-Élysées, on too lavish a scale for the time" (77).

Flaubert exposes the behaviour of the bourgeoisie within the private sphere too. With the emphasis on the sensual aspects of the scene, he provides descriptive accounts of the various costume parties held at wealthier homes where men danced with their mistresses from "the cheap dance halls" whilst simultaneously "larking about with the maid" (132, 134); where visions of "silk and velvet, [and the] bare shoulders" of "dazzling women gyrating" soon melted into a quite different scene (126):

In the end, everyone stopped, exhausted. Somebody opened a window. Daylight streamed in.... There was an exclamation of surprise and then silence.... the

⁷⁵ Levy discusses the concept of city as protagonist citing works by Dickens, Balzac, Zola and Joyce and describes Michel Butor's *L'Emploi du temps* as "a striking example of the personification of the city as a hostile identity in contemporary fiction", 67.

hangings were stained, the costumes crumpled and covered in dust; the women's hair hung down in strands over their shoulders; and under their make-up, smudged with sweat, their complexions were ghastly pale, their eyelids red and bleary (131-2, 138).

Frédéric is alternatively overcome by "a glimpse of whole worlds of wretchedness and despair" and his "thirst for women, for luxury, for everything connected with life in Paris" (136, 140). Thematic similarities are at play in two stories Mansfield wrote concurrently: "Sun and Moon" and "Je ne parle pas français" – the latter of which she is probably referring to when she claims to have found the right formula for her writing: "I feel I have found an *approach* to a story now which I must apply to everything... I read what I wrote before that last & I feel: no this is all *once removed*: it won't do" (CL2:71).⁷⁶ Mansfield dreamed "Sun and Moon" in its entirety: "I was in it[,] part of it & it played round invisible me", an idea which corresponds with Baudelaire's injunction (cited earlier): "to see ... to be at the centre ... and yet to remain hidden ..." (CL2:66).⁷⁷ Mansfield writes, "In my dream I saw a supper table.... It was awfully queer – especially a plate of half melted icecream" (ibid.). Both the longer "Je ne parle pas français" and "Sun and Moon" which is just seven pages operate around the juxtaposition of "intense eagerness" and subsequent disillusion which informed, though was not fully integrated into her early work, but which was later fully realised in almost every story ("In a Café": NB1:171).

O'Sullivan notes that "Sun and Moon" is written from the "privileged perspective" of the exclusive realm – a kind of garden of Eden; however, "the magic circle ... collaps[es] as reality stakes its claim" (CL2:viii). Both "Je ne parle pas français" and "Sun and Moon" were written during a dark period, when the anxiety brought about by her illness and her separation from Murry and by the war resulted in "night terrors" and also in black daydreams. "Je ne parle pas français" has received sustained critical attention, "Sun and Moon" less so, perhaps because Mansfield herself seemed later not to value it and even tried to prevent Murry from publishing it in the *Athenaeum*.⁷⁸ "Sun and Moon" is nevertheless a key work in Mansfield's oeuvre because it is again evidence of the diametrically opposed forces which she acknowledged inspired her creativity:

Ive two 'kick 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*.... The other 'kick off' is my old

⁷⁶ KM to JMM, 14 February 1918. Mansfield began "Je ne parle pas français" 30 or 31 January 1918 and finished it 10 February 1918. On 4 February she sent the first part to Murry for his critical opinion. He replied in a letter dated 8 February expressing his absolute admiration for the work. Mansfield then finished "Je ne parle pas français" on the same day that she began writing "Sun and Moon".

⁷⁷ KM to JMM, 10 and 11 February 1918.

⁷⁸ Nevertheless, it appeared in the *Athenaeum* 1 October 1920.

original one, and (had I not known love) it would have been my all. Not hate or destruction ... but an *extremely* deep sense of hopelessness – of everything doomed to disaster.... *a cry against corruption*.... Not a protest – *a cry*, and I mean corruption in the widest sense of the word ... (CL2:54).⁷⁹

Like many of Mansfield's stories "Sun and Moon" opens *in medias res* with the whole household in semi-disarray but eager anticipation of that evening's party: "But of course the place to be was in the kitchen" where the children "could watch the wonderful things she [Cook] and the man [Cook's assistant] were making for supper.... more and more things kept coming" (154-55). The *pièce-de-résistance* is the ice pudding: "Oh! Oh! Oh! ... It was a little pink house with white snow on the roof and green windows and a brown door and ... a nut for a handle" (155). Moon begs to touch the marvellous thing – "She always wanted to touch all the food. Sun didn't" (*ibid.*). Subconsciously fearing that the illusion will disappear, Sun does not seek to hasten the inevitable. Sun silently mocks his sister who "never knew the difference between real things and not real ones" (154); but while his sister, primping and preening, is already complicit with the farce that her decorative existence constitutes, it is Sun who struggles to differentiate between reality and illusion. Other than Moon who is always playing a role anyway, no one behaves in their usual manner: Cook "was all read in the face and laughing. Not cross at all" (154); Sun had never seen ... [Father] so jolly" (159); and his Mother "kept on laughing at Father" (*ibid.*). Furthermore, nothing really is as it appears to be:

It wasn't real night yet but the blinds were down in the dining-room and the lights turned on—and all the lights were red roses.... In the middle [of the table] was a lake with rose petals floating on it.... Two silver lions with wings had fruit on their backs and the salt-cellars were tiny birds drinking out of basins.... the little red napkins made into roses (155).

The reality of the post-party scene differs little from that encountered by Flaubert's Frédéric, shattering all Sun's illusions: "And so they went back to the beautiful dining-room.

But—oh! oh! What had happened. The ribbons and the roses were all pulled untied. The little red table-napkins lay on the floor, all the shining plates were dirty and all the winking glasses. The lovely food ... was all thrown about, and there were bones and bits and fruit peels and shells everywhere. There was even a bottle lying down with stuff coming out of it on to the cloth and nobody stood it up again. And the little pink house ... was broken—broken—half melted away (159-60).

"Sun and Moon" is then an Impressionist text, pictorially and thematically, particularly in its domesticity, its portrayal of bourgeois consumption and behaviour and in the dichotomy between illusion and disillusion.

⁷⁹ KM to JMM, 3 February 1918.

Tomalin writing about the dualities and oppositions in Mansfield's stories points to the constant misunderstandings and misinterpretations: "adults and children are at cross purposes, gulfs of incomprehension separate wives from husbands. Neither pain nor happiness is shared very much or for very long. Family life may have a complacent surface, but beneath it fear and cruelty stalk" (6). Tomalin concludes that "Hatred was her favourite emotion" (ibid.). But hatred was neither Mansfield's favourite emotion nor at the foundation of her work. In a letter to Murry, written at one of her lowest points, Mansfield clarifies the foundations on which she and her work rested: "... at the back of it is *absolute faith and hope and love*" (CL2:81).⁸⁰ While Tomalin correctly alights on the key traits in Mansfield's stories, and certainly "Sun and Moon" partly meets these criteria, the stories are not born out of or informed by hate. Joy was Mansfield's favourite emotion; disappointment her most familiar and this was owing in equal parts to the difficult times in which she lived, to her perpetual ill health and to the company she kept – the famously sordid circle associated with Bloomsbury and Garsington. Of course Mansfield was no saint and she was surrounded by people as duplicitous as herself. Dorothy Brett, one of her closest friends, was for a brief time romantically involved with Murry, and Mansfield with Murry's friend Carco.⁸¹ There were numerous other indiscretions on either side. Mansfield's letters contain many such references as well as evidence of her own duplicity – particularly those to Murry: "I wonder if you have escaped H.L [Her Ladyship, Ottoline Morrell]? She, has become to me now a sort of witch – I cant write to her ..." (CL2:84);⁸² only to write the very same day to Morrell professing her love and admiration: "Dearest Ottoline... I wish you were *here* ..." (CL2:85).⁸³ Sun's parents are no less duplicitous. The young boy is disturbed by his mother's dishevelled appearance: "'Mother—your dress is right off one side.' 'Is it?' said Mother [knowing full well it is]. And Father said 'Yes' and *pretended* to bite her white shoulder ..." (159; my italics). Mansfield's life and work are a testament to the words she portentously set down in one of her earliest vignettes "In a Café": "She, a pale, dark girl with that unmistakeable air of 'acquaintance with life' ... an expression at once of intense eagerness and anticipated disillusion" (NB1:171-72).⁸⁴ Similarly, Parmée asks if Flaubert in *A Sentimental Education* is "suggesting that anticipation is better than realization?" (xx); certainly the author's descriptions of bourgeois relationships and domesticity confirm this supposition, as does his protagonist's refusal to accept the truth: "what was the point? ... And perhaps he was scared,

⁸⁰ KM to JMM, 20 February 1918; KM's italics.

⁸¹ Dorothy Brett (1883-1977) was a student at the Slade School of Art, a member of the Bloomsbury Group and regularly at Garsington. She and Mansfield lived for a time (September 1916-February 1917), at the same London address: 3 Gower Street, Bloomsbury.

⁸² KM to JMM, 22 February 1918.

⁸³ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 22 February 1918.

⁸⁴ Published in *The Native Companion* 5 (2 December 1907).

too, of finding more than he'd bargained for" (423). Perhaps the mature Sun will also arrive at this conclusion in due course? Mansfield was perpetually torn between "the tragic optimism ... of youth" versus "tragic pessimism" ("The Tiredness of Rosabel" 519, *CL1:23*).⁸⁵ A letter to her sister reveals she felt disappointment inherent with life – "why are we always so much more chary to recognise grief than joy" (*CL1:49*).⁸⁶ And yet she also recognised "the subtle joy in pain" which she perceives as synonymous to modernity (*CL1:59*).⁸⁷ Though Mansfield's characters might temporarily lose themselves in the illusion – Rosabel in "The Tiredness of Rosabel", Vera in "A Dill Pickle" (1917) – they seem always to veer towards caution. Even Sun who lives in his sister's shadow, fully expects to be sent "stumping back to the nursery" at any moment (154). Flaubert's Frédéric contemplates the truth and decides "you give yourself a great deal of trouble ... and, in the end, discover a withered flower ..." (423). Mansfield plays on the same idea and like Flaubert she employs flower imagery to do so: Linda Burnell marvels at the "exquisite" beauty of the "tiny yellowish flower[s] ... of the manuka.... But as soon as they flowered, they fell and scattered.... Why, then, flower at all? Who takes the trouble—or the joy—to make all these things that are wasted, wasted ..." ("At the Bay" 221-22). Instead, Frédéric had "...discovered lying was fun" and chooses a life of "duplicity" (422).⁸⁸ Of course, Mansfield and Murry were also prone to fantasy, likening themselves to children in Eden versus a world corrupted by materialism and selfishness: "I have such a horror of present day men and women that I mean never to go among them again. They are thieves, spies, janglours all ... the only possible life is remote ... with books – with *all* the poets and a large garden full of flowers and fruits ..." (*CL2:86*).⁸⁹

Towards the end of *A Sentimental Education* when after some years Frédéric again meets Madame Arnoux with whom he has long been obsessed, he is torn between "a ... surge of lust more violent than ever.... [and] an indefinable feeling of repugnance" (459).

In the light of the lamp on the pier table, he saw her hair was white. It was like a punch over the heart. To hide his disappointment he sat down on the floor at her knees and, stroking her hands, began to caress her with words.... Intoxicated by his own rhetoric, Frédéric was beginning to believe what he was saying (458).

In impressionism, light – both natural and artificial – illuminates, literally and figuratively. This is where Mansfield felt that Woolf failed: "[her characters] ... are held within the circle of steady light in which the author bathes her world, and in their case the light seems to shine

⁸⁵ KM to Martha Putman (Harold Beauchamp's then secretary, who agreed to type manuscript for Mansfield), 22 July 1907.

⁸⁶ KM to Vera Beauchamp, 19 June 1908.

⁸⁷ KM to Garnett Trowell, 16 September 1908.

⁸⁸ It should be noted however, that the war and not just her dislike of others was also darkening her moods.

⁸⁹ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 22 February 1918. Christine and Claude in Zola's *The Masterpiece* long to escape Paris for the country: "How wonderful it would be to be there, in the back o' beyond, far removed from everyone they knew, alone with their love!" 176.

at them, but not through them" (*Novels and Novelists* 109). Both Flaubert and Mansfield in prose and the Impressionists in paint use light, particularly lamps – Mansfield most famously in "The Doll's House" – to reveal greater truths and deeper meanings: Madame Arnoux "listened entranced to ... [Frédéric's] adoring words for the woman she'd once been" but she does so "With her back to the lamp" (458-59); and Frédéric: "out of caution and from a desire not to tarnish his ideal ... turned away" (459).

In Degas's *Interior* also known as *The Rape* (1868-69), (see fig. 4), lamplight serves to illuminate the physical space between a partially undressed woman and her intrusive bourgeois male visitor. The strewn corset and the chest of personal items open on the table at the centre of the room reinforce the physical nature of what has just taken place and yet the figures' remoteness from each other, the one eerily lit, the other in shadow, lends the work a disturbing quality which is resounding even without the alternate title.⁹⁰ Lamplight falling upon the woman highlights her shame, while the shadow obscuring the man lends him a sense of anonymity which corresponds with the voyeuristic and exploitative license taken by men of his social class.⁹¹ In "The Little Governess" (1915) the interplay of light and shadow is utilised in the same way. Throughout the story light or lack thereof, effects the Governess's judgement. In the Ladies Cabin she is first lulled into a false sense of security when "The stewardess pulled a green shade over the light... 'I like travelling very much'... she smiled and yielded to the warm rocking" (175); above deck a "green glittering sky" provides a strong contrast to "the dark landing-stage where strange muffled figures lounged, waiting" (*ibid.*) From this moment forth, the Governess's route is marked by dark passages and punctuated by her failure to register the light which reveals the truth. She is led down "the long dark platform" of the train station; the departing train then "sprang into the dark" (176, 179). Though she was warned by her agency to insist upon a ladies only cabin, the Governess too easily accepts the intrusion of "an old man wrapped in a plaid cape" (178). Shortly after, in an attempt to gauge her bearings she looks out of the train window "but [realises] she could see nothing – just a tree outspread like a black fan or a scatter of lights ..." (179). Having promised to spend the day in the company of the man with whom she has shared the cabin, she is immediately filled with doubt – "Was I wrong? Was I? A drop of sunlight fell into her hands and lay there, warm quivering" (184). Arriving in Munich she is shown "into a dark [hotel] bedroom"; on the street she is hidden from view and prevented from seeing the darkening sky by her companion's umbrella long after the rain has stopped; at the café she fails to realise that "the shadows of the trees [which] danced on the

⁹⁰ Thomson suggests that the figures and setting in Degas's painting might have been partly inspired by a scene in Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* (1867), though Zola's novel does not contain a rape scene, 179.

⁹¹ I return to this theme in Chapter 5.

tablecloths”, are indicative of the advancing hour; finally she is ushered down a dark passage to the bachelor’s flat where she is seized upon by Herr Regierungsrat (185, 186, 187). Escaping his clutches the Governess returns to her own Hotel where she learns the full extent of her error from the waiter who had first attempted to shed light on her situation – “He ... pulled up a clattering, dusty blind” – and who might easily have predicted the outcome: “He took up a glass from the table, held it up to the light, looked at it with one eye closed” (185, 189). The above examples demonstrate how literary Impressionists seek to if not mimic, then at least achieve effects comparable with those realised in Impressionist paintings.

Zola’s Impressionism

In Zola, Mansfield appears to have found a literary model that supported her burgeoning artistic ideas and provide her with a set of aesthetic principles which would inform her writing; she writes: “Zola defines Art as nature seen through a temperament (drives in a Victoria to see the peasants)” (NB1:165).⁹² Mansfield was probably introduced to Zola’s novels along with Flaubert’s at Queen’s. A passage from the drafts for “Juliet” (1906-07) reveals that she was reading him upon her return to New Zealand: “Pearl ... smoking and read[ing] Zola’s Paris” (NB1:59). In fact, Zola is one of the most important examples of French nineteenth-century Naturalism in literature.⁹³ Though in his Salon critique of 1866 he denied an allegiance to any one school of painting, Zola was an early defender and supporter of the Impressionists’ work, particularly Manet’s, and a close associate of the group in general owing to his childhood friendship with Cézanne. In his first art critiques Zola sanctions the modern subjects, the innovative use of colour, and the rejection of academic conventions demonstrated in the work of the artists who, within a decade, would be known as the Impressionists.⁹⁴ Despite this early advocacy, however, ultimately Zola felt that Impressionism failed. In fact, his understanding of their aesthetics was limited and his vision for the movement’s development was entirely at odds with the practitioners’ goals. Zola seized upon the distinguishing features of Impressionism which corresponded with those also characteristic of Naturalism and Realism, specifically the contemporary subject

⁹² Mansfield is quoting from Zola’s Salon of 1866 which she probably read in French; though undated this entry is most likely from 1907 around the time of the Urewera camping trip.

⁹³ Naturalism originates from Eighteenth-century Europe. As a genre it represents a reaction against Romanticism, and is a development of the Enlightenment. See Gerald Needham in *Turner* 22:686.

⁹⁴ Robert Lethbridge notes that when Zola began as an art critic he in fact knew very little about painting and openly confessed this in a letter to Cézanne: “lorsque je vois un tableau, moi qui sais tout au plus distinguer le blanc du noir, il est evident que je ne puis pas me permettre de juger des coups de pinceau” / “when I see a painting, at most, I can distinguish white from black, it is then obvious that I should not be permitted to judge the strokes of the brush” [my translation]; Lethbridge 47, quoting from Émile Zola, *Correspondance*, 10 volumes, B. H. Bakker, Ed. (Montréal: Presses universitaires de Montréal, c. 1978-1995) 1:249.

and setting and non idealistic representations. Zola's enthusiasm for the Impressionists' avant-garde painterly techniques employed soon turned to reproach as their work failed to meet the criteria of Naturalism. His critique was made manifest in *The Masterpiece* (1888).⁹⁵

While it drew from both Balzac and the Goncourts,⁹⁶ *The Masterpiece* shows a very definite response to the practice of the Impressionist painters and, though a work of fiction it serves as an important cultural-historical document – a fact acknowledged by Renoir who described it as “an historical reconstruction of a very original movement in art” drawn from everything Zola had “seen and heard in our studios” (cited in Walton 10). *The Masterpiece* not only takes Impressionism for its subject, it is written in an impressionistic manner and testifies to the nature of the times in which it was written. An image-saturated novel, it focuses on the lives of those within the literary and artistic circles of *fin-de-siècle* Paris.⁹⁷ Like *A Sentimental Education*, *The Masterpiece* contains descriptive passages that correlate with the Impressionists' iconography and their attempts to convey atmosphere, suggesting that he was strongly influenced by the aesthetic principles of the avant-garde artists with whom he associated at that time, and that these ideas not only filtered into his writing but, in this case, informed it. In *The Masterpiece* the action occurs on the streets of Paris and the author takes pains to describe the city in pictorial terms:

It was four o' clock, and the day was just beginning to wane in a golden haze of glorious sunshine. To right and left, towards the Madeleine and the Corps Législatif, the lines of buildings stretched far into the distance, their rooftops cutting clean against the sky. Between the Tuileries gardens piled up wave upon wave of round-topped chestnut trees, while between the two green borders of its side alleys the Champs-Élysées climbed up and up, as far as the eye could see, up to the gigantic gateway of the Arc de Triomphe, wide open on infinity. The Avenue itself was filled with a double stream of traffic, rolling on like twin rivers, with eddies and waves of moving carriages tipped like foam with the sparkle of lamp-glass or the glint of a polished panel, down to the Place de la Concorde with its enormous pavements and roadways like big, broad lakes, crossed in every direction by the flash of wheels, peopled by black specks which were really human beings, and its two splashing fountains breathing coolness over all its feverish activity (91-92).

⁹⁵ Lethbridge explains that Cézanne provided the model for several of Zola's characters including Laurent in *Thérèse Raquin* and Claude Lantier in *The Belly of Paris* (1873) and in *The Masterpiece*, 46.

⁹⁶ Specifically Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece* (1837) and the Goncourt's *Manette Salomon* (1867) both of which feature the artist-protagonist battling with the love of a woman versus their own creative genius.

⁹⁷ Thomas Walton, working from the notes for the novel (now available for consultation in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris), explains how Zola based his characters on those with whom he associated at this time, amalgamating various personality traits and even superimposing his own aesthetic ideals upon the works which they produced: Bongrand is described [by Zola] as “un Manet très chic, un Flaubert plutôt”/“a very fashionable Manet, or Flaubert rather” 8-9 [my translation].

The passage above reads like a series of canvases – an Impressionist ‘map’ even – and evidences Zola’s familiarity with modern painting.⁹⁸ Zola is well known for documenting himself from the source – here the Impressionist painters and their work. In this particular passage the author has adopted the painter’s point of view and sees through the eyes of the painter, relying heavily on painterly visual references; the reader then also sees the world through the eyes of the painter. In his preparatory documents for the novel Zola determines the style in which Claude will work: “I add that he has produced some absolutely marvellous pieces [artworks]: a Manet, a dramatised version of Cézanne, nearer to Cézanne” (Walton 8-9).⁹⁹ In addition to specific references, throughout the novel Zola calls to mind a number of Impressionist works, amalgamates and manipulates the motifs and imagery, and transfers them into his text;¹⁰⁰ for example, Zola’s “black specks” are reminiscent of the figures in Monet’s *Boulevard des Capucines* (1873) (see fig. 6) which had been described in a pejorative review as “black tongue lickings...” (cited in Rewald 319-20);¹⁰¹ his description of the trees and buildings demarcating areas evokes Monet’s *Garden of the Princess* (1867); and the lake-like expanses of pavements are seen in Morisot’s *View of Paris from the Trocadéro* (1872).¹⁰² In addition to describing the action on the streets of Paris, Zola provides lively accounts of the café scenes which typify Parisian society. And in this novel particularly, he pays greater attention to the atmosphere within both natural and artificial landscapes, privileging the effects of light. These evocative scenes of the city are a significant feature of the text and, in addition to revealing the influence of Flaubert, with whom he associated, point directly to the influence of recent developments in modern art made by his painter colleagues.

Zola was for Mansfield an intermediary between naturalist and realist literature and painterly Impressionism. Though Zola was not a literary Impressionist proper, his work was sufficiently impressionistic to allow Mansfield glimpses of a style which she recognised as being partly commensurate with her own artistic goals, and providing her with subjects and thematic examples which she could build upon. Her piecemeal development as a writer – which Tomalin describes as haphazard and random – was in fact a very deliberate and

⁹⁸ Flaubert’s work contains similar passages which provide a workable map for his readers (see, *A Sentimental Education* 113 in the edition I cite).

⁹⁹ Original French: “j’ajoute qu’il a produit quelques morceaux absolument merveilleux: un Manet, un Cézanne dramatisé; plus près de Cézanne”, cited by Walton (ed.), 8-9. Alternatively, see Patrick Brady “*L’Œuvre*” de Emilie Zola, roman sur les arts, manifeste autobiographie, roman à clef, 225.

¹⁰⁰ Claude paints a version of Manet’s *Luncheon on the Grass* (see *The Masterpiece* 134). Passages in the text also call to mind J. M. W. Turner’s atmospheric works which had inspired Monet during his exile in London, for example, *Burning of the Houses of Parliament* (1834)

¹⁰¹ For the quote in context see Chapter 1.

¹⁰² Morisot, *View of Paris from the Trocadéro* (1872), oil on canvas, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara. Manet’s *View of the Paris World’s Fair* (1867), oil on canvas, National Gallery, Oslo, Norway, provided some of the inspiration for Morisot’s not dissimilar image.

progressive method of experimentation which involved appropriating and amalgamating various motifs and themes from a variety of sources and reworking them within a new context (89). It may be mere coincidence, but Mansfield ended a letter to Richard Murry not only in the tone employed by Zola in the closing paragraphs of *The Masterpiece* – “It’s queer how unimpressive they [people] seem to become as one goes on. One feels as though one has seen them enough – got what one wants from them ...” – but she takes his exact final words: “and so—to work!!” (Murry 1934:153). John Lapp argues that Zola “saw life in pictures” – an idea which echoes Smith’s suggestion that “Mansfield sees as Fergusson paints” – and he claims that Zola’s commentary on art shows how naturally he “oscillat[ed] between the graphic and the novelistic form” (Lapp 730, A. Smith 2000:8).¹⁰³ Bechhofer-Roberts’ recollections suggest the same of Mansfield. In *The Masterpiece* “Zola transfers his critical observations of actual paintings to the fictitious works of the novel” (ibid.). Like Zola, Mansfield’s sources were both literary and pictorial and in addition to nineteenth-century French texts she looked to the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites, the Impressionists and the Post-Impressionists. It is this method which causes Mansfield’s so-called New Zealand stories to have universal appeal.

Kimber argues that “Mansfield’s own unique form of Modernism was not derivative of other contemporary writers but was rather a product of her symbiosis of late-nineteenth-century techniques and themes” (2007:41); because her writing shows a clear debt to Baudelaire, Chekhov, Flaubert and Zola – with in some cases, direct references, I would argue that it was both. Though she found Quatremère de Quincy’s theories pertaining to the interconnectedness of the fine arts “a tangled attempt to communicate the incommunicable”, her own prose represents a continual endeavour to reveal fundamental interrelationships between various art forms – specifically poetry, prose, music and painting (NB1:160).¹⁰⁴ In fact, Mansfield often returned to the subject of the interconnectedness of the arts; describing Mozart she writes: “Mozart music sans le désir [without the desire], content with beauty. It has the fine lines of a Durer picture or a Botticelli, compared with the Titian splendour of Wagner” (NB1:214).¹⁰⁵ And further: “The music of Wagner has human blood in it. What Wagner tried to do is to unite mysticism and the senses, to render mysticism through the senses. That is what Rossetti tried to do in painting ...” (ibid.). Mansfield’s commentary substantiates Kimber’s claim that her development as a writer was symbiotic and it also demonstrates why literary Impressionism – inextricably bound as it was to concurrent

¹⁰³Lapp is less interested in judging Zola’s ability as an art critic and instead points to the worth of the collective criticisms as historical documents which negotiate the relationship between two art forms.

¹⁰⁴ See: A. C. Q. de Quincy *An essay on the nature, the end, and the means of imitation in the fine arts* (1823). Mansfield’s notebook entry is undated but is likely from May-June 1908.

¹⁰⁵ Undated, but probably 29 October 1908.

developments in painting but evident in writing which preceded the movement in painting – proves so difficult to define.

The Relationship between Painterly and Literary Impressionism

Ferdinand Brunetière whose review-article: “Impressionism in the Novel” (1879) represents the first attempt to define the concept of literary Impressionism states, it is “a systematic transposition of the means of expression of one art – the art of painting – into the domain of another art: the art of writing” (452).¹⁰⁶ However, while Brunetière claims that literary Impressionism developed out of painterly Impressionism, and this is a widely accepted view, thus Johnson notes that for some critics, literary Impressionism is therefore relevant only within the context of French Impressionist painting; Kronegger notes, if only in passing, the influence of Rodin and Cézanne on Rilke, as well as Vermeer’s and the Impressionists’ on Proust, but argues that “not all literary impressionism can be explained by the influence of painting” (31). Van Gunsteren, in her assessment of Mansfield’s position as a literary Impressionist, discusses “The interrelationship with painting ...[only] fleetingly ...[because] it is literature that must be at the heart [of her work as a] comparatist ... and it is literary devices that must be investigated” (16). However, because the visual arts, literature and music were inextricably linked at the *fin-de-siècle*, and increasingly so during Mansfield’s career, and because Mansfield described her work in painterly terms, I believe that any investigation pertaining to her work must be multidisciplinary.

While interdisciplinary research is commonplace within French letters,¹⁰⁷ and facilitated by figures such as Zola who wrote in response to concurrent trends in pictorial art (thus substantiating Brunetière’s claim for literary Impressionism’s painterly origins),¹⁰⁸ scholars who note the impressionistic impulse in Mansfield’s writing, have been reluctant to align her texts with specific paintings or to make anything more than vague generalisations, such as Fullbrook’s observation that the identity of Mansfield’s characters “is as impermanent as the dappled moments in a Renoir or a Manet” (64). Their reluctance partly relates to modern critical distaste for being too programmatic in imputing likeness, indeed, ‘influence’, that

¹⁰⁶ My translation from the French: “une transposition systématique des moyens d’expression d’un art, qui est l’art de peindre, dans le domaine d’un autre art, qui est l’art d’écrire”, “L’Impressionisme dans le roman,” *La Revue des deux monde* (1879): 446-59. Brunetière was responding to Alphonse Daudet’s *Kings in Exile* (1879).

¹⁰⁷ Emilie Sitzia for example in *L’artiste entre mythe et réalité dans trois oeuvres de Balzac, Goncourt et Zola* (Åbo, Finland: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2004) examines precisely the interrelationship between painting and writing. See also Guy Borréli, “Littérature et Impressionisme en France de 1870 à 1900”, *L’Information Littérature* 28 (1976): 203-05.

¹⁰⁸ Johnson provides a list of the most useful and authoritative articles, 291. See also Theodore Robert Bowie, *The Painter in French Fiction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1950); Sitzia (2004); Jie Chang, “Quasi-scientific Approaches Made by Impressionist Painters (Claude Monet) and Literary Naturalists (Émile Zola)”, *Review of European Studies*, 1. 2 (December 2009): 133-37: www.ccsenet.org/journal.html.

modernist *bête noir*, between one artist or creative medium and another. However, their unwillingness probably owes more to the fact that relatively little is known about what Mansfield saw in the galleries of Europe, owing to the number of missing notebooks and letters which relate to periods in Mansfield's life during which she was exposed to significant cultural developments.

Literary Impressionism: Towards a Definition

In his investigation Brunetière establishes a checklist of sorts against which other writers whose work displays impressionistic tendencies may be held up for comparison and it is to this end that Johnson attempts to provide a revised definition. Paraphrasing Brunetière, Johnson concludes:

Literary Impressionism ... consists of such aspects as a fresh, pictorial way of seeing and translating reality wherein a few elements serve to suggest a total impression, the use of the painterly (*pittoresque*) imperfect in place of the narrative preterite, dependent clauses, grammatical dislocation, suppression of the verb or conjunction, adjectives that could apply to several nouns, [and] thoughts and feelings translated through the language of the senses ... (271).

As I shall demonstrate point by point, Mansfield meets each criterion. Her stories are undeniably pictorial and often one or two details serve to convey an overall impression, such as in "Miss Brill" (1920) within which the people around the protagonists are identified by aspects of their physical appearance, "an ermine toque" for example, or Mouse's mouse-like muff in "Je ne parle pas français" (333).¹⁰⁹ Mansfield often employs the imperfect instead of the preterite which can lend the narrative a sense of incompleteness; primarily it disrupts or confuses time by making it difficult to ascertain if the narrator is referring to a single past action or event; a present and possibly reoccurring one; when that action or event took place and finally, whether or not it has ceased; such as in the second sentence in the following excerpt from "Bliss" (1918): "Miss Fulton did not look at her; but then she seldom did look at people directly. Her heavy eyelids lay upon her eyes and the strange half-smile came and went upon her lips as though she lived by listening rather than seeing" (99). This technique can also lend the text a sense of spontaneity – as though the events are just unfolding.

In grammatically correct English, dependent clauses do not stand alone because they sound incomplete; however, this is precisely the effect that literary Impressionists are seeking to achieve and Mansfield is no exception. In the following excerpt Mansfield utilises dependent clauses and suppresses conjunctions and verbs for impressionistic purposes, primarily to achieve a stream of consciousness effect: "And then the man who kept it [the

¹⁰⁹ Frieder Busch notes Mansfield's use of this impressionistic technique (essentially, synecdoche) and demonstrates how she employs it (see Chapter 2).

little antique shop on Curzon Street] was ridiculously fond of serving her. He beamed whenever she came in. He clasped his hands; he was so gratified he could hardly speak. Flattery, of course. All the same, there was something ..." ("A Cup of Tea" 399, KM's ellipsis). Conjunctions and verbs may be omitted in Mansfield's stories and replaced by a period, a semi-colon or ellipsis, clipping short various sentences which sometimes results in a staccato-like effect – a syntactical technique employed by Flaubert which would in time characterise impressionistic writing. Alternatively, Mansfield employs coordinating conjunctions 'and' and 'but' to abruptly begin a sentence: "AND after all the weather was ideal" ("The Garden Party" 245); "But now Sadie interrupted them" (ibid. 251); "And now she looked at the others" (ibid. 246). In both cases the effect corresponds with the cropped compositions of, for example, Degas. In *Place de la Concorde* (1875) Degas's dramatic cropping evokes a sense of instantaneity, of it being a glimpse or a snapshot (see fig. 28). In "Bliss" a new paragraph begins abruptly with "A white dress, a string of jade beads, green shoes and stockings" (97). As the paragraph continues Bertha's clothing is put into context but in a conventional narrative the sentence would begin with 'She wore', or more likely in Mansfield's case with 'she was wearing'. Mansfield's more abrupt start to the paragraph mimics the cinematic splicing of scenes – she had the year before acted as an extra in a number of unidentified films.¹¹⁰ However while Flaubert's short, clipped sentences, phrases or independent clauses always relate to one another, Mansfield's do not and this difference is crucial to the overall effect of the prose: "The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stuff castors. But the air!" (ibid. 249). In impressionist texts proper, there is a sense of randomness. In "The Garden Party" for example, within which Mansfield moves swiftly between characters and from one scene to another without overt authorial intervention, the party, which is ostensibly the subject of the story, is barely mentioned. It is dealt with in less than twenty sentences.

In disrupting the composition within a canvas, such as in *Place de la Concorde*, the narrative flow is also disrupted making the meaning of the work more difficult to ascertain. In this resultant ambiguity and overall visual appearance the Impressionists achieved an effect commensurate with the fragmentary nature of modern life. Similarly, Mansfield employs grammatical dislocation to disrupt the flow of her sentences and thus fracture the narrative: "SUDDENLY—dreadfully—she wakes up" ("The Wind Blows" 106). Again, this opening has a theatrical or cinematic feel to it and sounds almost like a stage direction. Grammatical dislocation is common in informal spoken French which may suggest that

¹¹⁰ See KM to Bertrand Russell, 16 January 1917, *CL1*:293. O'Sullivan, Sydney Janet Kaplan and Sarah Sandley are all interested in Mansfield's filmic techniques (see Chapter 2).

Mansfield's increasing fluency in the language aided her development as a literary Impressionist. Mansfield's desire to disrupt the flow of the narrative also helps to create the stream of consciousness effect achieved in the following excerpt: "And, lying in her cane chair, Linda felt so light; she felt like a leaf. Along came Life like a wind and she was seized and shaken; she had to go. Oh dear, would it always be so? Was there no escape?" ("At the Bay" 221).

Mansfield also demonstrates how adjectives can serve more than one noun in order to conflate the function of more than one sense: "How sweet the ices looked on little glass plates, and how cold the frosted spoon was, iced too!" ("Her First Ball" (1921), 341). Mansfield might have used 'pretty' or 'dear' instead of "sweet"; "sweet", however, encompasses Leila's perception because she is also anticipating that they will taste sweet. Similarly, Leila finds the floor "most beautifully slippery" and is swept away on "a soft, melting ... tune ... her feet glided, glided" (340, 343); of course, 'slippery', melting' and 'glided' all recall the ices. Essentially, Mansfield's use of language here, lends itself to Johnson's final point that in literary Impressionism "thoughts and feelings [are] translated through the language of the senses ..." (271). When forced to realise that "happiness didn't last for ever" Leila perceives that "the music seemed to change; it sounded sad, sad; it rose upon a great sigh", but it is Leila who is mournful, not the music (342). The senses play a significant the role in Impressionist aesthetics. Thus, as the next "ravishing" tune begins Leila is again seduced by the intoxicating sensual effect of "The lights, the azaleas, the dresses, the pink faces, the velvet chairs ..." (343).

Weisstein points particularly to the role of the senses in Impressionist aesthetics: "the only reality worth considering is that of the surface, which is precisely what Impressionism (which deserves the label "Sensationism") is all about" (287). Drawing from Mach's treatise, Van Gunsteren also points to "sensationism" as one of Impressionism's "basis aesthetic principle[s]" (16). Certainly, Impressionism privileges surface appearances and the role of the senses. However, as demonstrated in both Degas and Mansfield's family portraits (and discussed in Chapter 4), Impressionists' works are also acute psychological portraits within which the surface details may serve as pointers to deeper truths, without recourse to either overt Symbolism or Expressionism.

According to Kronegger, "Impressionism is born of the fundamental insight that our consciousness is sensitive and passive" (*L'Esprit Créateur* 311); and furthermore, that:

Man's consciousness faces the world as pure passivity, as a *tabula rasa*, a piece of paper on which nothing is written, a mirror in which the world inscribes or impresses itself. As a detached spectator, the impressionist protagonist considers the world without having a standpoint in it. Reality has become a synthesis of sense-impressions (ibid.).

Certainly the Impressionists were unconcerned with representing a scene in accurate or photographic detail. Rather, they aimed to realise the aesthetic qualities of their subject. As evidenced in their descriptive, evocative and colour-saturated imagery, Flaubert, Zola, Monet, and Mansfield in turn demonstrate the heightened sensitivity described by Kronegger. Passivity, however, is a term more difficult to reconcile with the aesthetics and methods of Impressionism. Murry asserted that because Mansfield “was a perfectly pure, and perfectly submissive, artist she was a great one” (1959:90). One cannot be passive if one is consciously observing and selectively recording, and it was this trait that set the Impressionists apart from their predecessors.¹¹¹ In a letter of 1920 Mansfield demonstrates how active the process was: “Delicate Perception is not enough; one must find the exact way in which to convey the delicate perception. One must inhabit the other mind & know more of the other mind and your secret knowledge is the light in which all is steeped” (CL4:4).¹¹²

For René Huyghe (1939) the representation of illusion as opposed to reality is the key technique in literary Impressionism – both are at play in “Sun and Moon”. He explains that in Impressionism “things [are represented] as they seem to be” (cited in Kronegger 117). The Impressionists did not necessarily ignore or suppress reality however; they merely privileged their own subjective viewpoint, which again disproves Kronegger’s claim for passivity. Jones explains that the impressionist mode, at least in New Zealand narratives, entailed a shift in emphasis “from what David Lodge calls the ‘common phenomenal world’ of realism, ‘located where the private worlds that each individual creates and inhabits partially overlap’, to the uniqueness, interiority, and intensity of those private worlds” (Sturm 174).¹¹³ Jones’s explanation is far more illuminating than Huyghe’s, nevertheless Huyghe’s succinct summation fits well with a reading of Mansfield’s work within the context of Impressionism; consider Kezia’s impressions in “Prelude”:

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

¹¹¹ Consider also Mansfield’s observations in a letter to Richard Murry: “Yes, I think you’re 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”, 17 January 1921, CL4:164.

¹¹² KM to Sydney and Violet Schiff, 2 May 1920. Mansfield’s commentary may point to her knowledge of contemporary theory as it is reminiscent of the ‘participant observation’ theory current in anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century, the leaders of which championed subjectivity within the context of scientific field work. Key theorists included anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) in Europe and Franz Boas (1858-1942) in America (see Robert H. Lowie “Boas, Darwin, Science and Anthropology”, *Current Anthropology* 42. 3 (June 2001): 381-406.

¹¹³ Jones cites David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) 40.

really Lottie? Kezia was not quite sure until she had looked through the ordinary window (14).

As demonstrated in the excerpt above,

... setting becomes not so much externally observed 'environment' as something that impinges on individual consciousness, caught in the process of impingement; character is not so much public persona as private consciousness and feeling; action is not so much a chronological, causal chain of public events as achronological moments of consciousness, often epiphanies of realization (Jones in Sturm 174-75).

These techniques, according to Jones, characterise literary Impressionism.

In an endeavour to identify the fundamental traits of literary Impressionism, Saur looks to the work of two Scandinavian writers, Jens Peter Jacobsen whose focus is the "creation of moods and feelings", and Kurt Hamsun who wrote under the influence of Nietzsche and employed an "indeterminate narrator" – an impressionistic technique, and one employed by Mansfield (3).¹¹⁴ Hamsun's professed literary aim: to convey "the incalculable chaos of impressions, the delicate life of the imagination seen under a magnifying glass; the random wanderings of ... thoughts and feelings", has somewhat of a romantic quality to it, but it also partly corresponds with the Impressionists' aesthetic goals (cited in Saur 3). It also calls to mind Mansfield's early literary aims: "In my brain ... a thousand delicate images float and are gone. I want to write a book that ... raises in the hearts of the readers emotions, sensations too vivid not to take effect.... I shall never attempt anything approaching the histrionic, and it must be ultra modern" (NB1:103).¹¹⁵ Hamsun's aim also corresponds with both Mansfield's achievement in "The Garden Party" and Meyers' understanding of Debussy's intentions (discussed in Chapter 1). Carl Schorske's findings however, reinforce how mutable the terms Impressionist and impressionistic are. He explains that for writers displaying Impressionist affinities, "a diffuse oceanic consciousness blurred the border between self and other, between inner and outer, blending dream and reality" manifesting in literature that took for its subject "the *fin-de-siècle* identity crisis" (cited in Saur). Jens Rieckmann cites the "key elements of narcissism, aestheticism, solipsism, duality of life, the crisis of knowledge, [which] struck a responsive chord in a whole generation" (ibid.). Again, the key elements identified by Rieckmann are the fundamental themes that underpin Mansfield's most popular stories and permeate Modernist fiction.

¹¹⁴ For example, in "The Young Girl", "Bank Holiday" and "Her First Ball". In "The Tiredness of Rosabel" the narrative moves fluidly between the main protagonist's perspective and the author's – though it is not always possible to tell whose thoughts are whose. Because in impressionistic texts the viewpoint shifts, it is a common misconception that Impressionists dispensed with the omniscient narrator altogether; however, as Busch explains, if they are there, they are "discreetly" present, 63 (see Chapter 2).

¹¹⁵ June 1907.

Both Bresky and Joy Hokenson in their respective critiques, focus on the linguistic traits exhibited in the writing they hold to be impressionistic, paying particular attention to the syntax and grammar, specifically the prevalence of assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia. Kronegger also lists some of the recurrent technical devices used, including the emphasis on colour rather than objects, subjective versus objective impressions, auxiliary verbs and the frequent use of ellipses.¹¹⁶ Flaubert frequently uses ellipses. Mansfield uses both dashes and ellipses to reinforce the notion of a 'slice of life', to suggest momentum, which in turn propels the narrative, to subvert readers' expectations by leaving her characters' thoughts unfinished and their questions unanswered. Using Johnson's criteria I have already demonstrated that Mansfield is a literary Impressionist and certainly the exploration and analysis of linguistic traits seems a very practical and necessary way into impressionistic fiction; these factors alongside consideration of the subjects and themes which permeate painterly and literary Impressionism, in my opinion provide a very clear picture of what constitutes Impressionism and how it might be defined.

Unarguably, Mansfield was a voracious reader who read for more than enjoyment. Along with the canon of English Literature – Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer and Donne – Mansfield read Poe, Swinburne, Walt Whitman, Wilde and Conrad, writers who Kronegger considers the precursors of literary Impressionism. Those whose early work as Busch, Kronegger, Saur and others explain, became a touchstone for an impressionist style in literature are those cited in Mansfield's notebooks: Balzac, Pater, Verlaine, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Proust and Chekov. Saur points specifically to Chekhov's "impressionistic use of mood, sensation, and random and petty detail", and to D'Annunzio's impressionistic "language of landscape" (3). The qualities in literature that Saur finds definitively impressionistic are the qualities that one finds in Mansfield's short stories, particularly the later ones as she properly realises her formula.¹¹⁷ In an entry of May 1908 Mansfield lists D'Annunzio as one of the "threads from many harmonious skeins" from which she was developing her "ideal and ideas of life" (NB1:110). She juxtaposes the doctrines of Realism and Symbolism, noting the "limitations" in each, and paraphrasing Maupassant, she writes, "Great artists are those who can make men see their particular illusion" (NB1:165) – an idea which corresponds entirely with Impressionism and with both Degas and Conrad's philosophies, as noted above.

European artists and writers at the *fin-de-siècle* and beyond continued to experiment with various styles, assimilating multiple aesthetics within any one given work to produce imagery and prose that continues to elude categorisation or concrete definition. Bourdieu explains:

¹¹⁶ See Bresky 299-300; Kronegger, *Literary Impressionism* 16.

¹¹⁷ See NB1:164-66.

... the transformations which have occurred within the fields of art and literature have done so at staggered intervals. These intervals have allowed writers and artists ... to benefit from previous advances already made, at different times, by their respective avant-gardes. Thus, certain discoveries, made possible by the particular logic of one or other of the two fields, have become merged, and appear in retrospect as complementary aspects of a single historical process (30-31).

Clearly Mansfield recognised this: "To write stories one has to go back into the past. And its as though one took a flower from all kinds of gardens to make a *new bouquet*" (CL5:146-47).¹¹⁸ Impressionism marked the beginning of the revolution which led to unprecedented levels of diversity and intensity in cultural and artistic production up to and beyond the *fin-de-siècle* and it remained the most dominant artistic style during Mansfield's life.¹¹⁹ It was within this milieu that Mansfield developed a prose style illustrative of Nochlin's claims. Mansfield began her literary career writing vignettes. "In the Botanical Gardens" and "In a Café" (1907) are impressionist scenes centred on the consciousness of a single undeveloped character. The works which she produced in her maturity owed much to these early Impressionist experiments. "Prelude" and "At the Bay" are fundamentally a series of more complex vignettes which employ an inconspicuous narrator, a shifting point of view, feature interior monologue, utilise high colours to suggest mood, dispense with transitions and narrative summaries, and are self-conscious in manner – while these became hallmarks of literary Impressionism their origins are to a large degree pictorial and owe much to innovations and developments within painterly Impressionism.¹²⁰

Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings in particular helped to elucidate what Mansfield, as a recorder of modernity, was aiming at in prose – as demonstrated in her response to Cézanne in which she recognises their corresponding vision: "He is awfully sympathetic to me.... One of his men gave me quite a shock. He is the spit of a man I have just written about - one Jonathan Trout. To the life. I wish I could cut him out & put him in my book" (CL4: 278).¹²¹ Mansfield is referring to Cézanne's *The Card Players* (1890-92) (see fig. 7); the story in question is "At the Bay", the sequel to "Prelude".¹²² Jonathan is not mentioned in "Prelude" but his sons, Pip and Rags, are; therefore, Mansfield probably had Jonathan reasonably well fixed in her mind before she wrote him into being in "At the Bay" and it is highly likely that she had seen Cézanne's *The Card Players* much earlier, if not in London,

¹¹⁸ KM to Charlotte Beauchamp Perkins, 8 April 1922.

¹¹⁹ See Pamela Gerrish-Nunn's comments cited in Chapter 3 of this thesis and Lawrence Jones's findings cited in Chapter 1.

¹²⁰ Notes she made upon her travels into the Urewera region in December 1907 find their way into "At the Bay" (see NB1:136). Roger Norburn notes too that at the end of these travels she composes a poem entitled "Youth" which anticipates the opening of Section VI in "At the Bay" (see NB1:203, 1 December 1908 and Norburn 11).

¹²¹ KM to Brett, 12 September 1921.

¹²² Cézanne painted five versions of *The Card Players* from 1890-92.

then in Paris, and if not in person, then in a catalogue of modern French paintings. I would argue, then, that the lowest common denominator of both literary and painterly impressionism is the contemporary subject matter – balls, train stations, bourgeois marriage; these serve as vehicles for the themes the Impressionists chose to address. While Johnson disapproves of Helmut A. Hatzfeld's tendency to merely align specific texts with specific paintings based solely on the shared subject matter (ports by Manet and Baudelaire, Paris by Renoir, Zola and Flaubert), as Brunetière advocates, this method proves a valuable starting point from which similarities in technique, style, vision and execution might then be brought in for analysis. This method works as well for Mansfield's fiction as it does for any of the leading French writers of the late nineteenth century. In addition to meeting the criteria which Johnson and Kronegger provide, such methodology reveals parallels in the work of Mansfield, Morisot and Cassatt. Within their respective oeuvres, one finds a preference for maternity themes and domestic interiors and close links between the ways in which they chose to picture women within the private and public spheres. Mansfield's café and street scenes are comparable to those in Manet's paintings, and close parallels exist between Degas's images of the opera and ballet and Mansfield's depiction of bourgeois leisure. Finally, in Mansfield's highly coloured, lyrical and semi-rural landscapes, one finds commonalities with Monet's nature imagery. A pragmatic borrower, it does not appear as though Mansfield aligned herself with any specific movement. And within her extant papers, there is nothing to suggest that she saw herself as a literary Impressionist. However, in addition to her reading and her temperament, Mansfield's ideas – as outlined in her diaries and letters – her methods and the resulting stories convincingly locate her as such.

CHAPTER 2

A SURVEY OF CRITICISM

As demonstrated by the scholarly criticism they continue to receive, Mansfield's stories are ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations. Criticism has addressed Mansfield's innovative narrative methods and her position within Modernism from a variety of perspectives including feminist and post-colonial. More recently, Mansfield's relationship to various other art media such as music, film and painting has come under scrutiny. My interest in such material lies in the degree to which it aids in revealing how the painterly collides – and colludes with – the literary in Mansfield's writing. Various critics have noted the influence of Impressionism on Mansfield's work and while there are limits to the critical investigation of this crucial influence on her writing, nevertheless this area has been far from satisfactorily investigated; particularly with reference to any work predating the 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition organised by Roger Fry, which critics consider a watershed moment in Mansfield's – and Woolf's – writing career and one which marked the eve of modernism.¹ Busch whose focus is Mansfield's application of Impressionist traits within a grammatical context, lists four early accounts of the term 'impressionism' being applied to her prose.² These indicate that the influence was at least noted, if not explored or properly understood. This chapter serves as a forum from which the views of the various critics who have noted the influence of Impressionism or of the visual arts on Mansfield's work will be examined and evaluated.

Although Vincent O'Sullivan does not carry out a sustained critique of Mansfield's work within the context of literary Impressionism he recognises Mansfield's primary aesthetic aims and succinctly outlines the impressionistic quality of her writing: "She is after a style that will hold the glancing imitations of form, a form that catches rather than sets" (CL1:xiii). O'Sullivan is interested in Mansfield's debt to Pater, Wilde and the legacy of the 1890s, especially Symbolism, and how these sources influence the ideas that shape her writing. He situates Pater, one of Mansfield's earliest teachers, at the beginning of what he describes as "the tide of ... Impressionism" [in literature] and writes, "[Mansfield's] temperament and reading seem early to place her squarely in the tide of late impressionism: the drift of experience that asks for vividness, the accuracy of momentary things, 'that strange,

¹ Critics cite this exhibition as particularly significant in view of Woolf's claim that, "On or about December 10 1910 human nature changed", see Virginia Woolf, "Character in Fiction", *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Volume III, 1919-24, Ed. Andrew McNeillie (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, 1988) 421.

² They are as follows: Fern Corin, "Creation of Atmosphere in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories", *Revue des langues vivantes*, 22 (1956): 65-78; Sylvia Berkman in *Katherine Mansfield – A Critical Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1951); Anne Friis in *Katherine Mansfield – Life and Stories* (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1946); Edward Wagenknecht, "Katherine Mansfield", *The English Journal*, 17. 4 (1928): 271-84.

perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves' as ... Pater had put it" (ibid.).³ "The Tiredness of Rosabel" is unarguably Mansfield's earliest impressionistic story. O'Sullivan points to the "almost plotless narrative in which time is moved so deftly that normal sequence is abandoned" and suggests that

Such stories seem to play a beam over life, to catch at fragments of personality and the glancing revelations of a moment rather in the manner of Impressionist painting. It is an approach to fiction that also places her squarely in that tradition, running from Wordsworth's "spots of time" to Joyce's "epiphanies", where the writer's emphasis attends to the value of illuminating and singular moments, to pattern rather than continuity (1985:x).

O'Sullivan finds that Mansfield's concerns correspond with those of the modern painters whose challenge it was to render light within their composition and he points to a letter written to fellow artist Brett within which Mansfield analyses her friend's work, "I see what you are getting at ... the sudden arrest, the poise, *moment*, captured in the figure in the flowing shade and sunlit world" (ibid., xv). Certainly Mansfield recognised that the qualities demonstrated in modern painting were qualities which could be modified and utilised for literary purposes. "The Tiredness of Rosabel" is more than just stylistically impressionistic; thematically it corresponds with Impressionism in its portrayal of a working-class girl. Although Mansfield vacillated between various models, this story represents an attempt to go further in her writing and seek new ways of rendering that which she observed in her every-day life, just as the Impressionist painters endeavoured to realise in their own time and in their own medium.

O'Sullivan notes the central significance of both the role of and rendering of the act of perception in an Impressionist canvas and observes that this too corresponds with Mansfield's aims:

Time and character became more fluid elements in a story.... She took shorter fiction towards a far more lyrical and looser form. Hers was a method that admitted the flicker of moods and perceptions, the mere brushings of temperament, where they had not previously been thought appropriate (ibid. xvi).

O'Sullivan considers the cinematic impulses in Mansfield's short stories which took her beyond Impressionism and he explains how these function in "Prelude", specifically in the string of incidental images which are more than symbols or illustrations, and which enable the narrative to progress. He explains how films, as series of vivid but brief images, appealed to Mansfield whose life operated in much the same way, and how Mansfield applied filmic devices to her prose, specifically in the manipulation of time so that the past, present and future were able to be perceived simultaneously.

³ O'Sullivan quotes from Pater's 'Conclusion' in *Studies in the Renaissance* (1873).

While emphatic in his belief that Mansfield's work is primarily impressionistic, O'Sullivan acknowledges the binaries at play: "If on one side she is so clearly aligned with Impressionism, on the other she draws close to the Expressionists, with their interpretations of reality by the way pictorial fragments are selected and rearranged" (ibid. xviii). O'Sullivan may have in mind images such as Fauvist Matisse's *The Dessert: Harmony in Red* (1908), a richly painted red interior within which the components of the picture have been selected and arranged for decorative purposes.⁴ Of particular note, the tablecloth and the wallpaper are in the same colour and design making it difficult to distinguish the one from the other; additionally, the fruit bowl is positioned close to the edge of the table so that it becomes part of the wallpaper design above it. O'Sullivan's understanding of what an Expressionist realises might be applied just as readily to either Monet – categorically an Impressionist – whose response was as emotive as any Expressionists': he writes, "For me, the subject is of secondary importance: I want to convey what is alive between me and the subject" (cited in Grove 57); or to Cézanne in his Post-Impressionist phase. Both demonstrate that they too were capable of contriving elements of their compositions to achieve an effect not dissimilar to Matisse's – or at least to produce works which evidence a heightened awareness of that which is lyrical. Cézanne's *Pot of Flowers on a Table* (1882-87) evidences a sense of deliberateness commensurate with Matisse's with various unrelated items chosen for their aesthetic value and positioned in accordance with the overall effect the artist was aiming to achieve within the composition.⁵ Mansfield's Bertha Young also acts in this manner:

There were tangerines and apples stained with strawberry pink. Some yellow pears, smooth as silk, some white grapes covered with a silver bloom and a big cluster of purple ones. These last she had bought to tone in with the new dining-room carpet. Yes, that did sound rather far-fetched and absurd, but it was really why she had bought them ("Bliss" 92-93).

She also strives for precisely the same effect as Matisse whose tabletop merges into the wall: "She had thought in the shop: 'I must have some purple ones to bring the carpet up to the table'" (ibid.); and of course, she dresses for the evening in order to match her pear tree, though she claims this was unintentional. However, this harmonisation of colour is at the centre of Impressionism too, as demonstrated in Monet's Haystacks series (discussed in Chapter 6). O'Sullivan's summation reinforces the ever present problems with definition and categorisation. As has already been shown in this thesis, to lesser and greater degrees Mansfield's work contains elements of several of the influential art and literary movements circulating Europe during her writing career.

⁴ Matisse, *The Dessert: Harmony in Red* (1908), oil on canvas, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

⁵ Cézanne, *Pot of Flowers on a Table* (1882-87), oil on canvas, Musée du Jeu de Paume, Paris.

Fullbrook is primarily interested in how Mansfield modernised the short story within the context of modernism. However, like O'Sullivan, Fullbrook acknowledges the impressionistic quality of Mansfield's writing:

An impressionistic impulse is behind 'Prelude'; the characters are presented in terms of the intersection of light and shade, and seen fleetingly against the light of the stars and the evanescent mystery of the sea.... the temporary look of things – people, objects, social relations – is all the narrative claims to know with any certainty (64).

Although the above summation is somewhat vague and Fullbrook fails to provide any substantiating examples, she correctly identifies the key impulse in Mansfield's story. She notes also, "the lack of fixture in life – the vagaries of perception" in "Prelude" which I consider particularly characteristic of Impressionism (ibid.).⁶ With only limited direct references to art movements and artists available within the extant letters and notebooks, Fullbrook, like A. Smith and others, quotes from Mansfield's letter to Brett regarding van Gogh's *Sunflowers* (1888) which she claims "... taught me something about writing ..." (CL4:333),⁷ (cited and discussed in Chapter 3). Fullbrook, A. Smith and I understand it as indicative of Mansfield's enduring preoccupation with analogous art forms. Fullbrook notes briefly Mansfield's references to Manet, Renoir and Cézanne but does not attempt to analyse her stories within the context of Impressionism or Post-Impressionism. She conducts a close reading of "Je ne parle pas français" (1918), but unlike Smith, Fullbrook does not attempt to align the story with any one art movement. By contrast, Smith interprets it as a Fauvist work based on the story's (and the narrator's), "wildness underlying its superficial control", its Fauvist palette of purples and greens, and its savage elements, particularly the cadaverous waiter and vampiric proprietor (2000:15).

Fullbrook, Smith, Van Gunsteren and Claire Hanson all show how Mansfield employs Symbolism – though Van Gunsteren asserts that it "was an early influence soon shaken off" (181). Fullbrook explains that the symbols are tied to particular characters so that the reader can understand a character without recourse to discursive explanation. She also explains that the repetition of motifs lends a degree of coherence to her work. I agree that this is primarily how Symbolism functions in Mansfield's stories. However, Van Gunsteren distinguishes between symbols and images and explains that Mansfield, as a literary Impressionist, employs the latter as a structuring device and that – "The chain of images" lends the narrative some coherency (ibid.). Interestingly, despite her argument for Fauvism,

⁶ Fullbrook points to Mansfield's letter regarding "Prelude", within which she describes her vision and her purpose in impressionistic terms, see KM to Brett, 11 October 1917, CL1:331 (cited in Chapter 6).

⁷ KM to Brett, 5 December 1921.

as discussed in greater detail below, Smith describes Mansfield's Symbolism in Impressionist terms:

Mansfield's stories focus on luminous details which resonate within the story and gain significance within the reader's mind in retrospect because they elude definition. The aloe in 'Prelude', the pear tree in 'Bliss' ... are ... brought into the light, but the light flickers as the object is seen from different angles, and no two readers interpret it in the same way (2002:xxiv).

In fact, Smith's ideas correlate with the techniques employed by the Impressionist painters, evidenced by their interest in mirrors and variable light sources. The Symbolists, as Julius Kaplan explains, sought "to render visible the invisible and to communicate the inexpressible" (169). By contrast, the Impressionists were less interested in concrete definitions and the abstract qualities of a thing and were instead preoccupied with representing the refraction and dissolution of light and colour within an environment. However, both the Impressionists and the Symbolists, in their shared subjectivity, produced works which were highly suggestive rather than descriptive, thus inevitably inconclusive.

One of Smith's particular interests is the influence of the visual arts on Mansfield's artistic and intellectual development, something which she notes has been commented on by literary critics but not explored; certainly Smith's sustained and illuminating investigations go some way towards rectifying this. She points to Mansfield's early preoccupation with colour and form over narrative – as demonstrated in one of the earliest extant letters⁸ – and pays particular attention to Mansfield's relationship with a variety of artists, including J. D. Fergusson, the Scottish Colourist, and American-born painter Anne Estelle Rice, both of whom developed a Fauvist aesthetic. Smith rejects the Impressionist label and instead believes that Mansfield's mature writing owes much to the aesthetic principles of Fauvism:

Mansfield sees as Fergusson paints. Scenes from Mansfield's letters and notebooks are often framed for their recipient, usually [Jack] Murry, presented as a Fauvist painting, with clearly outlined squares and rectangles, a dense use of colour, no perspective, and no shadows (2000:8).

This is a bold claim, especially given that Smith does not seek to substantiate her critical stance further here through any specific Fauvist painting or artist; but also because Mansfield articulated quite the opposite: in a letter to Murry in October 1920 Mansfield states "*Everything has its shadow*" (CL4:75).⁹ In support of her argument Smith cites a letter written to Richard Murry in 1920 which she believes demonstrates Mansfield's affinity for the colour palette of Post-Impressionism: "My small, pale yellow house with a mimosa tree growing in front of it – just a bit deeper yellow – the garden, full of plants, the terrace with crumbling yellow pillars covered with green (lurking place for lizards) all belong to a picture

⁸ KM to [Marion Tweed], 16 April 1903, CL1:4-5.

⁹ KM to JMM, 18 October 1920.

or a story” (CL4:42) (cf. fig. 9).¹⁰ In fact, Mansfield’s early and enduring affinity for Pre-Raphaelite paintings cemented the life-long obsession with colour: “You know that *peacock* shade of water. Blue ... with the blueness of Rossetti, green with the greenness of William Morris” (NB1:157).¹¹ Nevertheless, this letter does demonstrate that Mansfield was constantly thinking in pictorial terms, associating her surroundings with images she had encountered and translating them into text.

Smith goes on to explore the intrinsic differences between Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, specifically, the former’s privileging of “the external world, grasping surfaces rather than psychological depths” and the latter’s – and its prose equivalent, literary Modernism’s – preference for introspection, for “the profound self, and with deep structures”, in accordance with the teachings of the philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), whose theories excited Murry, Mansfield, Fergusson and Rice (2000:10, 11). As has been asserted, there was great diversity within Impressionist practice; while Renoir and Monet’s Grenouillère works of 1868-69 were primarily experiments in *plein-air* painting, Degas’s disturbing *Interior/The Rape* (1868-69) (see fig. 4), is in every way different from Monet’s picturesque images of the popular bathing spot; it is instead indicative of Degas’s increasing preoccupation with the theme of gender difference and the exploitation of working-class women. Although Mansfield’s personal and literary development involved a constant self-analysis, this does not necessarily align her primarily with the Post-Impressionists. The tendency towards introspection and the questioning of personal identity and one’s place within, and relationship to, the external world is something both the Impressionist painters and the modernist writers paid heed to within their respective media. Specifically, Nochlin explains that the Impressionist and the Post-Impressionists endeavoured to realise “the self” in their work (v). Similarly, as Fullbrook explains, “one of the organising principles of the avant-garde writing of the period was centred on a new examination of gender, its origins and its instability” (12). Fullbrook finds in Eliot, Woolf, Joyce and Mansfield’s writing, protagonists who “are all examples of this impulse working itself out” (ibid.). Like Post-Impressionism, Impressionism had various strands – as made manifest in Degas and Monet’s oeuvres. The Impressionists’ concentration on surface appearances and visual effects did not preclude an interest in the internal world. As Sarah Sandley notes, “Perception of significant external detail can provide insights into thought[s] or feelings the character may not consciously acknowledge” (83). Similarly, Matz asserts that Impressionism “does not choose surfaces and fragments over depths and wholes but makes surfaces show depths, make fragments suggest wholes, and devotes itself to the undoing of

¹⁰ KM to Richard Murry, c. 19 September 1920.

¹¹ 1907.

such distinctions" (1).¹² Manet, Degas, Morisot and Caillebotte all portray figures in quiet introspection, and even within their respective group portraits, the figures seem isolated from one another and absorbed in private reverie, hinting at those deeper levels or structures which Smith understands as especially post-impressionistic.

Mansfield, Murry and various colleagues and friends, such as Fergusson, did respond enthusiastically to Fauvism. However, it was only one of several styles in vogue in Europe influencing artists during the first decades of the twentieth century. Smith explains that Fergusson moved away from the impressionism of "Whistler's society portraits and muted ... landscapes" to develop an increasingly Fauvist style that owed to his exposure to Matisse, Derain and Vlaminck, artists whose "work was characterized by a sensuous and heightened use of colour, especially red and green, an emphatic outlining of figures, and an interest in 'primitive' subjects" (2000:12). For Smith, Mansfield's work demonstrates these same aesthetic principles, although other than in the three stories written for *Rhythm*, nowhere in her stories do I find this substantiated. In these early 'New Zealand' stories, "The Woman at the Store", "Millie", and "Ole Underwood", Smith makes a convincing argument for their status as Fauvist works, citing the barbarism and bold colours, particularly red.¹³ However, these three works stand quite alone within Mansfield's oeuvre. They represent a strong, though isolated, response to those artists and writers with whom she was at that time associating, and undoubtedly influenced by – a letter to Murry mid-1918 demonstrates that this style was but a passing phase: "Anne [Estelle Rice] keeps asking me to do things I cant do... her idea of literature ... is very tiresome.... shes still at the *Blood & Guts* idea – & how far away are we" (CL2:214-15).¹⁴ Far from being representative of an overarching affinity for Fauvism, they evidence her keen ability to change the style of her writing to meet the publisher's or editor's injunction – in this case, *Rhythm*, and Murry's call for an art that was brutal.¹⁵ As Ian Gordon points out she had done it before by producing satirical sketches for *The New Age* in 1910 (1974:30).¹⁶

Mansfield's demonstrably heightened appreciation of colour, as Smith notes, enabled her to use colour as a communicative tool. However, unlike the Post-Impressionists, or the Fauves specifically, Mansfield's colours are not unnaturalistic. Inspired by Symbolist poetry, Matisse's *Joie de Vivre* (1905-06), represents the artist's attempt "to create an imaginary land, or state of mind" (Whitfield 18). Mansfield's Impressionism situates her closer to

¹² Peters makes the same argument for Conrad's Impressionism, 3-4.

¹³ The New Zealand Stories: "The Woman at the Store", *Rhythm* 1.4 (1912): 7-21; "How Pearl Button was Kidnapped", *Rhythm* 2.8 (1912): 136-39; "Ole Underwood", *Rhythm* 2.12 (1913): 334-37; "Millie", *The Blue Review* 1.2 (1913): 82-87.

¹⁴ KM to JMM, 3 June 1918.

¹⁵ *Rhythm* 1.1 (1911): 36 (see CL1:xiii, re: *Rhythm's* editorial call for "guts and bloodiness").

¹⁶ Published collectively as *In a German Pension* (1911).

Realism than to Symbolism; her work is highly imaginative, but not unrealistic. Her work is littered with decorative motifs but it is not ornamental at the expense of credibility or verisimilitude. In terms of the art that she responded to most keenly, a letter to Richard Murry evidences a strong affinity for subjects and technique in keeping with Monet's Impressionist style rather than Fauvism:

The painting has come. I like it tremendously. I think there is a very fine feeling in that landscape seen across water; the house, the trees, the grassy levels all seem to partake of the watery element... It seems to me that not only the water reflects the house and trees but they reflect the water. I'm not trying to be literary ... It's in your painting (CL4:56).¹⁷

Mansfield's description calls to mind a number of Monet's landscapes within which rendering the 'watery element', as she so aptly put it, was the focus of the artist's endeavours; for example, in *Regatta at Argenteuil* (1872), (see fig. 8), the outlines of the solid structures are only subtly discernable from their reflections. Fauvist works of a comparable subject, such as S. J. Peplow's *Boats at Royan* (1910) or J. D. Fergusson's *Royan* (1910), evidence an entirely different aesthetic and demonstrate no concern with dappled light effects or reflections (see figs. 10 and 11). Instead, they are characterised by bold outlines which separate the pictorial components within the composition, and by jarring juxtapositions of primary and secondary colours. In Fergusson's image, the boat, house and other structures are drastically simplified and encapsulated within bold, flat colour planes with little gradation between colours and no shading. Neither of these Fauvist images demonstrates vague or elusive properties, whereas Monet's style is reminiscent of a line in the opening paragraph of "At the Bay": "there was nothing to mark which was beach and where was the sea" (205). Mansfield expresses the same sentiment or aesthetic in a letter to Murry: "Fine shades – fine shades – Im all for them. Life is made up of nuances. One must be sensitive sensitive to the very last nerve – or I must" (CL4:113).¹⁸ It is precisely this quality which brings Fullbrook to diverge from her primary critical perspective and method and to instead ponder Mansfield's impressionistic tendencies, leading her to conclude that Mansfield's stories are "written with exceptional lyricism and remarkable easy subtlety" – a summation in direct opposition with Smith's claim for Fauvism (5).

Mansfield's enduring aim – to represent 'Life' – aligns her more closely with the Realist, Courbet, who aimed to "express the manners, ideas and aspect of my time ... in a word, to produce living art", and his follower, Manet, who proclaimed that "An artist has got to move with the times and paints what he sees", rather than with Matisse, who explained his aims as follows: "What I am after above all, is expression ... Expression to my way of thinking does

¹⁷ KM to Richard Murry [September 1920]. Murry's painting remains untraced.

¹⁸ KM to JMM, 15 November 1920.

not consist of the passion mirrored upon a human face or betrayed by a violent gesture” (Courbet cited in Blunden 20; Manet, *ibid.*, 22; Matisse cited in Whitfield 24). As demonstrated in her critique of Gerhardt’s novel, Mansfield and the Impressionists understood that a look or a simple gesture could serve to convey the message of a work or the personality of a character – Wagenknecht believes this one of Mansfield’s greatest achievements as an author (23).¹⁹ O’Sullivan explains how in “The Tiredness of Rosabel”, “character ... is so often a matter of gesture and phrase rather than traditional ‘consistency’” (1985:xi).²⁰ The Impressionists dispensed with what they perceived as superfluous, as Matisse would also do in due course, but they were not aiming for that same sense of coherency or harmony within their compositions; rather, the Impressionists brought to the fore the fragmentations and disjunctions which were felt to characterise modernity. Furthermore, whereas Matisse assigned primary and secondary roles to elements within his compositions, unifying the picture plane through colour and rhythmical or lyrical lines, the Impressionists, and Mansfield, awarded all components within a composition equal importance, for which they were duly criticised. For example, the face of Manet’s *Olympia* (1863) is accorded no more technical attention than her bouquet of flowers; this frankness was seen as representative of the artist’s impersonality.²¹ And one recalls Mansfield’s deliberate intensification of “the so-called small things – so that truly everything is significant” (CL1:88).²² By contrast, Matisse explained,

The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive. The place occupied by figures or objects, the empty space around them, the proportions, everything plays a part. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the various elements at the painter’s disposal for the expression of his feelings (cited in Whitfield 24).

In this respect, his ideas partly correspond with those of Degas, the consummate draftsman, for whom space and proportion were of paramount importance. However, Degas’s paintings and those of his Impressionist colleagues were not primarily vehicles for emotive expression; rather they were a form of painterly journalism, serving as contemporary historical records. Furthermore, Degas’s compositions are not contrived and neither are Mansfield’s. They have a naturalness to them which stems from an almost contradictory blend of prolonged consideration and subsequent detachment which is wholly foreign to Fauvism.

¹⁹ Consider the awkwardness and idiosyncrasies of Degas’s dancers. In *The Dance Class* (1874-75), oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, a dancer seated upon the piano rather awkwardly scratches her back; numerous other dancers within the composition are depicted at ease and in ungainly positions both seated and standing.

²⁰ See KM to Brett, 11 December 1921 for her response to black and white photographs of her recent work. Mansfield finds Brett’s portrait of Ottoline Morrell weak because “It doesn’t look living” and advises her to aim convey “an aspect” of the woman herself, CL4:335.

²¹ Manet, *Olympia* (1863), oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay.

²² KM to Garnett Trowell, 8 November 1908.

Smith's case for Mansfield's status as a Fauvist is extensive, hence my prolonged response to her argument here. Furthermore, as explained above, Smith is specifically interested in Mansfield's relationship to the visual arts, which is also my primary focus. She quotes from Ida Baker's memoir – "Katherine hated 'fuzzy edges'" and she cites Mansfield's initial reluctance to cut "Je ne parle pas français" for publication as further proof of the artist's Fauvist style: "The *outline* would be all blurred. It must have those sharp lines" (2000:74; *CL3*:273).²³ Again, it must be emphasised that Impressionism is not synonymous with blurry edges; neither Degas nor Caillebotte produced the hazy atmospheric landscapes executed by Monet which had first earned the Independents the Impressionist title.²⁴ Rather, Impressionism is synonymous with modernity, with the representation of everyday contemporary life. Smith finds Raoul Duquette's childhood African laundress comparable to Gauguin's Tahitian women – an interesting connection – and points to Mansfield's late opinion of Renoir's portraits as further evidence of "her rejection of surface realism", and thus, Impressionism (2000:15):

Renoir – at the last – bores me. His feeling for flesh is a kind of super butchers feeling about a lovely little cut of lamb. I am always fascinated by lovely bosoms but not without the heads & hands as well – and I want in fact the feeling that all this beauty is in the deepest sense attached to Life (*CL4*:270).²⁵

Mansfield's response to Renoir's portraits signals not her rejection of Impressionism, but rather points to her dislike of Renoir's objectification of the female subject and his perpetually idealistic representations: "To my mind a picture should be something pleasant, cheerful and pretty, yes pretty!" (Renoir cited in Blunden 130). Smith points to Woolf's observation that Mansfield "liked to have a line round her" as further proof of the writer's Fauvist tendencies (cited in Smith 2000:15). This seems an overly literal interpretation of Woolf's recollection. Mansfield compartmentalised and this was both an organisational technique and a defence mechanism, as the following confession demonstrates: "Brett dearest, forgive me.... I simply cant say you-and-I. I never feel you and I with my friends. There is something forever separate in me.... If this is a bad limitation – I am very sorry" (*CL4*:317).²⁶ Woolf also recorded in her diary a conversation with Mansfield in which "I said how my own character seemed to cut out a shape like a shadow in front of me.... she thought this bad: one ought to merge into things" (Woolf cited in Smith 2000:115). Smith correctly interprets this as a technique by which the artist becomes the thing to which s/he is

²³ KM to JMM, 6 April 1920.

²⁴ Compare Monet, *Impression: Sunrise* (1872) with Caillebotte's meticulously rendered *The Floor-Scrapers* (1875), oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay.

²⁵ KM to Brett, 29 August 1921.

²⁶ KM to Brett, 11 November 1921; see also *CL1*:8 and *NB2*:134. See also Melissa Reimer, "Her Father's Daughter?: Katherine Mansfield's Lists", *Commonwealth* 29.2 (Spring 2007) 29-41, in which I discuss Mansfield's tendency to compartmentalise.

referring or describing. In Mansfield's case, this applied to both living things and inanimate objects as she clarified in a letter to Brett: "When I pass the apple stalls I cannot help stopping and staring until I feel that I, myself, am changing into an apple... When I write about ducks I swear that I am a white duck ..." (CL1:330).²⁷ However, Smith also explains that within this process, "bounding outlines dissolve" which surely undermines her claim for Mansfield's position as a Fauvist (2000:115).²⁸ Fauvists employed bold outlines to suggest solidity as opposed to the mutability and multiplicity which characterise Impressionist works, and which Baudelaire had insisted the *flâneur* aspire to: "The crowd is his element... His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd" (9). Baudelaire identified modernity as multiplicative, flickering, kaleidoscopic, and "always unstable" and these are precisely the features which the Impressionists and Mansfield capture in paint and prose, respectively (10).²⁹

The notion of impermanence and instability associated with both modernity and Impressionism also relates to Mansfield's personal situation. Much has been made of Mansfield's status as a colonial in Europe, as a female writer on the outskirts of male-dominated Modernism, and of her lifelong tendency towards self-imposed exile. Roger Robinson notes that her characters are also predominantly "outcasts, exiles, minorities, and fringe dwellers" (4). I do not entirely agree with Robinson. I think that many of her characters like to think of themselves as unique individuals – Bertha in "Bliss" revelling in her new found though misplaced sense of self-assuredness, smiles proprietarily over her dinner guests: "No, they didn't share it. They were dears—dears—and she loved having them there.... But ..." (100-101); Monica in "Revelations" (1920) believes herself to be more delicate and sensitive than others. In reality however, they are merely two in a great league of bored middle-upper class women whose sole occupation is their decorative domestic role.³⁰ Mansfield's characters are individuals in that they are often modelled on actual people who she knew or had encountered (Mansfield's Ma Parker was based upon her own char woman), but I believe that what she was really endeavouring to reveal was their universality; while this in part accounts for the continuing popularity of her work, it also touches upon a key theme in modern theory: the significance or importance of the individual in an increasingly fractured society. Her characters are often the majority rather than the minority. By drawing attention to everyday characters like Rosabel, the millinery assistant, Mansfield draws the reader's attention to the wider realm of working-class women in early

²⁷ KM to Brett, 11 October 1917.

²⁸ See also KM to Brett, 29 July 1921, in which she confesses "dividing line[s] ... frighten me". She is speaking specifically about the Channel "It is so terrifically wide, really", CL4:256. See Chapter 4 regarding the symbolic implications of such divisions.

²⁹ Levy makes a very similar claim for the city experience, 70 (cited in Chapter 5).

³⁰ The theme of the bored housewife is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

twentieth-century society. Of course, Mansfield liked to think of herself as unique and existing solely on the outskirts, as revealed in a diary entry of March 1908: "I am unlike others ..." (NB1:110); however, she quickly reprimands herself for such conceit: "O, Kathleen ... do tell the truth more ..." (NB1:111).

Fringe dweller or otherwise – O'Sullivan points out that in fact Mansfield rejected both the centre and the borders – she was, nevertheless, often in exile, living apart from family and friends. Consequently, her work is permeated with that "sense of discomposure *everywhere*" synonymous with modernity (O'Sullivan 1994:13); again, a perspective which corresponds with that of the Impressionists during the redevelopment of Paris (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 5). Robinson asserts that Mansfield's foreignness influenced her choice of sources, and I wholly agree. With no real literary or painting tradition in New Zealand – a country that she perceived was "[m]aking its own history, slowly and clumsily" – Mansfield was forced to look elsewhere (cited in Alpers 1982:59); diary entries of early March 1908 reveal how diverse her borrowings were. Robinson recognises Mansfield's use of Impressionist devices, specifically, the "obliqueness, open-endedness, discontinuous narrative, subversion of the concepts of wholeness and closure, and replacement of significance by intensity.... the moments of impulse and transition rather than well rounded narrative episode" (5). He shows too how Mansfield's colonial heritage directly informs her writing, the one characterised by "diffidence and perverseness", the other consistently "ambivalent, elusive, and perverse" (4).

Like Robinson, Smith understands Mansfield's foreignness as a major contributing factor. Specifically, she argues that Mansfield's status as a foreigner in London predisposed her commitment to selected Fauves "who were also predominantly not English, and who were excluded by the Bloomsbury avant garde" (2000:15). Though I disagree with Smith's opinion that Mansfield had a "shifting and disrupted development as a writer" (2000:15), because I believe that her development as a writer was deliberate and progressive, as demonstrated in the various jottings within the Urewera notes which were later modified and utilised within "At the Bay", and that her productivity was really only disrupted by her periods of ill health; I do think however, that the idea has validity within the context of Mansfield's viewpoint or perspective, which was undoubtedly fractured. An epistolary confession reveals the degree to which her viewpoint shifted with her later conceding that she valued her origins: "I thank God I was born in New Zealand. A young country is a real heritage, though it takes one time to recognise it. But New Zealand is in my very bones" (CL5:115).³¹ An Impressionist's viewpoint is definitively "shifting and disrupted" as made

³¹ KM to Harold Beauchamp, 18 March 1922.

manifest in Degas's images of the ballet.³² In Alpers's footsteps, Robinson's explains that in Europe, Mansfield's social insecurity forced her to look for alternative viewpoints: "The angles of vision are as unpredictable, as perverse, and as illuminating as they are in Manet or Conrad or the then newly familiar camera" (4). Robinson might have in mind Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergères* (1881-82), (see fig. 5) which subverts preconceptions in both its characterisation and in its duplicitous viewpoints.³³

Certainly, as an outsider and one so opposed to societal conventions, Mansfield was attracted to the Fauves' daring and freedom of expression, but she was not one to take such liberties in her own written work: "I feel as fastidious as though I wrote with acid" (CL1:124).³⁴ To liken Mansfield's prose effects to those realised by the Fauves is to ignore the deliberateness of her methods and, perhaps paradoxically, the elusiveness of her style. While the Fauves evidenced a greater spontaneity which bordered on recklessness or abandonment, Mansfield approached her work with caution and respect for the subject: "Every word matters.... I *cant* afford mistakes. Another word wont do. I choose every single word" (CL3:204).³⁵ This aligns her with Degas, who claimed,

No art is less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of thought and ... study...; of inspiration, spontaneity, temperament, I know nothing. The same subject has to be done ten times, a hundred times over. Nothing in art, not even movement, must seem accidental (cited in Blunden 138).³⁶

If erratic in her allegiances, Mansfield was very purposeful in her experimentation, drawing on the terminology and methodology espoused within alternate artistic media to realise her vision or ideal for a particular story; "Miss Brill" is a case in point:

I chose not only the length of every sentence, but 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 I'd 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 (CL4:165).³⁷

³² See Degas's *Orchestra at the Opera* (c. 1870), (see fig. 10), alongside his *Orchestra Musicians* (1872), (see fig. 9).

³³ This painting and its implications within the context of Mansfield's stories is discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

³⁴ KM to JMM, 19 May 1913.

³⁵ KM to JMM, 20 February 1920. She did not feel this way about her letter writing as the failure to apostrophise and punctuate demonstrates.

³⁶ Also cited in Rewald 177. Degas's close friend Paul Valéry writes, "... his pencil, his pastel crayon and his brush are never employed carelessly. Willpower dominates. His line is never quite as close as he wants it to be. He attains neither to eloquence nor to the poetry of painting; he seeks only truth in style and style in truth", cited in Blunden 151. Similarly, see Mansfield's advice to Brett, 15 October 1921, in which she explains that the artist must go beyond merely "seeing-and-feeling and *grasping*. I know that when I write stories at the seeing-and-feeling stage they are no good and have to be scrapped. I have *to go* on almost squeezing them in my hands ... until I KNOW them in every corner and part" CL4:296.

³⁷ KM to Richard Murry, 17 January 1921.

Smith understands the above quoted explanation as evidence of Mansfield's commitment to *Rhythm's*, and thus Fauvism's, preoccupation with line and form. However, there is nothing wild or untamed in Mansfield's approach to or attitude to writing; she remained "a powerful stickler for form" (CL1:124).³⁸

By contrast, Post-Impressionist van Gogh, whose example the French Fauves followed and built upon, confessed "I follow no system in painting; I flog the canvas with irregular strokes and let them stand. Impasto – here and there uncovered patches ..." (cited in Smith 84). Smith also points to Mansfield's "paring down process, the simplifying of line to reveal the essentials without stating them ... that were characteristic of Fauvism and of her mature fiction" (83). Unlike the Post-Impressionists, however, Mansfield's technique was not reductive. Although she dispensed with superfluity this was not at the expense of detail. To Koteliansky she described her "infinite delight and value in *detail* – not for the sake of detail but for the life *in* the life of it" (CL1:192).³⁹ In the same letter, she describes feeling intoxicated by "the air, and the noise the real waves make as the boats, with long fans of light, go dancing by" (ibid.). Such comments, expressed in impressionistic terms, are typical of Mansfield and evidence of her perpetual response to external stimuli; this fact alone aligns her more closely with the Impressionists than with the Fauvists who looked inwards. Essentially, Mansfield looks in both directions simultaneously: the inner gaze is registered through literary means, especially Symbolism, and the outer through painterly ones, especially Impressionism. By contrast, Joyce who, according to Kronegger and Matz, also used Impressionist techniques uses Expressionism to convey distorted inner states of consciousness.

Despite commonalities between Impressionist paintings and Mansfield's stories in terms of their themes and preferred subjects – domestic interiors, gardens and urban landscapes, all of which will be explored in detail within the coming chapters, Smith maintains that Mansfield is a Fauvist and that she "enjoys the random sounds and sensations of the city; she gives a Fauvist rather than an Impressionist, Matisse-like sketch of the lines and colour around her" (103-4): "It's a golden day. The blinds are down. I have some big yellow lilies in the studio. The garden door is open and the fig tree throws a wavy pattern on the floor and walls among big soft spots of sunlight" (CL1:316).⁴⁰ I would argue in fact, that far from resonating with a jarring or savage Fauvist aesthetic, Mansfield's description again calls to mind a characteristic Monet; for example, *Monet's House at Argenteuil* (1873), (see fig. 9), which features a brilliant interplay of light and shadow on the trees, flowering bushes and

³⁸ KM to JMM, 19 May 1913.

³⁹ KM to S. S. Koteliansky, 17 May 1915.

⁴⁰ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 13 July 1917.

paving outside the front door. While primarily preoccupied in rendering light effects, the Impressionists were no less concerned with formal line and colour harmonies, as clarified by French art critic and historian, Jacques de Biez (1852-1915) in his 1884 account of Manet:

It was by the focus of light that he penetrated the secrets of nature and divined her remotest charms. He had an admirable sense of the value of planes. He never went astray in the detailing of their mutual relations ... His elegant line comes to vivid life as it pursues light into the furthest recesses of his fancy. For this painter, who is a genuine virtuoso in the art of melodising over the whole scale of values, does not allow his invention to benefit by any improvisation of more or less happily contrived color areas. Each color area, so bright and so accurate, only acquires its full prestige, its full luster and ardour, as a result of superb and dazzling draftsmanship (cited in Blunden 130).

As much as Mansfield admired the Fauvist aesthetic, she clearly distinguished it as style quite different to her own, the one being bold and bright and busy, the other softer, evocative and rooted in a particular moment. Regarding the portrait painted of her by Rice, Mansfield wrote Murry: "Anne came early & began the great painting – me in that red brick frock with flowers everywhere. Its awfully interesting even now.... I painted her in my fashion as she painted me in hers. Her eyes ... "little blue flowers plucked this morning" (CL2:245).⁴¹ Ken Arvidson suggests that "Rice's portrait of her can be read as a representation of her personality" (*Stories and Pictures* 7). However, I would argue that it is a reflection of Rice's, rather than Mansfield's personality because Fauvism is synonymous with the expression of the artist's interior psychological state, not the subject's.

Like Smith who has endeavoured to identify Mansfield's non-literary sources, S. J. Kaplan also registers the specifically impressionistic tendency in Mansfield's work. Kaplan describes Mansfield's mature style as a fusion of "symbolism, impressionism, internal monologue, stream of consciousness, [and] cinematic visual effects", and she notes, specifically, the Impressionism in Mansfield's letters, passages of which are later drawn from and modified within her short stories (17). Kaplan points to Mansfield's acute "sensitivity to visual stimuli", which manifested in prose works which "Often seem like verbal equivalents of paintings", and acknowledges the influence of the numerous avant-garde artists with whom Mansfield and Murry associated, particularly during the *Rhythm* period (205). Interestingly, Kaplan suggests that Mansfield hid other primary sources behind her debt to Wilde, the stylistic influence of whom, during 1906-08 especially, is irrefutable. Kaplan makes a valid point because although Mansfield clearly acknowledged her youthful and consuming obsession with Wilde, alongside others who had become part of her alphabet, she

⁴¹ KM to JMM, 17 June 1918.

deliberately destroyed so much in the way of what would now be considered proofs of particular affinities with or debts to other artists or art forms. She acknowledged the debt to Chekhov, but not before she had borrowed heavily from him, whether consciously or not.⁴² It is virtually impossible to gauge just how much Mansfield borrowed from the various sources of inspiration available to her – as Roger Norburn explains: “she carefully covered her tracks” (xvi). In “Bliss” she at least acknowledges that it was not uncommon to do so: in response to an idea for a prospective play, one of Mansfield’s characters replies: “I *think* I’ve come across the *same* idea in a lit-tle known French review, *quite* unknown in England” (100). Jocelyn Harris (1998) believes that Woolf was equally elusive regarding her sources; and Mansfield freely admitted this fact to Ida Baker: “I am a secretive creature to my last bones” (CL5:120).⁴³

Kaplan’s critical preoccupation remains, however, Mansfield’s literary experiments and development within the context of feminism as opposed to any of the visual art forms dominant during the writer’s career and, thus, she understands the “careful reshaping ... whittling down ... [and the] avoidance of direct emotion”, in Mansfield’s prose, as “a curious version of antifeminism” rather than an Impressionist device (181). In view of the connotations which underpinned contemporary reviews of Morisot and Cassatt’s work and the idea that Impressionism was a feminine art (discussed in Chapter 4), Kaplan’s argument has some validity. Certainly, Mansfield identified and was keen to avoid what she perceived as the pitfalls in most feminine productions – too much introspection and “incorrigibly dimpled” heroines (CL1:37).⁴⁴ She also mocks those tendencies then regarded as particularly feminine, such as Monica’s nerves in “Revelations” and Betty Sinclair’s blushing breathlessness in “A Truthful Adventure” (1911). And she chastised Murry for his sometimes over emotional responses, his tendency to be melodramatic and his lack of proportion in the face of her own self control. However, she also denied any allegiance to feminism – specifically to the Suffrage movement – in her letters as well as in her stories: The same breathless Betty mentioned above implores Mansfield’s (autobiographical) character: “I always had the idea you were so frightfully keen on the future of women.... Come to dinner.... Let’s thrash the whole subject out” (536). It was precisely this “spirit of agitation of revolt” which offended Mansfield’s sensibilities, as demonstrated in a letter 1908, written directly following her own attendance at a Suffrage Meeting: “decided I could not be a suffragette – the world was too full of... Starlight” (CL1:60).⁴⁵ In many ways, the

⁴² See Chapter 3.

⁴³ KM to Ida Baker, 21 March 1922.

⁴⁴ KM to Vera Beauchamp, 17 January 1908 (cited in greater detail in Chapter 4).

⁴⁵ KM to Garnett Trowell, 17 September 1908.

emotionally charged behaviour and reckless abandon demonstrated by the suffragettes is the same quality or impetus behind Fauvism which Mansfield also rejected.⁴⁶

Hanson and Andrew Gurr briefly discuss Mansfield's relationship to Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, acknowledging certain characteristics of her work comparable to those in modern painting. However, they dismiss Mansfield's early affinity for Renoir's work, based on her mature preference for Cézanne, and thus reject the Impressionist label in favour of Post-Impressionist. They point also to the deeper layers of meaning in her stories and argue that they evidence a structural solidity at odds with an Impressionist aesthetic – an idea that Smith concurs with. Hanson and Gurr note the Post-Impressionist influence in the stories she published in *Rhythm*, and in "Old Tar", all of which they see as evidence of Mansfield's new found stylistic freedom following her experience of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*. They believe, however, that the Symbolist impulse is of greater importance than the influence of either Impressionism or Post-Impressionism. They point to Mansfield's debt to Pater, Wilde and Symons and throughout their analyses of her stories they show how details serve the narrative and function symbolically. They note the analogies between musical composition and Mansfield's technique – for example, her comments upon finishing "Miss Brill" – and they show how this too corresponds with the preoccupations of Symbolist poets, such as Baudelaire and Mallarmé, whose aesthetic theories Mansfield quoted and whose styles she partly emulated. Hanson and Gurr conclude with a close reading of "The Canary", irrefutably an overtly symbolic work. There is no doubt that Mansfield retained an affinity for Symbolism and employed Symbolist methods to varying degrees within her stories. More valuable, however, is the simple explanation they arrive at regarding why the short story, rather than a novel, is credibly comparable to painting:

Ultimately ... the analogy between the novel and the visual arts must break down: the one is unavoidably a temporal, the other a spatial art. But the parallel between a painting and a short story is closer. The short story takes place over a relatively short period of time, and can therefore more readily be grasped as an aesthetic whole. Its spatial and structural elements can be exploited for aesthetic effect in ways not possible over the longer time course of a novel (36).⁴⁷

I completely agree; and this is something Mansfield grasped earlier rather than later – it is the reason she dispensed with plans to write a novel and committed herself to the short

⁴⁶ Historical accounts reveal that there was a deal of violence surrounding suffragette demonstrations in London in 1912-13. That Mansfield chose not to acknowledge these in her letters is again telling.

⁴⁷ Kronegger also notes that the form most used by literary Impressionists is that of the diary. "Writers of notebooks, diaries and memoirs have the advantage of changing writing styles, [and] points of view ...", 17.

story genre: “now I want to write recollections of my own country.... Then I want to write poetry.... No novels, no problem stories, nothing that is not simple, open” (NB2:32-33).⁴⁸

While Kronegger briefly acknowledges the impact of Impressionist aesthetics on Mansfield she does not categorise her as a literary Impressionist; and yet, within the context of Kronegger’s definitions and summations, Mansfield’s work best fits this description. For instance, Kronegger explains, “Reality is a synthesis of sense-impressions. Impressionist art suggests an emotional reality. Impressionism means a new attitude toward life. Can we forget to “know” that the sky is blue, the grass, green; and to say, feel, paint, or express what the eye actually “sees”?” (14); which immediately calls to mind Mansfield’s “little Chinese Lottie” (“Prelude” 14, cited in Chapter 1). Busch, whose focus is largely literary, nevertheless goes beyond merely commenting on Mansfield’s relationship to Impressionism, to draw parallels – in terms of structure and effect – between “Her First Ball” and Degas’s *The Orchestra at the Opera* (c. 1870), (see fig. 13). (Weisstein cites the same example but his entire article owes much to Busch’s previous work).⁴⁹ Specifically, Busch points to the way the dancers have been cut off through the middle and associates this cropping in painting with synecdoche in literature. Dancers’ legs were commonly considered their most attractive feature and thus she understands Degas’s ‘body-less’ figures as registering this; she sees Mansfield’s use of synecdoche in “An Indiscreet Journey” (1915), within which a soldier is referred to as a “bayonet”, as correspondingly impressionistic (68).⁵⁰ Busch notes also the Cubist effects in Mansfield’s “Bank Holiday” (1920). However, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, Mansfield found Cubism depersonalised the human subject too much. Any reference to Cubism in her stories are shown in a negative light, for example, Duquette in “Je ne parle pas Français”, a novelist of no note and perhaps Mansfield’s vainest and most superficial character, “preens” himself “before the cubist sofas” (71).

Degas is precisely the artist whose technical achievements I see as closest to Mansfield’s, and like Busch, I understand the work discussed above as a particularly useful example in demonstrating the links between Impressionism in painting and in prose. Moreover, as in many of his works Degas employs an entirely unconventional viewpoint. The focus is, as the title suggests, on the musicians, namely, the bassoonist and cellist. However Degas’s unusual

⁴⁸ 22 January 1916. In a letter to Vera Beauchamp, of ?May-June 1908, Mansfield mentions the novel she had begun writing entitled *The Youth of Rewa*, CL1:46. She soon abandoned this and another novel draft entitled “Juliet”. See also CL4:68.

⁴⁹ Though she cites this example, Busch does not use this title. Many of Degas’s works share the same or a similar title and he painted numerous versions of the same subject which were exhibited under various titles primarily in English and French; these then came to be known by alternate titles which at times causes some confusion. There exists a not dissimilar version of the above-named work entitled *Orchestra Musicians* (1872), oil on canvas, Stadel Museum, Frankfurt am Main (see fig. 9).

⁵⁰ “An Indiscreet Journey” was published posthumously in *Something Childish and Other Stories* (1924).

vantage point allows him only a glimpse of the orchestra who are portrayed almost in profile and of a scattering of ballerinas – or rather, their legs. The perimeter of the orchestra’s pit divides the composition into three parts, none of which are balanced, and yet the work appears unified due to the zigzag linear effect produced by outline of the pit, the tube of the bassoon, the bows of the violins, and finally through the legs of the headless dancers. Like Degas’s, Mansfield’s vision is fragmented with neither artist permitting the spectator/reader a complete view of their chosen subject matter – for example, “Prelude” and “At the Bay” are divided into twelve separate episodes of uneven length and the story unfolds from various perspectives.⁵¹ Degas supplies only glimpses – fragments – of the simultaneous activities taking place. Mansfield does precisely the same thing in prose; “Bank Holiday” is a case in point with the focus constantly shifting from character to character and the reader permitted only snapshots of what is a panoramic scene.

In her illuminating study Busch notes Mansfield’s attention to rhetorical devices and figures of speech which characterise literary impressionism such as synecdoche, simile and onomatopoeia. More importantly, she lists several of the techniques employed by Mansfield that may be related to impressionist painting:

A peculiarity of her style is the materialization of phenomena of light and sound. Light is seen as a liquid, *like white wine splashed* [“Miss Brill”] ... music is visualized as a ribbon [“a fellow ... draws ribbons – long, twisted streaming ribbons – of tune out of a fiddle”, “Bank Holiday”], or a wave [He was tossed away on a great wave of music ...] “Her First Ball”] ... (70).⁵²

Busch might have had in mind images such as Renoir’s *La Grenouillère* (1868) or *The Ball at the Moulin de la Galette* (1876) within which the artist has achieved unprecedented effects in rendering light and movement.⁵³ Both the painterly and the literary Impressionist, explains Busch, may reduce “a living creature ... to a patch of colour; an inanimate object, on the other hand, may seem alive” (70). Busch demonstrates this through examples from “Her First Ball”, but there are many, including Raoul’s mental image of Dick’s female companion: “... dressed in mignonette green, name—Daisy ...”, and the café proprietor who is extraordinarily “transparent” (“Je ne parle pas français” 75, 61). Harris notes that Woolf does this too: when Lily paints Mrs Ramsay (who sees herself as “a wedge-shaped core of darkness”) she is “reduced ... to a purple shadow without irreverence” (cited in Harris 60). There are also numerous examples of anthropomorphism in Mansfield’s stories; the “enormous shock-haired giant” gum tree outside Mrs. Stubbs’s shop in “At the Bay” is one

⁵¹ “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” is also divided into twelve parts. The implications of this divisional method (particularly in relation to “At the Bay”) are discussed in Chapter 6.

⁵² Van Gunsteren also uses this example provided by Busch, though she does not acknowledge it (1990:165).

⁵³Renoir, *The Ball at the Moulin de la Galette* (1876) oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

(206). Busch acknowledges that although the tradition of 'Animism' predates the Impressionists, the Impressionists used it to "catch" and evoke both mood and atmosphere (70). Although Busch is predominately concerned with the syntactical techniques employed by Mansfield that are specific to literary Impressionism rather than with comparable texts and paintings; and though she does not attempt to reveal when and where Mansfield might have encountered Impressionism, still her approach is more comprehensive than others in that she does supply one specific illustrative example to demonstrate her argument for Mansfield's literary Impressionism.⁵⁴ My purpose within this thesis is to provide more of these examples, to reveal the sources of her pictorial borrowings and to offer reasons why Mansfield responded demonstratively to Impressionist paintings.

Weisstein (who borrows heavily from Busch), focuses wholly on the Impressionism of "Her First Ball", a story he finds has been largely ignored by the literati. Despite Mansfield's dismissive comments: "I don't believe ... [it] much good", Weisstein claims that this story represents Mansfield's "deliberate ... attempt to tackle Impressionism ... [in] ... literary terms.... by re-creating Impressionism in the verbal medium" (CL4:252; Weisstein 285).⁵⁵ Weisstein considers Mansfield a literary impressionist *par excellence* for a number of reasons including the pictorial quality of her writing, the utilisation of specific impressionistic linguistic techniques (as already demonstrated by Busch) and in the treatment of time. "Her First Ball" is for Weisstein significant for its "pervasive sense of motion" which he understands as a characteristic of Impressionism. This is partly due to the generous use of verbs, such as flying and gliding and slipping and, like Busch, he notes that they are applied to both mobile and inanimate objects, for example the "waltzing lamp-posts and houses and fences and trees" (287-88). I would also point to the characters' speech – Laurie calls: "Come on, girls, let's make a dash for it"; a girl cries for the basket of programmes: "Pass them along, pass them along!" – and to the abundance of verbs: "away they bowled"; "they were ... lifted ... carried along ... and pushed into ..." (337, 338; 336). There is also a sense of events having passed before they have been fully grasped which further lends a sense of urgency to the narrative: "But, of course, there was no time" – something which corresponds with those qualities which Kronegger identifies as underpinning impressionism – both literary and painterly: "change, flux ... instability [and] detachment" – the *zeitgeist* of their time ("Her First Ball" 337, Kronegger 88). The suggestion of movement, achieved through various syntactical strategies, and the attention to sensory

⁵⁴ However, like Weisstein, I am critical of Busch's conflation of Impressionism and Pointillism. Busch claims that Mansfield's techniques in prose parallel that of the Pointillists: "The accumulative technique is a main characteristic of impressionism. Little touches are placed side by side: the parallel to impressionist painting, especially 'pointillism' is obvious", 64, partially cited by Weisstein, 282, n. 18. Van Gunsteren also rejects this association.

⁵⁵ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 24 July 1921.

perceptions contribute to that sense of the momentary, the transient – the ephemeral – so central to Impressionist work, and which Mansfield repeatedly evokes in her prose. Busch and Weisstein show how the simple use of conjunctions, such as ‘and’, ‘for’ and ‘because’ – which are numerous in this story – reinforce the sense of motion or momentum. Busch, however, writes: “Of causative conjunctions (‘for’ and ‘because’) there are only three. The Impressionist is not troubled about ‘cause and effect’, which is a matter of the intellect, not of the senses” (62).

Busch is correct in her claim that the Impressionists privilege the senses over the intellect; however, Busch misunderstands that ‘for’ in “For it was thrilling. Her first ball!” functions “to emphasize Leila’s feeling of importance” (ibid.). ‘For’, in fact, emphasises Leila’s incredulousness at her companions’ indifference and at her own unexpected joy in the occasion. “For it was thrilling” represents Leila’s and Mansfield’s imploration to the reader to identify with her situation – to recall it, to remember it, as “She would remember for ever” (336). Busch does however note the element of authorial intervention within this story – though not in relation to the sentence cited above, but in regards to “because” which, she explains, relates to Leila’s first impression upon entering the cloak room: “Dark girls, fair girls were patting their hair, tying ribbons again.... And because they were all laughing it seemed to Leila that they were all lovely” (337). Busch claims that this is not Leila’s reflection but the author-narrator’s. I would agree with Busch’s findings here but also point out that it is an Impressionist technique meant to emphasise Leila’s reliance on the surface appearance of things – “it seemed that” suggests Leila is a passive participant in the illusion and that her perception, if not wholly reliable, is absolutely authentic.

Weisstein points also to Mansfield’s use of free indirect discourse/*discours indirect libre*, again an Impressionist technique. Utilised by Flaubert, Joyce and Franz Kafka, free indirect discourse facilitates the blurring of the subject’s first-person accounts with the narrative perspective of a third-person – usually the author. Mansfield’s narratives move fluidly between the perspectives of her characters and authorial intervention is present to lesser and greater degrees. In “The Tiredness of Rosabel”, for example, the narrator’s presence is made explicit via parentheses: “(The real Rosabel, the girl crouched on the floor in the dark, laughed aloud ...)” (518). “She could not see very clearly”, however, could be either the narrator’s observation or Rosabel’s internal monologue (513). Smith also notes the effect of this polyphonic method and relates it to Mansfield’s role playing, always assuming a different mask or disguise (2000:47-50).

As I understand it, Mansfield employs multiple viewpoints or voices in a manner comparable to that demonstrated by the Impressionist painters who used mirrors and employed unusual angles to confuse the spectator and thus to best represent their

experience of the fragmentary nature of modern life. In an Impressionist work it is not always clear who is the spectator and who is being watched and from where. This raises questions about not the validity of but the reliability of any one perspective. Alpers alights on this theme in his biography. He explains that the telling of Mansfield's "story" must be "done with mirrors" (1982:73). Mansfield, he writes, had "allegiances of every kind; and I think the only way to tell it is with mirrors, admitting the view of each witness in turn with a sort of *Rashomon* effect, since only in the multiplex confusion can veracity be found" (ibid.). Alpers is right to assert that Mansfield's allegiances were varied, as O'Sullivan and S. J. Kaplan have shown above. And his idea that Mansfield's life story requires mirrors entirely corresponds with Impressionist practice (as discussed above and throughout Chapter 5). Karl G. Heider explains that the *Rashomon* effect is the effect of the subjectivity of perception on recollection, by which observers of an event are able to produce significantly different but equally believable accounts of it.⁵⁶ This also entirely corresponds with Impressionism which privileges individual, subjective perception as demonstrated in the differing works Impressionist artists made of the same subject, such as Monet and Renoir's respective versions of the riverside resort of La Grenouillère or Degas and Manet's images of café society. Essentially, Alpers is suggesting that one must approach Mansfield's life with an Impressionist's viewpoint and that it must be recounted using an Impressionist's technique.

Interestingly, Weisstein claims that Mansfield believed that literature held an advantage over painting and explains that while the art of the Impressionist painters is atemporal – "in the painted canvas time is frozen in an eternal present" – literature, by contrast, is able to "convey or suggest movement ... or flux" and thus can more effectively represent the passage of time (285). Weisstein believes that the painters relied on "trickery" (ibid.). He points to Monet's series works, the Rouen Cathedral and the Haystacks – several versions of which were shown in London in 1905 – in which the same image is depicted at different times of the day and in different seasons;⁵⁷ when viewed consecutively these images mimic the passage of time.⁵⁸ Weisstein's point here is well argued but not entirely convincing. Representing the passage of time was thematically central to Impressionist concerns as Weisstein rightly emphasises, it is also the theme that pervades many of Mansfield's stories; she continually experimented with how best to render it, culminating in its evocation via

⁵⁶ Karl G. Heider, "The Rashomon Effect: When Ethnographers Disagree", *American Anthropologist*, 90. 1 (March 1988): 73-81. The name originates from filmmaker Kurosawa Akira's *Rashomon* (1950), in which a crime witnessed by four individuals is described in four mutually contradictory but credible ways.

⁵⁷ The catalogue for the 1905 show at the Grafton lists the following Monet works: Haystack, Sun Effect; Haystacks – End of the Summer; Haystacks – Snow Effect; Rouen Cathedral, The Porch; Rouen Cathedral, The Porch – Sunny Weather; no dates nor collection details provided.

⁵⁸ The thematic and pictorial treatment of the passage of time is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6.

nature imagery in “The Garden Party”: “And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed” (257). However, the transience of life and the fleeting nature of time had preoccupied artists from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries onwards, particularly in Northern Europe where *vanitas* and still life painting flourished. There is no evidence to suggest that Mansfield believed literature was unique in its capacity to convey this thematically, or that painting was at a disadvantage; a letter to Brett suggests quite the opposite: “I am absolutely uneducated about painting. I can only look at it as a writer but it seems to me the real thing. It’s what one is aiming at” (CL4:278).⁵⁹ Mansfield’s comments, here and elsewhere, such as in her conversations with A. R. Orage, editor of *The New Age* reveal that achieving painterly effects within the medium of prose remained one of her primary concerns.

Van Gunsteren readily acknowledges the “painterly quality of her [Mansfield’s] descriptive prose” and notes the significance of colour and light comparable to that employed by the Impressionists and which in Mansfield’s case results in “verbal paintings” (167). C. K. Stead goes so far as to call her stories “canvas[es]” (2000:39). Van Gunsteren’s approach is, however, almost exclusively literary. Van Gunsteren believes Weisstein’s focus is too narrow because he privileges the pictorial aspect of Mansfield’s short stories. However, because the work of the writers such as Flaubert and Zola, held to be forerunners of the movement, is highly pictorial, this is a logical starting point; both Brunetière and Hatzfeld show that this approach provides a strong foundation. Van Gunsteren’s research is thorough and she provides a comprehensive account of Mansfield’s relationship to literary impressionism. Her publication serves as a text book of sorts, within which she considers no less than fifty-four of Mansfield’s short stories, with greater analysis reserved for the better known stories, such as “At the Bay”, “Prelude”, “The Daughters of the Late Colonel”, “The Doll’s House” and “The Fly”. She considers Mansfield’s narrative methods, themes, structure, characterisation and imagery. Van Gunsteren asserts that her aim was to find Mansfield’s place in English literary history, and the role of Impressionism in her aesthetics and fiction. Like Smith and Fullbrook, Van Gunsteren acknowledges the other styles influencing Mansfield’s writing. She deals with Modernism, Symbolism and Expressionism in turn, and reaches some valid conclusions. She finds Mansfield’s short stories fundamentally impressionistic because they are concerned solely with rendering the impressions which various characters form, as opposed to reliable narrative accounts drawn from objective experience – an idea which further validates Alpers’s theory pertaining to the Rashomon effect.

⁵⁹ KM to Brett, 12 September 1921.

Unlike Weisstein, Van Gunsteren does not believe that Mansfield consciously analysed the aesthetics of French Impressionist painters, or that she “consciously intend[ed] to write Impressionist short stories or ... imitate the Impressionist painters” (11). Van Gunsteren observes that within Mansfield’s papers there exist only “minor references to Renoir and Manet” and that “Mansfield ... never ... commented on Impressionism as such” (11). However, she also acknowledges that “no art and no artist exists in a vacuum” and that Mansfield must have been “aware of the movement, but not consciously struck by an affinity” (12, 11). Throughout the course of my research I have vacillated on this particular point. Why is there not more indisputable evidence of Mansfield’s painterly borrowings? She was happy to concede the debt to Wilde. Why then did she not openly acknowledge the debt to Impressionism too? Did she hide it as Kaplan suggests? However, despite the documents which she destroyed, and the indeterminate number of letters lost over time (which may or may not have supported the link to Impressionism), there is still evidence of Mansfield’s knowledge of and direct response to French Impressionism in painting and in literature. Her correspondence with Brett especially was evidently a forum for much artistic discussion:

I am deeply interested in what you feel about Manet. For years he has meant more to me than any other of those French painters. He satisfies something deep in me. There is a kind of beautiful real *maturity* in his painting, as though he has come into his own and it is a rich heritage. I saw a reproduction of a very lovely Renoir the other day – a young woman, profile or three-quarter with the arm lazily outstretched, lovely throat, bosom, shoulder – such grace. But I think that in his later paintings he is so often muzzy. I cant appreciate the queer woolly outline, & I feel it was so often ... rheumatism rather than revelation (CL4:257).⁶⁰

Mansfield’s reflections evidence her familiarity with not just a few Impressionist paintings, but with Manet and Renoir’s respective oeuvres, as she recognises certain stylistic changes or developments.

In addition to the affinities Mansfield demonstrates towards painterly Impressionism, a letter of 1906, demonstrates that, even at that early stage in her literary development, she was familiar with the concept of literary Impressionism:

I picked up a small collection of poems entitled “The Silver Net” [1903] by Louis Vintras – and I liked some of them immensely. The atmosphere is so intense. He seems to me to belong to that school which flourished just a few years ago – but which now has not a single representative – a kind of impressionist literature school. Don’t think that I even approve of them – but they interest me... (CL1:18).⁶¹

O’Sullivan explains that work of the poet and fiction writer Ernest Dowson (1867-1900), who was linked to decadence, and of his colleague, the novelist and critic, Robert

⁶⁰ KM to Brett, 29 July 1921.

⁶¹ KM to her cousin, Sylvia Payne, 24 April 1906.

Harborough Sherard (1861-1943), both of whom Mansfield associates with literary Impressionism, did not, as she suggests, constitute a school of any sort (CL1:19, n.4). However, Mansfield's comments again highlight her wide reading, her awareness of the concept of literary Impressionism and her interest in some of its characteristic techniques or effects. Her dismissiveness and assertion that she did not approve of the movement, might suggest that she was conscious of the negative connotations surrounding Impressionism, and of the pejorative early criticism that had not altogether abated in her own time and that, perhaps, she was keen to avoid similar criticism by distancing herself from the name – if not the style – of Impressionism.

Despite Van Gunsteren's thorough account of Mansfield's relationship to literary Impressionism, a perusal of the bibliography reveals unavoidable omissions in her primary resources. Van Gunsteren looked primarily to *Katherine Mansfield's Letters to John Middleton Murry, 1913-1922* (1951), *The Scrapbook of Katherine Mansfield* (1937), and the *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, 'Definitive Edition' (1954). All three were edited by J. M. Murry and all contain errors in transcription. Furthermore, in both the *Scrapbook* and the *Journal*, a haphazard ordering of material renders them less reliable than those produced under more recent scholarship, specifically, *the Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, edited by Margaret Scott and published in two volumes in 1997 (seven years after Van Gunsteren's book went to print), which provide a cohesive, chronological and more objective ordering of material. Finally, Van Gunsteren had at her disposal only the first two volumes of *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, edited by O'Sullivan and Scott, the first of which contains the surviving letters for the period 1903-1917. The second volume contains those from 1918-1919, meaning that Van Gunsteren had to rely on Murry's editions of *The Letters of Katherine Mansfield* (1928), published in two volumes which, again, are not as reliable as the volumes O'Sullivan and Scott have subsequently produced. Various letters and diary entries written towards the end of Mansfield's life when tuberculosis had been formally diagnosed and the writer was in search of a medical miracle are far more telling. They contain retrospection and conclusions which provide further evidence of her early affinity for and adoption of the aesthetic principles of Impressionism. No doubt these would have proved a further valuable resource for Van Gunsteren. Finally, as previously noted, Van Gunsteren's perspective is literary and she is less interested in the interrelationship with painting; this ultimately undermines any comprehensive account of Mansfield's relationship to Impressionism.

Sarah Sandley (1994) is interested in the alternative art forms from which Mansfield sought inspiration, including poetry, film and music. One specific focus is on the cinematic quality of Mansfield's writing which, like O'Sullivan, she loosely associates with

Impressionism. Sandley identifies Mansfield's successful and innovative combination of free indirect discourse and the epiphany – in Mansfield's own words, “glimpses”– which she utilised in at least seventeen stories.⁶² Her findings provide further evidence against Smith's case for Fauvism. A notebook from which Sandley quotes to substantiate her point reinforces the parallels between Mansfield and the Impressionism of, for example, Monet and Degas, the former of whom was preoccupied by light and water effects and the latter of whom endeavoured to render “suspended moments” and “suspended movement” (Blunden 142-43). Mansfield writes:

And yet one has these ‘glimpses’.... The waves, as I drove home this afternoon – and the high foam, how it was suspended in the air before it fell ... What is it that happens in that moment of suspension? It is timeless. In that moment ... the whole life of the soul is contained. One is flung up – out of life – one is ‘held’, and then, down, bright, broken, glittering on to the rocks, tossed back – part of the ebb and flow (NB2:209).⁶³

Mansfield's description echoes Baudelaire's (see Chapter 1). Sandley notes that these glimpses, which were later used to structure her stories, were present in her work from the time of the Urewera trip. Jottings in Mansfield's notebook reveal how she experimented with recording “scenic, pictorial detail”, weather effects and personal and impersonal responses to these stimuli (Sandley 82). Sandley believes that Mansfield's affinity for the cinema, and her roles in 1917 as a movie extra opened her eyes to the potential of a structural technique she could apply to her longer stories, primarily in that a film is a series of “segmented scenes and images” then assembled as one finished product (74); of course, this is precisely how “Prelude”, “At the Bay” and “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” are structured, but I would hasten to point out that Mansfield was applying this technique to the semi-autobiographical novel “Juliet” which she had commenced writing in May 1906.⁶⁴ Sandley notes that this corresponds with how a piece of music is composed in movements and thus was doubly significant in respect to Mansfield who was an accomplished cellist and thus must bear upon her methods and ideas pertaining to the composition and structuring of her prose (81). Like O'Sullivan, Sandley shows how Mansfield employs filmic techniques such as the ‘close up’, ‘pan shots’ and ‘long shots’, to good effect in her stories and points out how the evocation of atmosphere via the filmmaker's varied lighting effects might have prompted Mansfield's own ideas about how light might function to signal epiphanies in her stories. In fact, this is precisely how light functions in Impressionism as made manifest in Degas's *The Rape* (as

⁶² Sandley in Roger Robinson, ed. *Katherine Mansfield: In from the Margin*, 70-71. Mansfield used the term “glimpses” in a review for *The Athenaeum*, April 25, 1919, reproduced in *Novels and Novelists* 12.

⁶³ Early 1920.

⁶⁴ Compiled and reproduced as logically as Scott deemed possible in NB1:48-68.

discussed in Chapter 1 and discussed throughout Chapter 5). Mansfield was employing light – particularly lamplight – for symbolic and impressionistic purposes long before she became familiar with filmic techniques, for example in “The Tiredness of Rosabel”, “Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding” (1910) and “The Aloe”.

Although she does not write about Impressionism itself, Christiane Mortelier provides an insightful French perspective which points to the intrinsic qualities of this style nonetheless. She writes that while France or Paris at least is not a significant emblem in Mansfield’s stories, it features nevertheless: Paris inspired “vivid descriptive glimpses—in ‘Spring Pictures’, for example—and snippets of backdrops of hotel rooms or streets.... France was presented in diminutive pictures of insectlike [sic] human activity from up high looking down, as in the vignettes that color her letters” (137-38). She attributes Mansfield’s “detached vision” to the fact that she observed France from the window of Carco’s fourth floor apartment on the quai aux Fleurs, or from the train, a notion which correlates well with reading Mansfield’s stories within the context of Impressionism (138, n.2). An early voyeur, Mansfield continued to enjoy these elevated viewpoints. In a 1922 letter Mansfield recalls a hotel in Paris at which she had stayed during the bombardment and to which she had returned and was now writing from: “I have a funny room on the 6th floor that looks over the roofs of the Sorbonne. Large grave gentlemen in marble bath gowns are dotted on the roof.... A coy rather silly looking eagle is just opposite perched upon a plaque called Geologie. I like this view *fearfully*” (CL4:283).⁶⁵ Such views inspired stories, vignettes and letters within which she describes the view from, for example, the top floor of the Parisian department store Au Bon Marché and from the top of Westminster Cathedral (see Chapter 5). Observing the agitated masses from the summit of New York’s World Trade Centre, Michel de Certeau asserts that “elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was ‘possessed’ into a text that lies before one’s eyes. It allows one to read it ...” (92). This is precisely how it worked for Mansfield.

Mortelier notes Carco’s affinity for landscapes and the Impressionist techniques he learned from Verlaine, particularly the privileging of sense perceptions, and the use of assonance, techniques she finds equally applicable to Mansfield’s prose. She believes that Mansfield’s debt to France has not been either fully realised or admitted to, even by Mansfield herself – though with the recent publication of Kimber’s *The View from France* (2007), this has been significantly rectified. Mortelier names the French writers who Mansfield read and at times emulated – Carco, Colette, Raschilde, Maupassant and Verlaine (Kimber lists thirty)⁶⁶ – and suggests that the affinity may have been strengthened by the

⁶⁵ KM to Brett, 3 October 1922.

⁶⁶ See Kimber’s Appendix D, 287-88.

fact that French writers dealt with sex and sensuality in a manner not yet acceptable to English literary audiences but which appealed to Mansfield.

Alpers's purpose as Mansfield's biographer ostensibly precludes a bias, unlike my own for Impressionism. Thus, he notes the significance if not the influence of the 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition at which Mansfield saw van Gogh's *Sunflowers*. Based on his very thorough research of her manuscripts, Alpers believes that Mansfield did not commit a single story to "paper until it existed for her as a sort of audible recitation" and that she made very few changes, if any, between the drafts and the final versions, and finally, that "most of the shorter manuscripts seem to have been written in one session" (1988:xvii). In this respect, her technical approach corresponds with the Impressionists' method of painting *en plein air* and supposedly completing a work in a single sitting; though, in fact, this was the case for very few canvases. Degas in fact worked laboriously at his canvases. Monet too returned to his series works which had had to be abandoned temporarily when the light changed and he was forced to begin another. However, even this fact is relevant in Mansfield's case as she returned to the same subject too, namely her family, picturing them first as the Burnells and later as the Sheridans. Like Stead who asserts that for Mansfield "Immediacy is of the utmost importance", Alpers's overall assumption is that Mansfield's key technique was spontaneity (Stead 2002:38). While there is some textual evidence to support Alpers's claim, his summation does not allow for the deliberateness and technical exactness of the process. Mansfield consciously and deliberately worked through styles – including those of Pater, Wilde, and Chekhov – particularly between 1907 and 1912 when she vacillated between aesthetic and brutal realism, outback colonial writing and a cosmopolitan modern style, and between the Urewera and London. While closely observing developments in modern art and correlating these with her own artistic aims, she consciously adopted and experimented with various writing models, assimilating what she required before moving on to another often quite different style. The mature style that Mansfield arrived at post-"Prelude" contains traces of all the stylistic elements previously encountered. Her development – the process by which she wrote – was not linear. Unlike Tomalin, I am not suggesting that Mansfield's achievement, or development was piecemeal but rather that it was accumulative (89). The importance of her notebooks in this process, many of which travelled with her, and to which she constantly returned for phrases, motifs, lists and "association of ideas", cannot be underestimated (NB1:82). They served her in much the same way as a sketch books serves a painter.

In sum, previous Mansfield scholarship has provided invaluable insight into the author's life and work from a variety of rewarding perspectives. These, however, have been almost exclusively literary and therefore her relationship to the visual arts has up until this time

been insufficiently attended to. My research neither reads against the grain of current literary practice nor contests such scholarship. Rather, my aim within this thesis is to provide an additional, cross-disciplinary methodology which elucidates for its reader the sources of Mansfield's highly pictorial prose and explains its function.

CHAPTER 3 EXPOSURE AND INFLUENCE IN THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Mansfield's Trajectory

In tracing Mansfield's development as a writer alongside the development and exhibition history of modern French art and its offshoots in Europe and in New Zealand, one finds that during her most formative years she encountered Impressionism at every turn. She reached London in 1903, just as Impressionism was gaining momentum within the public realm via the smaller independent art galleries which were a feature of *fin-de-siècle* European society. Following this period of acculturation, Mansfield returned to her home city of Wellington in December 1906 at which time a more definitive version of Impressionism was emerging there. She then returned to London to embark upon a career as a writer, just prior to the highly influential exhibition: 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' which showed at London from November 1910 until January 1911 and which she later recalled as having had a direct impact on her development as a writer.¹ Additionally, Mansfield's voracious reading – "If there is a book to be read, no matter how bad that book is – I will read it" – of both English and foreign texts, particularly French² and German, as evidenced in her diaries and recalled by Baker, meant that she had access to a greater variety of source material and that she was not cut off from artistic and cultural developments in other cosmopolitan cities, such as Brussels and Berlin (NB2:337).³ Her letters and her reviews reveal that she was an avid consumer of all things cultural and an active participant in debates surrounding aesthetic theory and practice.⁴ The circles in which she moved, the people with whom she was regularly corresponding and the publications to which she contributed – both stories and reviews – ensured that Mansfield was at the very forefront of avant-garde developments and trends within both the literary realm and the visual arts scene, particularly from 1910 upon the acceptance of her first submissions to the modernist journal *The New Age* (London, 1907-1922).

Archival Evidence: The Extant Letters and Diaries

Though Van Gunsteren amongst others has pointed out that there exist in Mansfield's journals and letters only brief references to specific artists which, in themselves, are not particularly telling, I would argue that those artists Mansfield does mention – Manet,

¹ See KM to Brett, 5 December 1921, CL4:333.

² In a letter to Vera Beauchamp, May-June 1908, referring to Guy de Maupassant's *Pierre et Jean* (1888), she writes, "there is positively no difficulty with the language – the French seems to translate itself – or rather – it does not translate at all", CL1:46.

³ Baker cited in Elizabeth Johnson, *Katherine Mansfield: An Exhibition, September - November 1973* (Austin: University of Texas, 1975) 20.

⁴ A selection of Mansfield's reviews have been collated in *Katherine Mansfield: Novels and Novelists*, ed. J. Middleton Murry (London: Constable & Co Ltd., 1930).

Whistler, Renoir, Cézanne, Derain and Van Gogh – point to the type of art in which she was interested and thus have a significant bearing on the aesthetic dimensions of her writing. The lack of more specific references to artists and art movements in Mansfield's diaries and correspondence can be very simply explained: several of the "huge complaining diaries" and bundles of the letters of 1909-12 – one of two significant and formative periods in Mansfield's career, and which correspond with the two most significant exhibitions of French Art in London – were deliberately destroyed (NB2:58). Only twenty-eight letters remain of the period dating from her arrival back in England in August 1908, including the short trips she made to Paris in October 1908 and Brussels in April 1909, and the period she spent at Bavaria from June 1909 until January 1910, after which she returned to England.⁵ Only five letters written in 1910 and five from 1911 remain; only eleven of the letters written in 1912 have survived, or have at least been recovered and reproduced in *The Collected Letters*. In 1918 Baker offered a substantial bundle of the letters she had received from Mansfield back to the writer believing she would draw from them for subsequent stories, as was her tendency. O'Sullivan explains that these letters were detailed weekly bulletins from the eighteen month period Mansfield spent back in New Zealand after her schooling at Queen's College, and others from the period Baker spent in Rhodesia from 1914-16. Baker recounts how Mansfield read one or two and subsequently ordered her to "burn them *all*" (cited in CL1:xxiii). It was not only letters she destroyed. William Orton, author of the autobiographical novel, *The Last Romantic* (1937) and Mansfield's lover for a short period, recounted to Alpers that by 1912, Mansfield had "decided to be businesslike about the literary career.... She destroyed a lot of earlier mss. [manuscripts] at this time, and so did I.... It was like an abortion" (cited in Alpers 1982:119). Again, in 1922, Mansfield swept the slate clean: "Tidied all my papers. Tore up and ruthlessly destroyed much. This is always a great satisfaction. Whenever I prepare for a journey I prepare as though for Death. Should I never return all is in order. This is what life has taught me" (NB2:321).⁶

Given Mansfield's transient life, it is reasonable to assume that she acted in this manner on other occasions and that much was destroyed which might be of significance and interest to Mansfield scholars. Whereas Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) and Lady Ottoline Morrell (1873-1938) acted as careful if selective archivists, neither A. R. Orage (1873-1934) nor D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) kept any private correspondence.⁷ Despite the efforts of

⁵ Twenty-one of these are to Garnett Trowell and are often little more than gushy love letters.

⁶ Mansfield might be forgiven for her over-dramatic tone here because her Tuberculosis was advanced at this stage and she was more often ill than well.

⁷ Alpers's research has revealed that Russell destroyed those letters of Mansfield's which might have exposed the affair they did, or did not have (see 1982:232). Mansfield disposed of the majority of the letters she received keeping only those written her by Murry and Lawrence, *ibid.* 310.

collectors, O'Sullivan estimates that less than half of Mansfield's letters have been retrieved (CL1:xxii). In his introduction to *The Aloe* [1930], (1974), Murry estimates that Mansfield destroyed two thirds of her manuscripts and papers. Not all reliable traces have been lost, however. Within what remains it is still possible to trace Mansfield's literary development in relation to her exposure to and personal experience of, and response to various artistic movements and developments during her early professional years in New Zealand and then in London and Paris. Even the briefest of entries in her notebooks sheds light on Mansfield's artistic aims and demonstrates her selective and methodical approach to her writing; such as the brief mention of Goethe. Having read his autobiography, *Poetry and Truth* (1811-1833), Mansfield notes, "That's the sort of strain, not for what it says and means but for the 'lilt' of it [,] that sets me writing" (NB1:275).⁸

An earlier journal entry, of 26 February 1907, refers to paintings Mansfield had either seen at an exhibition in London during her school years, or for which she had at least obtained the catalogue; alternatively, it may represent a small volume of reproductions newly available in New Zealand where, at this time, Whistler's name was often in the Press.⁹ Significantly, it reveals an affinity for urban landscapes and for the rendering of atmosphere

Twilight walkers with sand – out building roof tops 5.

22 Poets cottage – sombre – mysterious – good colouring.

2. From Lambeth Bridge – London Atmosphere – Every object in smoke...

– Street scene St Ive's superb colouring – bright – lustrous signboard

10. Distance – Immensity & age – London.

19. Chelsea & [...] by Whistler – composition pleasing.

English Village The absolute effect. (NB1:82)

The catalogue becomes part of Mansfield's reservoir, a visual reminder of the effects achievable through heightened colouring and how atmosphere might be evoked through smoke, reflections and experiments in composition. It is a crucial piece of evidence from which one can infer how conversant she was with the Impressionist 'way of seeing'. In her search for artistic inspiration, Mansfield looked to the work of poets, novelists, playwrights, philosophers and painters; she borrowed, modified, assimilated and re-contextualised what she needed, taking the subjects, themes, motifs or aesthetic principles of one discipline and adapting and applying them to both her childhood memories of Karori and her recent experiences in Europe – from Wellington to Würzburg, as it were – conflating the different

⁸ 14 February 1914. Scott and O'Sullivan note that many pages have been cut out of both the front and the back of this notebook (Notebook 19, qMS-1247).

⁹ I can neither locate this catalogue nor determine the exhibition to which it refers. It does not correspond with then current exhibitions at The New Zealand Academy of Fine Art in Wellington. I expect it was a catalogue from her initial period in London.

styles and influences.¹⁰ This lent her work a modern and international flavour and resulted in stories which were often difficult to geographically locate and categorise. For example, an early vignette, “In the Botanical Gardens”, contains Maoriland echoes, incorporates threads of Symbolism and references Impressionism.

Queen’s College London: Mansfield’s Initiation into Continental Culture

Mansfield’s initiation into modern artistic and literary movements came early in her intellectual development when, at the age of 14, she was sent along with her two elder sisters to Queen’s College, London, England. It was here that Mansfield was introduced to amongst others, Pater, Henrik Ibsen, Wilde, Verlaine, and Richard Dehmel by her German professor Walter Rippman (Alpers 1982:25). It was also at this time that Mansfield developed a strong affinity for art, with trips to the National Gallery and the Tate Britain, London, and the Louvre, Paris, all mentioned in her diary and letters. In a letter home, dated April 1903, Mansfield writes of having visited the Tate and having “fallen in love with all Watts pictures.... The most marvellous originality of colour is most striking, the depth of his reds, the calm peace of his blues, and his figures!!!!” (CL1:5).¹¹ George Frederick Watts (1817-1904), an English painter and sculptor, enjoyed great popularity at this time. The works described by Mansfield are conventional and allegorical and have little in common with the works of the avant-garde painters of the period.¹² What Mansfield’s enthusiasm demonstrates, however (as Smith also notes), is an inherent inclination towards visual art and a passion for colour, mood and form, the qualities which also drew her to the richly coloured and symbolic art of the Pre-Raphaelites and which would also influence her own artistic output (Smith 2000:6).¹³ From the moment she first alighted in London, Mansfield lost no time in feeding her cultural “starvation” (CL1:21).¹⁴ Initially accompanied by her

¹⁰ For example, Mansfield read and was inspired by *The Smart Set* (1900-24) (see NB1:108), an American literary periodical with an English edition published in London; it was a mid-sized, mass-market magazine, specialising in short fiction, including D. H. Lawrence, Ford Madox Ford, Aldous Huxley, Ezra Pound and James Joyce. Sharon Hamilton, “The First New Yorker! The Smart Set Magazine, 1900-1924”, *The Serials Librarian*, 37.2 (October 1999): 89 – 104.

¹¹ KM to [?Marion Tweed], 16 April 1903. Mansfield’s school magazine also notes Class 1 and 2 visited the National Portrait Gallery in the first term of 1904.

¹² In “Daphne” (discussed later in this chapter) Mansfield returns to Watts and Rossetti’s work and discusses it in comparison with the cubism of Picasso and Braque – though she does not directly name either Cubist. In its painterly quality, this story also hints at her familiarity with Degas, Cézanne and Renoir.

¹³ It is likely that Mansfield was familiar with the Pre-Raphaelites prior to her schooling in London. Literary historian, E. H. McCormick in his survey of art and letters in New Zealand lists *The Germ* – “the paper of some affected young men who called themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and preached startling new doctrines of art and poetry” – as likely to have been one of the publications among the possessions of immigrants to Colonial New Zealand, along with the works of Tennyson, Browning, Clough, Dickens and Thackeray, 18.

¹⁴ KM to Sylvia Payne, 8 January 1907.

family, she made the obligatory stops at the numerous cultural sites London had to offer: Hyde Park, Hampstead Heath, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and the British Museum were on April 1903's itinerary alone. It is, then, reasonable to assume that the National Gallery was also on this agenda. Such sights prompted highly imaginative and pictorial descriptions in letters of this time which point ahead to the impressionistic writing she would soon produce with conviction: "The carriages, horses and babies are most lovely, especially the last named. In their perambulators they remind me of little bits of wedding cake tied up with white ribbons" (CL1:5).¹⁵

Mansfield's early diary entries and letters reveal fragments which would later make their way into her stories; for example in the highly pictorial story "Daphne" (1921), published unfinished within *The Doves' Nest and Other Stories* (1923), but for which she utilised diary notes made as early as 1907 if not earlier.¹⁶ "Daphne" evidences her knowledge of modern art and reveals where her aesthetic preferences lay. This story represents an early, experimental and piecemeal response to the visual arts which significantly predates Woolf's protagonist-artist, Lily Briscoe of *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Mansfield's unnamed male protagonist is a painter and the story takes place in the fictional town of Port Willin, which may be understood as Wellington. In her description of the place, Mansfield merges elements of the city of her childhood with the French landscapes of Cézanne, particularly his views of L'Estaque, several of which were exhibited at the 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition, for example, *View of Estaque and the Château d'If* (1883-85), (fig. 14) and Monet's, *Bordighera* (1884), effectively rendering the colonial within an Impressionist context:¹⁷

I took an extraordinary fancy to the shape—to the look of the place. It's a small town ... planted at the edge of a fine deep harbour like a lake. Behind it, on either side, there are hills. The houses are built of light painted wood. They have iron roofs coloured red. And there are big dark plummy trees massed together, breaking up those light shapes, giving a depth—warmth—making a composition of it well worth looking at ... (461).

Similarly, in a letter to Pissarro, 21 July 1876, Cézanne writes, "My picture of L'Estaque is like a playing card. Red roofs against a blue sea.... The sun is so tremendous that objects

¹⁵ KM to [? Marion Tweed], 16 April 1903.

¹⁶ Alpers observes that Mansfield's "early writing often shows signs of following quickly upon direct experience, whatever it might contain of fantasy", 1982:80. She may have begun "Daphne" and then put it aside for some time, as it draws on her early experiences in London in 1903 but also implicitly references art works which were not produced until around 1912.

¹⁷ Monet, *Bordighera* (1884), oil on canvas, The Art Institute of Chicago. See also Cézanne's *The Sea near L'Estaque* (1879-79), oil on canvas, (shown at the 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition but which she may have been familiar with earlier), and *Red Roofs at L'Estaque* (c.1883-85), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

seem to ... be silhouetted ..." (cited in Blunden 185).¹⁸ While historical photographs of Wellington reveal that Mansfield's description is very accurate, her use of painterly terms seems to suggest she had in mind pictorial reminders.

In "Daphne", Mansfield describes the city's buildings in a manner which points to both her own affinity with exoticism and Impressionism's interest in *Japonisme*, particularly the delineated flat colour planes: "There was a theatre too, a big bare building plastered over with red and blue bills which gave it an oriental air in that blue air, and a touring company was playing 'San Toy'."¹⁹ Mansfield also implicitly acknowledges Degas, who was a favourite according to Richard Murry: "The inside smelled of gas, of glue and burnt paper. Whistling drafts cut along the corridors—a strong wind among the orchestra kept the palms trembling, and now and again the curtain blew out and there was a glimpse of a pair of large feet walking rapidly away" (462). Mansfield's description is reminiscent of several of Degas's oblique compositions within which the artist denies any one component of the picture eminence and instead renders the transitory aspects of the scene, such as the sounds and variable light; for example, *The Orchestra at the Opera* (c. 1870), (fig. 13), in which the composition has been divided, zigzag fashion, allowing only partial glimpses of the orchestra and the dancers beyond.²⁰ Degas's method of fracturing the composition likely resonated with Mansfield who was herself at pains to present simultaneous and limited viewpoints and which she realised ultimately in "Prelude" and "At the Bay". Here, in "Daphne", Mansfield mimics Degas in two significant ways: in her attention to the multitude of sensory stimulus palpable within the theatre environment and in the structure of the narrative, which is told from a limited, non-omniscient perspective, and which progresses randomly, alternating between the past and present tense/events. Though the story was left unfinished, it is rather the method of narration – particularly in the details she chose to omit versus that which she allowed – that renders the work inconclusive and ambiguous and which echoes Impressionist techniques.

Continuing with her pictorial treatment of a painterly subject, in "Daphne" Mansfield describes the women in terms of a Renoir or a Cassatt whose paintings of fashionable theatre-goers pointed to the spectacle that they were both witness to, and participants of:

¹⁸ See Chapter 6 for a fuller version of this quote.

¹⁹ *San Toy* or *The Emperor's Own* is a "Chinese" musical comedy in two acts. It was originally performed at Daly's Theatre in London on 21 October 1899 and ran for 768 performances. However, J. C. Williamson's Dunedin-based Musical Comedy Company performed the play in Wellington in November 1902 and it seems likely that Mansfield attended. See the advertisement for the show in the *Evening Post* 64. 125 (22 November 1902) 4. The *Otago Witness* 2544 (17 December 1902) 38, has a photograph of the Members of J. C. Williamson's Company and a short note regarding the tour.

²⁰ See also Degas, *The Song of the Dog* (c. 1876-77), in which Degas privileges the effect of the gas lights against the shimmering trees; oil on canvas, gouache and pastel over monotype on three pieces of paper joined, Private Collection, Los Angeles, on loan to the J. Paul Getty Museum.

But what women! What girls in muslin dresses with velvet sashes and little caps edged with swansdown! In the intervals long ripples of laughter sounded from the stalls, from the dress-circle. And I leaned against a pillar that looked as though it was made of wedding-cake icing—and fell in love with whole rows at a time.... (462, KM's ellipsis).

Mansfield's description mirrors pictorial and compositional elements of both Cassatt's *Lydia in a Loge Wearing a Pearl Necklace* (1879) and Renoir's *The Loge* (1874), the latter of which was shown at the 1905 Impressionist exhibition in London and included in the illustrated catalogue (see figs. 15 and 16). Mansfield's artist-protagonist acknowledges that his work is somewhat avant-garde, and that the residents of Port Willin were "still trying to swallow Rossetti, and Hope by Watts" – a reference to the works she had seen at the Tate upon her arrival in London in 1903 – but claims, in a clear reference to the cubist experiments of Picasso and Braque: "I'm by no means an out-and-out modern ... people like violins and landscapes of telegraph poles leave me cold" (463). Mansfield might have had in mind Picasso's *Girl with a Mandolin (Fanny Tellier)*, (1910).²¹ Fergusson, by contrast, had been quite taken with "Picasso's portrait of a woman with a guitar" (Morris 190).²² In its semibiographical elements – for example, like Mansfield, the protagonist is a self-confessed "impermanent movable" and it is set in New Zealand but references visiting the galleries in Europe – this story represents a very deliberate attempt to internationalise an otherwise colonial sketch ("Daphne" 461/CL5:118).²³ It is experimental to say the least, and points to her tendency to borrow and modify – here from developments and trends in modern art, specifically, Impressionism.

Mansfield cannot have seen examples of French Impressionism at either the National Gallery of London, or at the Tate until after 1917 at which time Sir Hugh Lane's bequest saw thirty-three modern art works, including paintings by Manet and Renoir, enter the Gallery's permanent collection. Prior to this the collection included a reasonable representation of early-mid-nineteenth century French landscape painting, including the Barbizon school – acknowledged precursors of the landscapes of Monet, Pissarro *et al.* Mansfield most likely first encountered Impressionism at the dealer galleries during her time at Queen's College. As mentioned in Chapter 1, between 1870 and 1905 the Impressionists were showing in

²¹ Picasso, *Girl with a Mandolin (Fanny Tellier)*, (1910), oil on canvas, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. See also Braque, *Violin and Palette* (1909), oil on canvas, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

²² Arriving in Paris from Scotland in 1907, J. D. Fergusson describes seeing "Picasso's portrait of a woman with a guitar in the rue Vignon on an Opening day in 1907 ...", Margaret Morris, *The Art of J. D. Fergusson: A Biased Biography* (Glasgow: Blackie, 1974) 190. Mansfield was back in New Zealand in 1907 so could not have seen these particular Picassos (unless in reproduction), until after mid-1908. However, as this story was composed in parts this reference might have been thought of earlier rather than later.

²³ KM to Vera Beauchamp Bell, 20 March 1922.

London on an annual, if limited basis.²⁴ During this period, Monet's paintings showed at no less than twenty-seven exhibitions, Degas's work hung at twenty-two exhibitions, Pissarro, nineteen; Sisley, eighteen; and Renoir and Manet at ten shows, respectively. The International Society's first exhibition in 1898 in London featured Cézanne's Post-Impressionist works and Benedict Nicholson notes the availability of an increasing body of literature regarding Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh, from the beginning of the twentieth century (11).²⁵

Impressionist Exhibitions in Early Twentieth Century London

It was not until the first decade of the twentieth century – almost thirty years after its inception in Paris – that London's general art public was becoming properly familiar with Impressionism through more cohesive exhibitions and reviews and criticism in the press. Mauclair wrote prolifically on art historical matters; his legacy includes *The French Impressionists, 1860-1900* (1903). Mauclair writes:

[Impressionism] has brought us a sunny smile, a breath of pure air. It is so fascinating, that one cannot but love its very mistakes which make it more human and more accessible. Renoir is the most lyrical, the most musical, the most subtle of the masters of this art. Some of his landscapes are as beautiful as those of Claude Monet. His nudes are as masterly in painting as Manet's, and more supple. Not having attained the scientific drawing one finds in Degas's, they have a grace and brilliancy which Degas's nudes have never known (cited in Flint 338).

Though it reveals a bias towards Renoir, the excerpt above highlights the respective strengths of the leading Impressionists and the qualities to which their followers, one of whom might have been Mansfield, no doubt looked.

In the Spring of 1903 there was a small showing of modern French works at the Goupil Gallery, including Degas's *Café Singer* (c. 1879) and Pissarro's *Morning* (?1895).²⁶ In April-May 1904 Durand-Ruel again exhibited Impressionist works; while the catalogue is no longer available, there exists an unsigned review in the *Star*, 31 May 1904, describing a selection of Monet's London sunsets and sunlight effects on Waterloo Bridge, views from Westminster Bridge and various "impressions of a curious green light ... descending upon the Thames", all of which failed to impress the reviewer who perceived them as weak

²⁴ See Flint's Appendix: 356-375. Based on the reviews in the press, Flint sees the 1883 Impressionist exhibition in London as the turning point for Impressionism's acceptance in England, 6.

²⁵ At this stage, however, there was still only a limited market for Impressionist works. Cecil Gould has identified only two early purchasers of Impressionist paintings in England, 141-142.

²⁶ Degas, *Café Singer* (c.1879), pastel, Norton Simon Art Foundation, Pasadena; Pissarro's *Morning* (c. 1879), oil on canvas. Pissarro completed a number of works in different seasons and at different locations, entitled *Morning ... /Le Matin*, any one of which might have been this one; see for example, Pissarro, *Morning, Sunlight on the Snow, Eragne-sur-Epte*, (1895), oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

attempts to achieve what Whistler, Tissot and Bastien-Lepage had already realised (cited in Flint 335).²⁷ The International Society showed Monet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1866), (see fig. 18) and one of Pissarro's views of Port Dieppe in 1904.²⁸ These smaller showings culminated in the comprehensive exhibition at the Grafton in 1905.

Pamela Gerrish Nunn explains that even in Paris where Cubism and abstraction were vying for eminence, Impressionism remained the "most visible [style in painting] from 1900 to the outbreak of the war, and very popular because by then no longer threatening and unfamiliar. Impressionism was still modern enough in many eyes, especially given that some of its practitioners were still active" (27). English newspaper reviews of Impressionism demonstrate that by 1910, though it was no longer considered a minor or marginal tradition, Impressionism was still considered avant-garde.²⁹ An English article of 23 July 1918 in *The Times* demonstrates that Impressionism was still a contentious issue outside of France.³⁰ Remarking on British conservatism the correspondent complains that

... even Englishmen of taste, are aware of nothing later than the Barbizon school. Impressionists are to them still dangerously novel; and, if they see an Impressionist picture in the Academy, they wonder what the Academy is coming to. In France, Impressionism is of yesterday; and every one [sic] who cares for pictures on the Continent, and even in America, is familiar with it. With us it is a sign of enlightenment, and even of rashness, to like Corot (9).³¹

As I indicated in the introduction to this thesis, the diversity of critical opinion reveals that Impressionism, while not at the forefront of avant-garde practice at this time, was still inciting debate. As one who was so keenly attuned to the artistic styles and aesthetic trends of the time, and such a voracious consumer of the newspapers and periodicals, Mansfield cannot have failed to have absorbed the tide of Impressionism sweeping London in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Although amongst Mansfield's extant papers there exists not a single precise reference locating her at an exhibition of Impressionist works during her first residency in England,

²⁷ The reviewer is American-born Elizabeth Pennel (1855-1936), who served on the *Star* as an art critic from about 1888 and contributed criticism to the *Daily Chronicle*. She and her husband, Joseph Pennel (1857-1926), an etcher and illustrator, were close friends of Whistler, Flint 334.

²⁸ Pissarro's work is listed in the catalogue as *Avant Port Dieppe*; it is probably *L'après-midi, soleil, Avant-Port de Dieppe* (c.1900-02), oil on canvas; whereabouts unknown.

²⁹ Other French artists linked to the Impressionists, though not labelled as such, included Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), held to be a follower of Degas's, whose exhibition of posters showed at the Whitechapel Art Gallery from July till Aug 1903 and at the Doré Galleries, in the late summer of 1913, either of which Mansfield might have seen. Toulouse-Lautrec had previously exhibited in London at the Goupil Gallery, May 1898; it was a large exhibition and included sixty paintings, and twenty drawings and lithographs (see B. Nicholson, "Post-Impressionism and Roger Fry", *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 93 (1951): 10-15, 11).

³⁰ Mansfield was living in London in July 1918 and contributing to the *Times Literary Supplement* (see Norburn 52).

³¹ "A National Modern Gallery", *The Times* (23 July 1918): 9.

the aforementioned vignette entitled “In the Botanical Gardens”, demonstrates that she was by then familiar with the distinguishing features of Impressionism. It is a deceptively important piece of writing, experimental and not altogether successful, but interesting nonetheless because it is one of Mansfield’s earliest attempts at assimilating foreign aesthetics into an otherwise colonial sketch. Specifically, Mansfield observes that the people in Wellington’s public gardens “seem as meaningless, as lacking in individuality, as the little figures in an impressionist landscape” (NB1:170). Her description corresponds with a number of Impressionist works including Monet’s *The Garden of the Princess* (1867), (see fig. 17), the focus of which is one of the new urban spaces which bore testament to Baron Haussmann’s redevelopment of Paris.³² In Monet’s *Garden* the people who populate that space are denied any real identity;³³ instead, their purpose within that realm is merely decorative, indicative of the spectacle that constituted bourgeois living and the primary social role of bourgeois women particularly (a theme to which I return within Chapters 4 and 5). The creation of these civilised spaces entailed significant demolition, particularly of the numerous unsightly ramshackle buildings and homes, which, like the ‘mean’ little cottages in Mansfield’s “The Garden Party” “were the greatest possible eyesore and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all” (254).

Monet’s depiction does not necessarily amount to a damning critique of contemporary society but neither is it a celebratory image of progress and modernisation. By emphasising the spectacle which constitutes bourgeois leisure, with fashionable men and women promenading amongst the hustle and bustle of the rapidly industrialising city; where the quality of one’s accoutrements, such as those on the horses and carriages, is indicative of one’s wealth and success, Monet, like Flaubert and Zola before him, implicitly acknowledges the dislocation and displacement of the less affluent families who once inhabited those spaces. The immaculately manicured garden, almost empty in comparison with the surrounding boulevard is suggestive of the numerous and yet invisible hands that tend that space and others like it which have been created solely for the purpose of displaying the material successes of the increasingly powerful middle-class. Undoubtedly, Impressionist

³²For example, Monet, *The Quai du Louvre* (1867), oil on canvas, Haags Ge meentemuseum, the Hague, Netherlands; Monet: *Rue Montorgueil* (1878), oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris; Monet, *Boulevard des Capucines* (1873), oil on canvas, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri (shown at the Grafton Gallery, London, 1905); Pissarro, *The Place du Théâtre Français, Rain* (1898), oil on canvas, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota, USA; Pissarro, *The Place du Théâtre Français, Afternoon Sun, Winter* (1898), oil on canvas, Private Collection (Grafton, London, 1905); Pissarro, *Boulevard Montmartre, Morning, Dull Weather* (1897), oil on canvas, Private Collection, (London, 1905).

³³ Whereas in Renoir’s *Pont Neuf* (1872), oil on canvas, Alisa Mellon Bruce Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C., the costumes are more clearly defined and thus indicative of the characters’ different roles within the space, be it a tradesman, or a promenading mother and child.

paintings are characterised by ambiguity and are open to multiple interpretations. Emilie Sitzia demonstrates that this work might also be understood as “a hymn to the lively and sparkling activity of the newly-laid wide Parisian boulevards” and notes that Haussmann’s urban development allowed unprecedented light and air into the city and created wide open spaces which the Impressionists seized upon as subjects (2007:275). Monet’s *The Garden of the Princess* is at the very least an acknowledgement of that dislocation and displacement which constitutes modern society. This was a theme that Mansfield could relate to. Smith explains: “Mansfield’s experience of colonial life prepared her for the disrupted forms and fractured expression of the writers and artists who became known as Modernists; she was already familiar with the concept of the multiple and fissured self...” (2002:xv). Thus Mansfield’s fractured subjectivity was a condition of colonisation as well as of modernity.³⁴

From an historical perspective, Paris’s makeover corresponds with the expansion Mansfield witnessed in the colonial society of her childhood and adolescence, initially in Wellington and its burgeoning suburbs:

They have been making havoc of our pine avenue – cutting down some of the trees – sawing the branches off others – a horrible, crashing, tearing sound, then the clinging roots scattered on the yellow clay – The whole sight – the men in their rough clothes – the toiling of the horses – patches of sunshine lacing through the silver point boughs – on to the emerald grass – makes me think of a modern Belgian painting – do you see it – full of suggested sound – and strangely – death! (CL1:50).³⁵

Mansfield probably had in mind Ford Madox Brown’s (1821-93) *Work* (1852-65).³⁶ In this epic canvas, the artist endeavoured to depict the essence of mid-Victorian life, particularly the progress and modernisation which not only changed the physical landscape but disrupted existing social hierarchies. Central to this scene of urban renewal are workmen digging up Heath Street in Hampstead, London, while numerous other figures on and around the periphery represent members of the various classes, from prostitutes to social reformers and educators. As the workers tear a hole in the road, the implication is that social fabric is also being torn apart. Of course, class hierarchies and the residential proximity of richer and poorer people in society are at the heart of “The Garden Party” and “The Doll’s House”. Also in New Zealand, during her camping holiday through the Urewera region, Mansfield experienced at first hand the effects of colonisation, modernisation and progress upon the Maori people and the natural landscape, particularly the scars left by deforestation and the

³⁴ Further developed in Chapter 5 (Mansfield’s love/hate relationship with the city).

³⁵ KM to Vera Beauchamp, 19 June 1908.

³⁶ Ford Madox Brown, *Work* (1852-65), oil on canvas, Manchester City Art Galleries. Born in Calais, Brown studied in Antwerp and later lived in London and associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

abandoned *whares*: “Everywhere on the hills great masses of charred logs – looking for all the world like strange fantastic beasts” (NB1:136).³⁷

The depth of Mansfield’s appreciation and understanding of the underlying themes that permeate Impressionism is only hypothetically determinable. However, the thematic and stylistic commonalities between, here, the urban landscapes of the Impressionists and her sketch of Wellington’s public gardens, and elsewhere, such as in the family portraits and domestic interiors in her stories, suggests that Impressionism resonated with her more definitely than any other painting style flourishing at that time. Mansfield describes the Gardens as “a subtle combination of the artificial and the natural” – a notion which fits well with specific Parisian spaces where nature is orderly and contrived such as in Monet’s *Garden of the Princess* (NB1:170). The content and style in both the draft and the final script of this vignette lacks the control demonstrated in her mature work, and it shows the still potent influence of Wilde.³⁸ It also shows Mansfield’s simultaneous resistance to the “orthodox banality” of imitative colonial life (represented by the contrived borders of carpet bedding) and her curious engagement with it as she waxes lyrical over the native bush and notions of ancient savagery and her desire “to become one with it all” (ibid.). More importantly, this early experimental example of Mansfield’s prose points to the writer she would become by revealing her tendency to appropriate and modify different stylistic traits in the development of her own signature style – a style that, in its maturity, Mark Williams describes as laminated.³⁹ To E. J. Brady, editor of the *Native Companion*, Mansfield writes: “I send you some more work – practically there is nothing local – except the ‘Botanical Garden’ Vignette – The reason is that for the last few years London has held me – very tightly indeed – and I’ve not yet escaped” (CL1:26). The date of the letter – 23 September 1907 – is significant in that she acknowledges that she was then in London’s grip but endeavouring to write colonial stories. Mansfield’s referencing of native New Zealand elements – such as ferns and cabbage trees – within an Impressionist landscape suggests that she had recognised the aesthetic principles of Impressionism though she had not yet fully realised how she might use them for her own purposes.⁴⁰

³⁷ December 1907; *whare* is the Maori term for house.

³⁸ The anemones are described as “seductive but poisonous”, NB1:170.

³⁹ Williams, in conversation with Reimer, February 2007. Williams borrows the term ‘laminated’ from Muriel Bradbrook who used it to describe the work of the novelist, Malcolm Lowry in *Under the Volcano* (1947). Lowry’s novel shows the influence of both Conrad and Joyce and in parts features a stream of consciousness prose-style.

⁴⁰ It was not until 1918 that Mansfield really felt she had discovered the successful formula: “I feel I have found an *approach* to a story now which I must apply to everything”, KM to JMM, 14 February 1918, CL2:71; Mansfield is referring to either “Sun and Moon” or “Je ne parle pas français” (see Chapter 1).

Mansfield's focus within this story corresponds with the Impressionists': to render the effect of the scene or event. She notes the Impressionist's preoccupations with "tone", observing "the bright dresses of the women, the sombre clothing of the men" and describes "On the green moss, on the brown earth, a wide splashing of yellow sunlight" (NB1:170, 171). She acknowledges too, the "laughter and movement and bright sunlight" but also the presence of "vague forms lurking in the shadow staring at me malevolently..." (ibid. 171). Here, her description is strongly reminiscent of Monet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1866), (see fig. 18), which was reproduced in *The Studio* magazine in 1903 and 1904 and, as stated previously, was exhibited in London in 1904. Monet's group portrait contains five women and seven men, one of whom is separated from the group and only barely visible within the dark shadow behind the broad trunk of a birch tree. Another of the male figures stares out at the viewer, alluding to and challenging the role of spectator. The remainder of the male figures are either engaged in conversation with the women or at least observing that interaction. The two central female figures seated on picnic blanket, correspond with Mansfield's characterisation in another early vignette: "In a Café" in which she describes her young woman as having "an expression at once of intense eagerness and anticipated disillusion" (NB1:172). The heart and arrow carved into the trunk of the light-dappled tree trunk is subtly suggestive of the picnicking group's latent sexuality. Monet's young lover Camille Doncieux and his colleague Bazille served as models for all of the figures in this composition which the artist drafted in Fontainebleau.⁴¹ He then completed the work in his studio relying heavily on contemporary fashion magazines for accuracy in costuming details (see Heinrich 17). In what can only be a coincidence, but a remarkable one nonetheless in another vignette of 1907 entitled "The Thoughtful Child", Mansfield describes a child whose: "Mother let her paint some ladies' dresses out of a Fashion Book - it always gave her a 'creepy' feeling down her back" (NB1:127).

Mansfield's pictorial description in "In the Botanical Gardens" within the context of Monet's imagery calls to mind Fullbrook's observation that, "the darkness of her art is one of its hallmarks. While the surfaces of her stories often flash with sparkling detail, the underlying tones are sombre, threatening, and register the danger present in the most innocent seeming aspects of life" (8). Many of Mansfield's stories feature vulnerable young women at the mercy of domineering men, either of their social class or above it, and represent thinly veiled critiques of bourgeois society, justifying Fullbrook's claim. Additionally, many of Mansfield's female protagonists' lives involve a precarious balancing

⁴¹ Frédéric Bazille (1841-70) worked in the style that would become known as Impressionism and is sometimes cited as such. However, he died in the Franco-Prussian war four years prior to the first Impressionist exhibition.

of the false identity that society ascribes them and their real self which they oppress but which threatens to surface and jeopardise their composure; for example, Bertha in "Bliss": "Oh is there no way you can express it ["a feeling of bliss"] without being "drunk and disorderly"? How idiotic civilisation is!" (91-92).⁴² Mansfield's proclamation within the Gardens vignette – that the role or significance of the individual in modern society is increasingly of less importance; that their individuality is in jeopardy – corresponds with contemporaneous artistic attitudes. More importantly, both her detached observations and her fleeting descriptions hint at the duplicity of modern life and as such, are quintessentially and characteristically those of an Impressionists.

Mansfield's first formally documented exposure to Impressionist, or, more specifically, Post-Impressionist painting, occurs in a letter of 1921 to Brett regarding her visit to the exhibition 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' of 1910. On display were eight Manets, twenty-one Cézannes, twenty-two Van Goghs, thirty-six paintings and drawings by Gauguin, and smaller showings by, amongst others, Picasso, Matisse, Derain, Signac, Seurat, Albert Marquet, Henri Manguin, Orthon Friesz. Marquet, Manguin and Friesz all became contributors to Murry's journal *Rhythm*. Significant works then exhibited included Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bèrgere* and Matisse's *The Girl with the Green Eyes* (1908), the latter of which Mansfield may have had in mind when she wrote into being Harry's green eyed, red headed fiancée in "The Tiredness of Rosabel" – a story which I have demonstrated is Impressionist and which Alpers and O'Sullivan believe holds "a key position in the development of her art" and is indicative of the style that would characterise her best work (Alpers 1982:239, 191).⁴³ The exhibition admission fee was 1 shilling – something that mattered to the unerringly snobbish Mansfield as evidenced in a letter to Vera Beauchamp: "I pray you – marry an Englishman & come and live in London – and take your Poor Relation to an Art Gallery with an Entrance Fee once a month" (CL1:51).⁴⁴ Thus, in addition to her attendance at the state-owned galleries, Mansfield's plea to her sister suggests that she participated in the dealer-gallery art scene from this early stage and even that she was familiar with the exhibition turnarounds. A letter of 12 May 1918 informing Brett of current exhibitions reveals she was still an avid gallery-goer (CL2:169).

Of specific interest to scholars charting Mansfield's relationship to the visual arts, is of course her response to Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* at the 1910 show:

⁴² A theme I return to in Chapter 4.

⁴³ Harry's fiancée is "a girl with beautiful red hair and a white skin and eyes the colour of that green ribbon shot with gold they had got from Paris last week", 515. Harry demands for her "a black hat with a feather that goes right round it and then round your neck and ties in a bow under your chin...." *ibid.*; cf. Matisse, *The Girl with the Green Eyes* (1908), oil on canvas, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA., USA.

⁴⁴ 19 June 1908.

That picture seemed to reveal something that I hadn't realised 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 (CL4:333).⁴⁵

Alpers stresses the importance of such a show, particularly for young people for whom “the experience of stepping from London’s November gloom into that luminous exhibition was like a sudden liberation, a shaking free from Victorian and Edwardian attitudes into wholly new ways of seeing” (120). Certainly Mansfield responded to these very qualities; commenting on an exhibition of French paintings some nine years later, she writes, “One seems to dip into a luminous life – unlike this heavy old pudding of London” (CL2:346).⁴⁶ However, as I have intimated earlier, the 1910 exhibition was not, as Alpers believes, London’s first experience of modern art.

Mansfield and the Impressionists in London 1905

With establishments now in Paris, London and Brussels, in January of 1905 Durand-Ruel brought the Impressionists to London on an unprecedented scale with an exhibition at the independent Grafton Gallery. Collectively, independent galleries represented something of a challenge to the monopoly previously exerted by the larger state-owned establishments. Both the purpose and the professional aims of these smaller galleries was diametrically opposed to that of the respective Royal Academies of London and Paris and to the ideals enforced by the panel of jurists and upheld at their associated annual Salons. Various dealer galleries within London, such as the Grafton Gallery, the Goupil Gallery, Leicester Galleries and the Fine Art Society, situated in fashionable parts of London like Old Bond Street, Piccadilly, Pall Mall, and the Haymarket, held regular exhibitions of works, usually modern in subject matter and execution and domestic in scale, aimed at attracting the increasingly affluent middle-class market. These exhibitions were widely advertised in the contemporary art-specific journals and periodicals, and in mainstream newspapers such as *The Times*. Woolf, who admitted that “for some months in the winter of 1904-05 we were for ever ... visiting a picture gallery”, attended this exhibition and heard the influential critic Frank Rutter speak on the topic of Impressionism (Harris 62, 63).

Based on the evidence thus far, Mansfield encountered Impressionism at least as early as 1906. Either she attended one or more exhibitions of modern French art in London, or possibly in Paris and Brussels. She may have learnt of others through the plethora of

⁴⁵ KM to Brett, 5 December 1921; Mansfield’s sea captain is most likely van Gogh’s postman, *The Postman/Le Postier, Joseph Roulin* (1889), oil on canvas, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Van Gogh painted a number of paintings of sunflowers, many of which are in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.

⁴⁶ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 13 August 1919. The exhibition of contemporary French art was held at the Mansard Gallery, Heal and Son, Tottenham Court Road.

reviews, associated commentary and reproductions which featured in not just the specialist art press but in widely read newspapers and magazines including the following publications: *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, *Athenaeum*, *The Times*, the *Spectator*, the *Art Journal*, the *Magazine of Art*, the *Burlington Magazine*, the *Saturday Review*, the *Sunday Times*, the *National Observer*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Globe* and the *Studio*.⁴⁷ A review in *The Times* (London), 17 January 1905, of the exhibition at the Grafton opens with:

Assuredly London cannot complain of a dearth of picture exhibitions this winter. To the Watts at the Royal Academy and the International at the New Gallery there is now added, at the Grafton, the first really important display that has been seen there for years—the display of the work of nine French painters.... this is by far the most representative exhibition of the kind that London has ever seen. Manet and Monet, Degas and Renoir ... names that everyone knows ... (6).

With over three hundred pictures and drawings on display, including nineteen works by Manet, fifty-five by Monet, thirty-five by Degas, fifty-nine by Renoir, forty by Pissarro, thirty-six by Sisley, ten by Cézanne, thirteen by Morisot, and thirty-eight by the proto-Impressionist, Boudin, *The Times* reviewer writes,

All are good examples; and if some of the most famous are not here, the show is none the less highly characteristic, showing each of the painters in several moods and at several periods. The leaders of the modern movement in French art can here be thoroughly appreciated and judged (ibid).

Given her inclinations and her familiarity with Impressionism prior to the 1910 show, as revealed particularly in the 1907 vignette, “In the Botanical Gardens”, it is highly likely that she attended the 1905 exhibition at the Grafton, either of her own accord, or possibly with a school group; certainly her school was in close proximity – less than a ten minute walk and the Queen’s College Magazine notes visits to both the National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery at this time.⁴⁸

Regrettably, in spite of Mansfield’s prolific output, there remains neither a relevant diary entry, nor a letter amongst her papers which corresponds with the date of this exhibition. In fact, jottings from around the time of the exhibition reveal nothing of her extracurricular activities. Given Mansfield’s constancy in letter-writing and diary-keeping – though she did not always date her entries – as evidenced in the fifty-three notebooks remaining – it seems

⁴⁷ See for example *Daily Telegraph*, 18 July 1903: 9; *Vanity Fair* 1903-4 (page unspecified, see Flint 29, note 47); *St James Gazette*, 17 January 1905: 18; *Sunday Times*, 29 January 1905: 4; *Daily Telegraph*, 23 February 1905:11; *Nineteenth Century*, April 1905, 62: 627-31.

⁴⁸ A school visit to the National Portrait Gallery is noted in the School Magazine 76 (June 1905): 176; a visit to the National Gallery, London and subsequent review of Turner’s marine pictures features in No. 81 (March 1906): 367.

odd that there is not a single diary entry for the first six months of 1905.⁴⁹ Therefore, it is fair to assume that a substantial amount of material is missing from this particular period – possibly an entire notebook which may have been either lost or destroyed.⁵⁰ Significantly, the extracts referred to in this paragraph are from what archivists now call ‘Notebook 29’ which is made up of loose papers and pieces of other notebooks of roughly the same size that either Murry, or a subsequent custodian collected and bound together, and which does not therefore provide a full, true, or entirely chronological account of Mansfield’s life at this time. Perhaps the most telling piece of writing from this time is the short story “About Pat”, published in *Queen’s College Magazine*, December 1905. The vignette draws on her memories of her family’s gardener and handyman at Karori, is narrated with a sense of melancholy but is not overly sentimental, and is based on personal observation of an actual person and place in time. Pat is of course evoked again in “Prelude”.

Wellington after London: December 1906 – July 1908⁵¹

While her years at Queen’s College (April 1903 – July 1906) whetted her appetite for culture, it was back in New Zealand – a period that Mansfield perceived as enforced exile – that she began fashioning not only her artistic persona – arming herself for her return to the Wizard London – but also formulating a prose style that reflected her own burgeoning aesthetic theories and artistic affinities which grew out of her European experiences.⁵² Directly upon her return to New Zealand, Mansfield embarked upon a rigorous reading schedule spending hours at the General Assembly Library. In a letter to Vera of April-May 1908, Mansfield lists her “alphabet”:

William Morris and Catulle Mendès, George Meredith and Maurice Maeterlinck, Ruskin and Rodenbach, Le Gallienne and Symons, D’Annunzio and Shaw, Granville Barker and Sebastian Melmouth, Whitman, Tolstoi, Carpenter, Lamb, Hazlitt, Hawthorne, and the Brontës (*CL1:45*).

The list is nothing if not diverse. Lending records compiled by the Parliamentarian librarian, Dr. G. H. Scholefield, reveal that she was a voracious reader who judiciously selected books

⁴⁹ 46 of the notebooks and various loose manuscripts are held by the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand; the remaining archival material is held at the Newberry Library in Chicago (see *NB1:xiii*).

⁵⁰ In a diary entry dated 27 December 1903 but confusingly also listed as “New Years Eve” Mansfield explains her New Year’s intentions: “I propose to begin my book. It will not be at all grand or dramatic, but just all that I have done” *NB1:20*. This seems to suggest that Mansfield already had a substantial amount of material she felt was publishable, at least enough to fill a small volume. However, given that there is only a limited amount of extant material relating to this period, it seems likely that a lot of it was destroyed as Orton explained.

⁵¹ Having set sail 18 October 1906 from Gravesend on the SS. *Corinthic*, the Beauchamps arrived back in Wellington 6 December 1906. Mansfield then set sail from Wellington, 6 July 1908 and arrived in Plymouth, England, 24 August 1908 from where she caught a train to London.

⁵² The Wizard is Mansfield’s own term for London (see *NB1:87*, 5 October 1907).

to aid her own development as a writer.⁵³ Mansfield's early reading reveals the young woman's search for self – a tired cliché, but a truism nonetheless – and is indicative of her very deliberate self-fashioning as not merely a writer, but an *artiste*.

Both the persona and the literary style that Mansfield created evidenced multiple strains of influence – something that she acknowledged without hesitation in a diary entry of March 1908:

... where is my ideal and ideas of life? ... now I am growing capable of seeing a wider vision – a little Oscar, a little Symons, a little Dolf Wyllarde, Ibsen, Tolstoi, Elizabeth Robins, Shaw, D'Annunzio, Meredith. To weave the intricate tapestry of one's own life it is well to take a thread from many harmonious skeins... Not necessary to grow the sheep, comb the wool, colour and brand it, but joyfully take all that is ready and with that saved time go a great way further (*NB1:110*).

Mansfield's amusing summation of her methods points to her colonial upbringing with the analogy she draws between her literary development and the process of wool processing – something she would associate with New Zealand, which at this time was known for little aside from “its exports of wool and gold [and quality] horses and footballers” (Alexander and Currie xiv). Mansfield's theory also calls to mind Lawrence's wry observation that having enjoyed thus far a life of “wealth and ease” she considered everything hers for the taking – that it was “her birthright” (*CL1:xv*).⁵⁴ Her privileged upbringing afforded her the opportunity to pursue a career abroad, not just in terms of the generous allowance provided by her father, but also the initial publishing opportunities that he instigated.⁵⁵ And her status as a colonial, a breed that was defined by the new frontiers it established, provided her with the impetus “to try *all* sorts of lives ... [to] impersonate so many people” within her writing – from Zola to Marie Bashkirtseff (*CL1:19*).⁵⁶ O'Sullivan concludes, as “an outsider [Mansfield was] open to [life's] advantages yet excused of its limitations” (*CL1:xv*).

That Mansfield considered herself an outlaw, that she flouted convention and believed herself entirely free from those restrictions imposed on others is widely acknowledged.⁵⁷ While her foreigner status meant she felt insecure within London's established literary and social circles, her colonial upbringing provided her with a sense of freedom to operate outside of the perimeters dictated by stuffy Victorian and Edwardian principles – in Europe

⁵³ See Beauchamp, *Reminiscences and Recollections* 194-5.

⁵⁴ Lawrence's comments survive in an unpublished entry in Murry's diary, dated February 1915, cited by O'Sullivan within the introduction to Volume One of *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*.

⁵⁵ See Alpers 1982:51-53 regarding Beauchamp's discussion with Tom L. Mills then a reporter with the *Evening Post* requesting that he might look at Mansfield's work; and his correspondence with E. J. Brady, editor of the *Native Companion* in which Mansfield had published three vignettes.

⁵⁶ KM to Sylvia Payne, 24 April 1906.

⁵⁷ See O'Sullivan in *CL1:xv*; Wilkins 1; Stead 9; Williams 1998:700.

and within her native country. It also allowed her to develop a style that owed less to the grand traditions of Shakespeare and Chaucer – although the author claimed an allegiance to both – and only partly to the literary example of her contemporaries, and more to the cultural and physical environment of her childhood home.⁵⁸ Her rebellion against both the provincial society of Wellington and the generally conservative attitudes upheld in polite London society was itself a ‘colonial’ gesture and her self-making as an artist combines the colonial stress on making anew with the Wildean stress on untrammelled aesthetic fashioning. Lydia Wevers, whose interest lies in Mansfield’s colonial stories of 1912-13, particularly “The Woman at the Store”, “How Pearl Button was Kidnapped” and “Millie”, believes these works are indicative of the style in which Mansfield might have continued “had she stayed in her colonial dress, and resisted appropriation by Europe” (1988:6).⁵⁹ However, Mansfield was raised to believe in her dual heritage and she was fully expected to partake of the privileges that both worlds offered – the comfortable bourgeois respectability her father provided for her in New Zealand, a lifestyle which he expected her to resume following her period of schooling abroad, and the British education and European acculturation. For Mansfield, as demonstrated in the aforementioned diary entry, this dual heritage meant she was able to take from both traditions and that she had every intention of exploiting, both personally and professionally, all that was available to her; hence her alternation between Maori and Russian costume,⁶⁰ and evidenced by her stories which are indebted to sources as disparate as Pater and Dickens, Rossetti and Manet. In a sense, it was Mansfield who did the appropriating – taking subjects from colonial New Zealand and refashioning them with European tools for a Global audience – which is perhaps what she was hinting at in the following diary entry: “When N[ew] Z[ealand] is more artificial she will give birth to an artist who can treat her natural beauties adequately. This sounds paradoxical but is true” (NB1:81).⁶¹

⁵⁸ The significance of the physical landscape of New Zealand on Mansfield’s writing is expounded upon in Chapter 6.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Bowen thinks along the same lines as Wever, see Stead, “Katherine Mansfield as Colonial Realist”, *The Writer at Work: Essays* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2000) 39.

⁶⁰ Her first husband, George Bowden recalled for Alpers in 1949 that on the occasion of his second encounter with Mansfield he found her dressed “more or less Maori fashion”; he elaborated on this some years later: “She looked like Oscar Wilde”, Alpers 1982:87. Vera Beauchamp explained that both she and KM had worn a tiki in London when “we wished to be identified as New Zealanders” Harris et al, *Material Mansfield* (Auckland: Random House, 2008) 43. There might in fact have been two tikis (see Charlotte Beauchamp to Sylvia Payne, 14 October 1907, *ibid.* 14).

⁶¹ This diary entry of late October 1906 is cited again in Chapter 5 in response to Frank Sargeson’s arguments. In her notebooks it follows the poem “The [...] Child of the Sea” which contains the following semi-impressionistic stanza: The changing light, the changing light/Purple and gold change to the night/A wide strong blue when the sun is bright/A riot of colour – a wonder sight, NB1:81.

Though brief, this period in New Zealand might very well have cemented the subject matter and ideas for her best stories. The vignettes Mansfield wrote during these eighteen months and subsequently had published, drew on both her New Zealand and European experiences. The nursery stories that dominated her early years were merely exercises and are not an accurate reflection of where she saw herself progressing as a writer. In an interview with E. K. Robieson – née Bendall, the ‘E. K. B’ of Mansfield’s journals – Robieson recalls, “I suppose I was her life-line at that time. It meant a lot to her that I was a painter and spent every spare minute painting. She loved to be with me and begged me to go on those evening walks” (*Dominion Sunday Times* 1983).⁶² Robieson stayed with Mansfield at the Beauchamps’ house at Days Bay and remembers, not without nostalgia and regret, how every night Mansfield would write her a vignette which she was supposed to illustrate and how all but one of these was subsequently burnt by a maid when she was out one day. The jottings in Mansfield’s notebooks dated June 1907 confirm, however, that she has left “Child Verse” behind her; her most recent book she now finds “absurd” (NB1:103, 102). O’Sullivan finds that by 1908 Mansfield had claimed her own narrative style, and that her letters, notebooks and fiction demonstrate she had already begun to constellate the themes that would dominate and characterise her writing henceforth: “Her belief ... that art, like sensitivity, has its price in suffering... the sense of isolation that intensifies what surrounds it, the joy ... of the solitary, observing mind... the ambiguous sexual perceptions” and that sense of impermanence, the idea that people and places “are more in the nature of campsites than enduring edifices” (CL1:xiii).

Wevers concurs with O’Sullivan: “As a whole, Mansfield’s fiction suggests that cultural identity is a kind of baggage carried around in hotels and on trains, constantly on the move” (1998:260). Wevers notes that the location of her stories is always shifting, her characters are often in transit, and that the stories are permeated with a sense of impermanence: “A large number ... take place on trains or boats, in foreign hotels or at stations, or on the brink of voyages, at wharves” (ibid). “Prelude”, which centres around the family’s moving house, and “At the Bay”, which recounts the goings on at a holiday house – a mere interlude at a temporary abode – substantiate Wevers’s point. Clearly Mansfield recognised this because she articulated it through the character of Duquette: “I believe that people are like portmanteaux—packed with certain things, started going, thrown about, tossed away, dumped down, lost and found, half emptied suddenly ... until finally the Ultimate Porter swings them onto the Ultimate Train and away they rattle” (“Je ne parle pas français” 60-61).

⁶² “They Knew Katherine Mansfield”; no date nor page number available but facts in the article indicate that this interview was undertaken in 1983 and conducted by Celia Manson (ATL-fms-Papers-6984-6).

Before her return to England in 1908, Mansfield had determined to write stories that incorporated her early childhood memories of a colonial upbringing in a landscape that enthralled her more than any other, and her experiences of the metropolitan cities of London, Paris and Brussels in a style that would capture the essence of both – that would be both elusive and modern (see *NB1:103*). She had her subjects; her themes were both local and universal – childhood memories; the plight of young women, both married and unmarried, and, by association, the role assumed by and the conditions endured by the governess; social climbing; that sense of the individual as isolated in an increasingly alienating modern world – the latter of which became a modernist dictum. Her decorative motifs were both local and foreign too: native New Zealand plants, such as manuka and toi toi, and the café lights and sounds and imagery of early twentieth century cosmopolitan society. Paradoxically, like Joyce, Mansfield was cosmopolitan and yet regionally-oriented. The local and the specific are interspersed with the foreign via the application of imported aesthetics which she arrives at through rigorous self-editing, removing all superfluous detail, description, punctuation and explication – she was quick to explain that good description did not come about by “*an infinite piling on*” – resulting in a formula that corresponds with that of the Impressionists: sense-based perceptions, fleeting impressions of a scene, event or experience (*CL4:117*).⁶³

Matz, who locates Woolf and Proust within literary Impressionism, though he curiously fails to align Mansfield within this field, points to the Impressionist’s method of conflating memories and current experience; he does so through Proust’s text: “An impression is an experience of a present moment that is also an experience of a distant one, ‘so that past was made to encroach upon the present and I was made to doubt whether I was in the one or the other.’ The impression is therefore ‘extra-temporal’” (5).⁶⁴ Matz explains that this method situates the character “outside time,” and gives him the power to “rediscover days that were long past, the Time that was Lost” (*ibid.*). As demonstrated in the previous chapter and throughout this thesis, this is precisely what Mansfield does; she acknowledged it in her journals and letters: “To write stories one has to go back into the past” (*CL5:146-47*).⁶⁵ Her notebooks reveal that she learned this from amongst others, Mérimée whose ideas she found arresting:

⁶³ KM to JMM, 21 November 1920.

⁶⁴ My quote, therefore, includes Proust’s text and punctuation.

⁶⁵ KM to Charlotte Beauchamp Perkins, 8 April 1922 (cited in Chapter 1). See also *NB1:213*: “A rough sea journey is a strange conglomeration of sensations. I, in a moment seem caught by a thousand memories – am a child again ...”, (cited in Chapter 6); see also KM to Sarah Gertrude Millin, early March 1922, *CL5:78* (cited in Chapter 6); and finally, Mansfield in O’Sullivan 1988:1: “One lives in the past—Or I do” (cited in Chapter 6).

Mérimée has les idées très arrêtées. The artist becomes an artist by the intensification of Memory – extraneous. It is the clear sighted sensitiveness of a man who watches human things closely, bringing them home to himself with the deliberate essaying art of an actor who has to represent a particular passion in movement! (NB1:165).

Mansfield's allegiance to Mérimée's theory reveals that, by Matz's own definitions, then, she must also be an Impressionist.

The Cultural Climate of Home

Though in time she came to value her colonial upbringing, the New Zealand that a resentful Mansfield returned to in December 1906 was a world she perceived as being bereft of culture, completely unsympathetic to her creative spirit, a world in which "Life [was] ... impossible" (CL1:20).⁶⁶ Despite her condemnations, at the beginning of the twentieth century there was a burgeoning group of writers participating in a nascent literary scene in New Zealand and Australia, and their endeavours were energetically directed towards establishing an intelligentsia of sorts. Jane Stafford and Mark Williams locate Jessie Mackay and Blanche Baughan within this school and demonstrate that they were Mansfield's near contemporaries in this literary sphere (145).⁶⁷ The Sydney *Bulletin* established in 1880 and notable for its nationalist and anti-imperialist character accepted work from New Zealand shores and, unlike many New Zealand publications, its contributors received payment for works published (Phillips 522).⁶⁸ J. O. C. Phillips explains, however, that *Bulletin's* New Zealand readership, though considerable, was not substantial enough to aid in the development of a similar literary school. Henry Lawson, one of *Bulletin's* most prominent contributors, known for his outback yarns including some based on his New Zealand experiences, partly provided the newspaper with its distinctive voice. Yet no Lawson imitators emerged on the New Zealand side of the Tasman.⁶⁹ Instead, Phillips explains, "The image of New Zealand in the *Bulletin* was of a rather genteel and British place, unfortunately rather prudish and respectable ..." effectively reinforcing Mansfield's protestations (524). The New Zealand stories, Phillips continues, although often similar in theme to the

⁶⁶ KM to Sylvia Payne, 8 January 1907.

⁶⁷ What became known as the cultural nationalist movement arose in New Zealand after the death of Mansfield. It is associated with names such as Charles Brasch and Allen Curnow, whose work sought to represent the New Zealand experience as it really was, without recourse to imported trends, and later Frank Sargeson and his 'blokey' stories celebrating provincial New Zealand life. Their collective works came to define a national literature in way that even Mansfield's 'colonial' stories did not.

⁶⁸ J. O. C. Phillips lists Edward Tregear, William Pember Reeves, G. B. Lancaster, Will Lawson, and Boyce Bowden as amongst the most prominent New Zealand contributors, "Musings in Maoriland – or Was There a *Bulletin* School in New Zealand." *Historical Studies* 20. 81 (October 1983): 521.

⁶⁹ Mark Williams suggests that David Mckee Wright whose short stories and verse was strongly New Zealand in flavour and demotic in tone might be the exception.

Australian tales of pioneers' efforts to "tame the landscape" – a popular subject in painting too⁷⁰ – were more "elevated" in tone and featured "respectable gentle folk" in the role of "heroes and heroines" and not the "drifter spieler-type living off his wits" characteristic of Lawson's hero-figure (ibid.).⁷¹ In summary, Phillips writes, "New Zealand lacked the ... anti-British tradition which Australia possessed" and, therefore, "the values of the *Bulletin* school were seen as subversive, disorderly and generally hostile to the genteel respectable aspirations of [the] Britain of the South" (525). At the turn-of-the-century, New Zealand intellectuals who were determined to forge a national voice looked closer to home for both inspiration and publication (ibid. 524). In this endeavour, they turned to New Zealand's most distinctive feature, its native people, popularly held to be dying off and yet still the finest native race in the world. Mansfield was not wholly aloof from this interest and this effort.⁷²

In 1899, the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* was established and in its first issue openly set forth its nationalist intent: "There comes a time in the history of every colony – at least every colony of British origin – when the new country ceases to be a mere appendage of the old" (ibid. 526).⁷³ The magazine ran for five years, but Phillips notes that the "specifically New Zealand content" dwindled from the outset, until in its last issue in September 1905, only three random photographs bore testament to its New Zealand origins and supposedly nationalist purposes; the remainder of the magazine was decidedly British (ibid.). The *Triad*, established in 1893, achieved greater success in its attempt to harbour a national literary school.⁷⁴ Heralded as New Zealand's first cultural magazine, *Triad* was a monthly journal which advertised itself as "Devoted to Literature, Art, Science, & Music"; it was, however, more journalistic than literary (Williams 1998:699). It published work by local and foreign artists, including Wilde. Mansfield, like Mackay, submitted work to the *Triad* and its Australian counterpart, the *Native Companion*. Newspapers such as the *Otago Witness* and Wellington-based *Dominion* and *Evening Post* also published the poems and

⁷⁰ See "Academy of Fine Arts: An Interesting Exhibition", *Evening Post*, 74. 90 (12 October 1907) 9.

⁷¹ Mansfield's colonial style in "How Pearl Button was Kidnapped" and "The Woman at the Store" evidence a knowledge of modern Australian literature. The latter is similar in style, or tone, to the Lawson's work; however, this story derived from her experiences in the Urewera and she is not therefore merely appropriating Lawson's themes.

⁷² Like other writers of the period, Mansfield was not immune to the allure of Maori mythology and she was aware of the potentially exotic and picturesque subject matter represented by the Maori peoples of New Zealand; this is exemplified in her short stories, "Summer Idylle, 1906", *NB* 1:75-77 (discussed further in Chapter 6) and "How Pearl Button was Kidnapped."

⁷³ Mark William's discusses its place alongside the *Triad* and Sydney's *Bulletin* within the realm of "Literary Scholarship, Criticism, and Theory", *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, ed. Terry Sturm (Oxford, Melbourne and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 695-736.

⁷⁴ Pat Lawlor devotes a chapter to *Triad's* popularity and reputation in *More Wellington Days* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd., 1962) 153-62.

stories of budding Australasian writers; in the latter, Mansfield had published “The Education of Audrey”.⁷⁵ These publications were, as Stafford and Williams explain, “the standard Maoriland outlets”, from which Mansfield launched her career (152). That being established, Mansfield had no desire to be associated with Maoriland writing. Although she claimed poverty from the outset, the generous allowance provided by her father during her adulthood meant that Mansfield was not financially dependent on her writing and so free to experiment.⁷⁶ She set about cultivating a style that diverged far from the path of colonial fiction.⁷⁷

Mansfield’s letters of 1908 already evidence an Impressionist’s perspective and attitude – one which is almost entirely sense-oriented; she describes the scene at the launching of the HMS *Collingwood* at Devonport (7 November 1908): “She towered above everybody. On a flag enveloped platform.... We were all ... down below. It was a brilliant day, but a fierce wind rushed down and about. The crowd was silent, while the choir and sailors sang.... You see the dramatic effect – it caught me” (CL1:88).⁷⁸ The Impressionists painted numerous scenes similar to that described here by Mansfield, the everyday subject, the bustle of modernity and inherent spectacle proving worthy subjects for representation.⁷⁹ Even Mansfield’s unconventional viewpoint accords with those sought by Degas and Caillebotte respectively, the former viewing the stage at the ballet from the orchestra’s pit, the other preferring the elevated view from balconies. In another letter of this period Mansfield describes her desire

⁷⁵ *Evening Post* 77. 25 (30 January 1909) 12. Mansfield is not likely to have submitted the work herself. The *Evening Post* was in the habit of lifting stories from London newspapers and reproducing them within its own pages. On 6 November 1914, the *Evening Post* also published, anonymously, an excerpt from a letter Mansfield wrote to her Godmother, Laura Bright (who would in January of 1920 become her stepmother). The letter, dated 21 September 1914, described the scene on the streets of London which was then “in the throes of this frightful war” (see KM to Laura Bright, 21 September 1914, CL1:139).

⁷⁶ Amongst the Mansfield archives at the ATL, are signed copies of Harold Beauchamp’s formal letters of instruction to the Bank of New Zealand’s London branch, dated 1919, increasing the allowances he had already settled on his four daughters, securing henceforth on each of them an income of £300 per annum. Ian Gordon notes that at this time, the annual income of a Rhodes Scholar was £250 and thus concludes that Mansfield was “liberated, financially, from the outset” and never the poverty stricken bohemian artist that she purported to be, “Warmth and Hydrangeas: Katherine Mansfield’s Wellington Years 1907-08”, *NZ Listener* (8 May 1976). Alpers notes that Mansfield and Murry employed a servant from 1912 and that Mansfield and Murry’s combined income at that time was in excess of £450, which put them “well inside the professional class” Alpers 1982:149.

⁷⁷ In fact, much of Mansfield’s early work was considered too risqué to feature alongside that which her contemporaries were producing; as Scholefield explains, they were of the “sex problem type” and therefore, at odds with the more puritan atmosphere in New Zealand. Mills, a prominent journalist and editor, in a letter to Guy Morris, 30 October 1937, called Mansfield’s stories, “sexy writings”, cited in Stafford and Williams, 147. Mansfield’s “The Awakening River”, is one such story *Rhythm* 1.4 (1912): 30-33.

⁷⁸ KM to Garnett Trowell, 8 November 1908.

⁷⁹ See Manet, *Departure of the Folkestone Boat* (1869), oil on canvas, Mr and Mrs Carroll S. Tyson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art. See also Eugène Boudin, *Jetty at Trouville* (1865), oil on panel, Collection of Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon.

to recite her poetry publicly on: “A darkened stage – a great – high backed oak chair – flowers – shaded lights – a low table filled with curious books – and to wear a simple, beautifully coloured dress”; she goes on to discuss “*tone* effects” and “gesture” and her desire “to be the Maud Allen of this Art” (CL1:84).⁸⁰ These are the very qualities that the Impressionists and those artists associated with Impressionism, such as Whistler accorded primary importance to, and aimed to evoke in paint. In these early letters Mansfield also describes the landscape in impressionistic terms. From London she writes: “Here the city is smothered in fog, and the sun hangs like a gold ball in the half leafless trees – a raw, Winter morning” (CL1:67);⁸¹ and from Paris regarding Versailles: “Avenues of chestnut trees ... burning a red bronze with the fires of Autumn.... and a lake where yellow leaves flooded like sunlight – the green lawns – and always the marvellous distance effects” (CL1:77).⁸² She also alights upon the themes that preoccupied the Impressionists, watching and recording the awkward interaction between a young newly married bourgeois couple and the waiters on the Continental train: “these two ... look nervy, ashamed & apologetic” (CL1:74).⁸³ Her stories would soon unarguably demonstrate that primary affinity.

In addition to the literary journals to which Mansfield and other aspiring writers contributed, the newspaper advertisements and reviews of the period provide a more than satisfactory overview of the art and cultural scene in the Capital at this time and reveal that Mansfield’s claim: “here there is really no scope for development – no intellectual society – no hope of finding any” was, if not unfounded, then at least exaggerated (CL1:42).⁸⁴ The music scene was lively, with the work of Strauss, Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner, familiar to a select and informed Colonial audience; and following the Christchurch Exhibition of 1906, at which “Wagner’s soul-stirring music has been predominant in every programme”, the Exhibition’s Orchestra toured, stopping in Wellington (*Triad* 1 February 1907, 32-33). The *Evening Post*, like most of the daily newspapers, ran gossip columns, including one that was specifically London oriented, and an ‘Entertainments’ column detailing current and upcoming concerts, theatre shows, art exhibitions and other various and numerous cultural pursuits. These archives demonstrate that the Colonists, despite their geographical isolation, were not entirely cut off from developments abroad, nor were they without the material exoticisms available to their Continental counterparts; even Mansfield’s favoured Egyptian

⁸⁰ KM to Garnett Trowell, 2 November 1908. O’Sullivan explains that Maud Allen (1883-1956) usually performed barefoot in a loose Greek gown, see CL1:62, n. 1. See also Chapter 5 for Mansfield’s response to Canadian Dancer, Maud Allen’s performance at the Palace Music Hall.

⁸¹ KM to Garnett Trowell, 7 October 1908; cf. Monet, *Impression, Sunrise* (1873).

⁸² KM to Garnett Trowell, 24 October 1908; cf. Sisley, *Avenue with Chestnuts*, near La Celle-St-Cloud (1867) and *Sisley, Banks of the Loing, Autumn*, and *Autumn, Banks of the Seine near Bougival* (1873).

⁸³ KM to Garnett Trowell, 21 October 1908.

⁸⁴ KM to Vera Beauchamp, late March 1908.

cigarettes were readily available.⁸⁵ They also demonstrate that in the 1880s and '90s the New Zealand public was becoming increasingly aware of cultural matters. Brown and Keith identify the self-consciousness that accompanied this self improvement and explain that the main concern lay in establishing art schools, art societies and art galleries (49).

Brown and Keith trace the swiftly moving public preference for overseas cultural trends in the first two decades of the twentieth century:

Whistler was 'in' in the 1890s and first decade of the twentieth century, but 'out' by the 1920s and a cult of eclectic orientalism held sway. Japanese prints of obscure provenance were framed.... Another spin of the whirligig and ... orientalism was ... discarded in favour of the colour print.... [and] for the post-impressionists in rapid succession. Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* blazed on ... walls in ever-enlarging versions, the size defining not only the owner's financial resources but also the degree of his enlightenment. Van Gogh gave way to Gauguin, Gauguin to Cézanne (101-02).

At the end of the 1920s New Zealand artists were practising a "semi-decorative brand of post-impressionism" (ibid. 102). A letter of 1917 reveals that Mansfield knew of and, somewhat ironically, was scornful of her native country's dependency on foreign customs and styles:

My bank Manager assures me that it's [New Zealand] a perfect little goldmine and whenever I go down to the Bank of New Zealand [London branch] I turn over a heap of illustrated papers full of pictures of electric trains and American buildings and fashionable ladies and gentlemen who might have walked out of the Piccadilly Grill (CL1:316).⁸⁶

Brown and Keith's findings demonstrate that despite the inevitable cultural lag, New Zealand was at least open to foreign ideas; what it lacked was the population, a fine arts tradition and a substantial enough body of artists to establish one.

While a perusal of The "Art and Literature" section of *Triad* demonstrates that Colonial society had a healthy appetite for both, it also reveals the gendered cultural climate and highlights the patriarchal nature of the Arts domain into which Mansfield launched herself as a writer. Under the title "How to Write Poetry", an unspecified author provides "a few helpful hints on the *manly* art of making rhymes" (*Triad*, 1 June 1904, 12, my italics). "A good physique is the first requisite. Begin by taking long walks and plenty of deep breaths. After some light dumb-bell exercise, take your pen in hand, and you are ready for business" (ibid.). Such advice calls to mind Stanley Burnell's physicality:

... girt with a towel, glowing and slapping his thighs. He pitched the wet towel ... and standing firm in the exact centre of a square of sunlight he began to do his exercises. Deep breathing, bending and squatting like a frog and shooting out his legs. He was

⁸⁵ See *Triad* (1 June 1904): 19.

⁸⁶ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 13 July 1917.

so delighted with his firm, obedient body that he hit himself on the chest and gave a loud “Ah.” (“Prelude” 25).

The following excerpt reinforces how gendered the cultural climate of New Zealand was by revealing that women were, evidently, a problem at the theatre:

Perhaps in no English-speaking country in the world is there less intelligent interest in the stage than in New Zealand. The popular taste is unsettled, and there is no dramatic critic in the two islands to help it. There are consequently no canons, and women, for once, have too powerful a voice. Applause is frequent and irresponsible, and a reasoned disapproval unknown (*Triad* 1 February 1907, 16).

The “Literary Notes” in another issue provide further evidence of the chauvinism exhibited towards women’s authorship in general: “When women write, the impulse is usually derived from the deeper emotions, and so the majority of their works take the melancholy tinge” (*Triad* 1 January 1907, 5).⁸⁷

Unlike the capital cities of Europe, New Zealand boasted nothing like a National Gallery in Mansfield’s time.⁸⁸ Like Mansfield, upon her return from Queen’s College Charlotte Beauchamp complained that the colony was “absolutely devoid of art and so naturally the people are most uninteresting” (cited in Alpers 1982:42).⁸⁹ The country was, however, served by a number of smaller independent galleries; in Wellington these included McGregor Wright and Co., and the Fine Arts Academy. A review of an exhibition at the Academy finds the majority of the paintings “conspicuously good” (*Evening Post* 74. 90, 12 October 1907, 9). Nevertheless, as evidenced in another editorial in the *Evening Post*, Charlotte was not alone in believing the nation bereft of art and culture: the consensus amongst the local painters echoed Whistler’s recent claims, that “there never was an art-loving nation” (cited in 75. 6, 8 January 1908, 6). Local artists claimed that in New Zealand the “public runs to horseflesh, or liquor, or prohibition; but it does not run to pictures” (*ibid.*). The article’s author challenges this claim based on the recent purchase of British pictures, both paintings and photographs, from the Christchurch Exhibition, totalling over £17,000 which s/he claims, tongue-in-cheek, surely demonstrates the public’s “appreciation of art, and a popular market for pictures, if the art is perceptible, and the pictures are good” (*ibid.*). The real issue, it seemed, was the Country’s lack of appreciation for local art, instead

⁸⁷ George Eliot and Mrs Gaskell’s works are cited as exceptions to the rule.

⁸⁸ In fact, the country’s National Art Gallery was officially opened in Wellington in 1936 thanks to the generous benefaction of amongst others, Mansfield’s father whose bequest of a house which was sold for the sum of £6,250 provided acquisition funds and further enabled the purchase of a property suitable to house the Gallery. The details of the Sir Harold Beauchamp bequest were obtained via email from Celia Thompson at the Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongawera, 12 September 2007. Letters to the Editor and general articles indicate the increasing public demand for an official National Gallery, “to bring Wellington into line with other colonial cities”, *Evening Post* 60.70 (20 September 1900):7.

⁸⁹ Charlotte Beauchamp to Sylvia Payne, January 1907.

preferring the imported variety that came “with an “R. A.’ attachment to warrant their quality” – a sentiment not entirely at odds with Mansfield’s own assimilation of foreign aesthetics.

Celebrated New Zealand artist Colin McCahon (1919-87) described the New Zealand art public at the turn of the century, as “visually unaware and conservative” (9). He explains that at this time, “no New Zealand, or Australian artist stayed at home. Both the academic and the adventurous fled to Europe”; it was nothing short of an “exodus” and while many went to England, the majority went to Paris and to the Académie Julian (6-7). Nevertheless, as Pound explains, there existed in New Zealand from the 1890s an attenuated version of the Impressionist landscape, most notable in the lighter colour palette and sketchy execution employed by a number of artists. Scottish-born artist James McLachlan Nairn (1859-1904), was the leading practitioner of this style in New Zealand; *New Brighton Beach* (1893) is a good example of Nairn’s Impressionist style.⁹⁰ Raymond McIntyre’s (1879-1933) work also evidences impressionist tendencies, for example, *George Street, Dunedin* (c.1907). His work met with little enthusiasm in New Zealand – regarded as “‘Whistlerian’ in temperament” M. N. Day explains that in conventional Christchurch art circles McIntyre was “scorned for being ‘an adherent of Impressionism’” – thus he emigrated to Europe to further his career and develop his Impressionism – a career move which raises an interesting parallel with Mansfield’s and which substantiates McCahon’s claim.⁹¹ McIntyre’s *Morning on the Seine* (c. 1926) is an example of the Impressionist/Fauvist aesthetic he readily adopted.⁹² In the late 1920s Evelyn Page (née Polson), (1899-1988), painted well-lit nudes in natural settings in a style which Brown and Keith explain, “derived from a late form of impressionism [and] indicates an attempt to capture the subject at a given moment” in a manner which harks back to Nairn’s teaching (102). Artists and historians assert however, that in New Zealand, for the most part Impressionism petered out upon Nairn’s death (Brown and Keith; Pound 1983; McCahon 1964); and McCahon sees it has being supplanted by Post-Impressionism

⁹⁰ J. M. Nairn, *New Brighton Beach*, watercolour, Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Nairn was born near at Lenzie, near Glasgow, and immigrated to New Zealand in 1890 arriving in Dunedin where he lectured and exhibited for several months before moving to Wellington. His work is considered in greater detail within Chapter 5.

⁹¹ “Raymond Francis McIntyre 1879-1933”, *National Art Gallery Catalogue*, 1972: <http://www.art-newzealand.com/Issues1to40/mcintyre.htm>, accessed on 16 August 2007.

⁹² McIntyre, *George Street, Dunedin* (c.1907), watercolour, private collection; *Morning on the Seine*, (c.1926), oil on panel, The National Gallery, Wellington. McIntyre attended the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Gallery, London 1912. He exhibited with the London Group, the New English Art Club and the Royal Academy in London. While his reputation grew from the 1920s, Mansfield may have been familiar with his work prior to this through exhibitions at the Goupil Gallery in 1912 and in 1921, and at the Eldar Gallery in 1918.

which was then gaining currency in Europe, and which provided a touchstone for twentieth century modern painting in New Zealand (McCahon 9).⁹³

There are few extant exhibition catalogues or archival papers for the galleries operating in Wellington in the early years of the twentieth century; those still available relate only to exhibitions at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts. Vial's research into New Zealand Impressionism has revealed that attenuated or otherwise, it was certainly the dominant style in painting at this time.⁹⁴ An exhibition review in the *Evening Post* of the Nineteenth Annual Exhibition at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (12 – 26 October 1907) notes specifically, the “strides [being] made in impressionism” (12 October 1907, 9). Mansfield's friend, Bendall, with whom she was at the time collaborating on an illustrated book of nursery stories, exhibited a number of Nursery Panels in watercolour at this exhibition, which also featured the work of Sydney L. Thomson, Walter Leslie, C. N. Worsley, and Owen Merton. Given Bendall and Mansfield's close association, it is likely that Mansfield attended this exhibition. In February 1908 there were again impressionistic works being exhibited in Wellington and favourably reviewed in the *Evening Post*.⁹⁵ However, a letter to the Editor in response to this review highlights the generally conservative tastes of the Colonists:

However the cognoscenti may differ as to what constitutes 'Art' in the abstract, there can be no uncertainty as to what are the essential elements in pictorial art... Now with two, or possibly three exceptions, the works, which are highly praised by your writer, are devoid of any one of these essential elements. The obvious excuse for this futility of effort is that the artists are expressing their emotions in the manner of the modern 'impressionist' school (*Evening Post* 28 February 1908, 3).

While the author is not specifically critical of impressionism as a style, s/he states that “The true impressionist picture can only be produced by a past master of the school of “Work” not “Splash” and concludes with a caution against “the temporary vogue of “hurry, skurry, and splash” (ibid.).

The newspaper reviews, articles and the opinion expressed by the author of the aforementioned letter provide evidence that there was a burgeoning exhibition scene in early twentieth century New Zealand and that Impressionism was neither an entirely foreign nor even an exotic concept. It also reinforces the sense of work ethic so central to colonial society. The newspapers also indicate that Whistler, a peripheral figure in

⁹³ McCahon also explains that in New Zealand, the Post-Impressionist style had symbolist overtones, 9.

⁹⁴ Jane Vial, “Execrable in its nightmare of blues and greens” – New Zealand Impressionism under Fire”, Paper presented as part of the ‘Art After Dark’ Programme, in association with *Monet and the Impressionists* at the Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongawera, Wellington, 16 April 2009.

⁹⁵ It was probably an exhibition of new pictures by English and Colonial Artists at McGregor Wright's, for which regular advertisements featured in the *Evening Post*.

Impressionism and associated with Symbolism and Aestheticism too, was as much a household name as Shakespeare; in New Zealand, at least, Whistler's style was synonymous with Impressionism and avant-garde painting.⁹⁶ Interestingly, in a short article in the *Otago Witness* in 1904, within which the writer notes Monet and Pissarro's visit to London to escape the war in France in 1870, the British painters Turner and Constable are cited as the fathers of French Impressionism and of the Barbizon group, respectively:

In the colossal achievement of Turner lies the germs of the Impressionist movement. In his lovely dream-like watercolours in the cellars of the National Gallery, in a dozen of his oil paintings, where light and sunshine, movement, and colour seem to have been miraculously blown upon the canvas, he heralded the new era in landscape that has become the significant art development of our time (14 September 1904, 77).

The origin of French Impressionism is therefore claimed as British and thus, made less foreign more and accessible to New Zealand as a British Colony.

There was, however, no real literary or painting tradition in New Zealand and no local school to which Mansfield could look for inspiration; nor, apparently, was anyone else endeavouring to do what she hoped to achieve in the realm of modern literature via the short story genre.⁹⁷ Mansfield's modernism is not wholly separable from the colonial condition against which she simultaneously struggled and existed within. Her identification with Wilde and the Decadents lies at the basis of her modernism and was both a gesture of rebellion against her father and an intellectual or at least stylistic one, against the weight of colonial propriety.⁹⁸ Mansfield was both inclined and forced to look further afield to the arts of Europe. Evidently, the innovations of the Impressionists, demonstrated in their lighter, brighter colour palette, fragmentary compositions and modern-day subjects, struck the greatest chord. Impressionism allowed her to distance herself from her colonial world and simultaneously provided her with a means of modernising and internationalising her work.

From Morisot's images of domestic entrapment to Cassatt's contemporary and yet poignant portraits of motherhood and childhood, from Manet and Degas's images of the Opera and of working-class women, to Monet's evocative landscapes – her appreciation of which might have been heightened following the recent Urewera camping experience – Mansfield increasingly took the key elements of Impressionist art and applied them to her own literature. She adopted the everyday, often low-brow subject matter – for example, in the sketch "About Pat", then more successfully in "The Tiredness of Rosabel". From this early

⁹⁶ General notices at the end of 1907 make mention of his soon to be published biography See: "About People", *Evening Post* (14 September 1907) 9; "Notes", *Evening Post* (16 November 1907) 13.

⁹⁷ As demonstrated in the experimental and impressionistic "In the Botanical Gardens".

⁹⁸ Ideas raised in a conversation with Mark Williams, May 2007.

stage, Mansfield experimented with perspectives, preferring unusual angles and shifting viewpoints within her narratives; she increasingly exposed the superficiality and artificiality which she felt characterised modern bourgeois society in particular; and she meditated upon the instability of identity, associating it with the flux of modernity, as did the majority of the Impressionists and the modern artists who followed in their wake. It was an accumulative process which involved a constant reappraisal of what she wanted her art to say, and how she might most acutely realise that.

London, World War I, Before, During and After

It would not be until 1916 upon the publication of "Prelude" that Mansfield would be seen to have found her own voice – a voice that was definitively an Impressionist's, a voice that Woolf envied and was subsequently influenced by (Alpers 1982:260). Had Mansfield not returned to London, "The Aloe" would undoubtedly have developed quite differently; it might very well have stayed in its colonial dress as Wevers suggests (1988:6). Mansfield's best stories, according to Damien Wilkins, are "luminous re-imaginings" (4); he explains that "lit" as they are "with the affection and nostalgia of the expatriate" these sorts of stories would never had been written had Mansfield stayed in New Zealand (ibid). Although, ostensibly, Mansfield turned her back on New Zealand, Gordon points out that once established "across the sea," she then "turned [her] eyes resolutely homewards" (1954:5). Scholarship, unfailingly assigns this new sense of sentimental nostalgia – in the author's own words, an "ardent ... desire" to repay her "sacred debt" – to her brother's war-related, accidental death in 1915 and the subsequent homesickness that this tragedy brought upon her (NB2:32,⁹⁹ Alpers 1982:183, Wevers 1995:34, Wilkins 2007:11). Certainly, her very personal and confessional diary entries and letters of this time substantiate this view. However, on a less romantic level, aside from the enormous loss which served as a clanging reminder of the ephemeral nature of life, Mansfield's grief, and the war itself, prompted her to think more seriously about her direction as a writer and in as much forced her to consider the ways in which she might make her mark – this was, after all, the year she pledged "to make money and get known" (NB2:58).¹⁰⁰ In respect to the literary world of Europe, Mansfield's "undiscovered country" was quite literally just that; it was 'copy' of the freshest and thus most modern kind (NB2:32). As cathartic as the writing process proved, it was not merely nostalgia which caused her to look to New Zealand; her native country had always been her preferred subject. "About Pat", one of her earliest stories, is a Karori reminiscence and as Alpers notes, by endowing them with family names "she gave characters ... a drop of family blood from the outset" (1982:192). Alpers also points out that as early as 1910

⁹⁹ 22 January 1916.

¹⁰⁰ 13 February 1916.

Mansfield had begun to idealise New Zealand within her poems; she simply needed the right formula with which to present her chosen subjects. She determinedly set about exploiting what had “not yet risen” by opening “the eyes of the old world” to “the mists [and] the great mystery [of the] New Zealand atmosphere” (NB2:59, 2:32, 2:59).

Critics perceive these now oft-quoted diary entries, of January and February 1916, as the turning point in Mansfield’s development, particularly the following entry:

Now – I want to write recollections of my own country. Yes I want to write about my own country until I simply exhaust my store.... I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the old world. It must be mysterious, as though floating – it must take the breath.... I shall tell everything, even of how the laundry basket squeaked at ‘75’ – but all must be told with a sense of mystery, a radiance, an afterglow ...” (NB2:32).

Here, Mansfield’s aesthetic ideas partly correspond with the example set by the Impressionists – the trivial details, such as the squeaky laundry basket, and that sense of the elusive, aligns her with the painters and their respective attempts to capture and convey the ephemeral and transitory in what were essentially observations of daily, almost mundane activities; both Morisot’s domestic images and Degas’s laundresses are a good example. Furthermore, although she insisted that the effects of the War in Europe must bear upon the type of literature henceforth produced, in her refusal to overtly or explicitly reference it within her own stories, Mansfield aligns herself with the Impressionists who while preoccupied with representing modernity, for the most part very deliberately refrained from referencing recent socio-political events in their paintings. Mansfield’s was not a delayed reaction to Impressionism; the tell-tale fragments in her notebooks and letters indicate that she began experimenting in prose immediately upon encountering the style in paint; were her papers complete, this connection – this debt – would be indisputably substantiated.

The New Age and Rhythm: Mansfield’s Association with British Modernist Journals

From 1910, Mansfield was contributing to *The New Age*, a socialist magazine advertising itself as “A Weekly Review of Politics, Literature, and Art”.¹⁰¹ *The New Age* published Imagist poetry and the stories of then little-known Chekhov (now widely accepted as one

¹⁰¹ *The New Age* first published Mansfield’s “The Child Who Was Tired”. The majority of her first collection of stories was published in successive issues of *The New Age* during 1910 and as a collection entitled *In A German Pension* in 1911. The originality of Mansfield’s “The Child Who Was Tired” is a contentious issue. Essentially, it is a modified version of Chekhov’s “Spat Khochetsia”, published in English for the first time in 1903 under the title “Sleepyhead.” See Alpers 1982:111. Elizabeth Schneider rejects plagiarism in favour of “a case of unconscious memory”, 30. On Mansfield’s debt to Chekhov see also D. W. Kleine, “The Chekhovian source of ‘Marriage a la Mode’”, *PQ* (42, 1963); C.C. Kurylo, *Chekhov and Katherine Mansfield: A Study in Literary Influence*, PhD Thesis (University of Michigan, 1961).

Mansfield's most significant literary influences and the writer she declared her "master!"), (CL2:345).¹⁰² Lucien Pissarro, Camille's son, was also associated with this paper though his contribution is indeterminate. Alpers notes that the magazine discussed the Post-Impressionists several months before Roger Fry's first exhibition of their work in 1910 – though I would argue that this is somewhat misleading because Fry was the first to use the term 'Post-Impressionist' and he did so in relation to the exhibition (1982:109). Nevertheless, the volumes are full of intelligent discussion and debate pertaining to Realism, Impressionism, Symbolism and Aestheticism, and indicate that its contributors were confidently able to chart the development of modern French painting from Corot to Courbet to Manet, Degas, the Impressionists and beyond. Walter Sickert (1860-1942),¹⁰³ artist – a German-born English Impressionist whose work was influenced by Whistler and Degas – critic and regular contributor to *The New Age*, discusses the merits of Turner versus Corot,¹⁰⁴ Whistler versus Millet¹⁰⁵ and demonstrates the links between Corot, Courbet and Pissarro.¹⁰⁶ "Pre-Raphaelitism" [sic] and Impressionism are perceived as the two most significant art movements prior to 1910, and the artists associated with these movements are praised for their commitment to personal vision and divergence from tradition (*The New Age*, 7. 5, Supplement, 2 June 1910, 11). There was certainly no shortage of informed art criticism within the pages of *The New Age* during Mansfield's association with the magazine. Alpers's research has revealed that Mansfield was influenced by paintings and cartoons reproduced in various contemporary periodicals – such as the aforementioned *Jugend* which Alpers describes as containing illustrations of dreamy young women gazing out of windows or seated alone at café tables, smoking, waiting; and various motifs epitomising the spirit of pre-war Europe (1982:113).¹⁰⁷ In keeping with the theme of the brush that liberates the pen, which, explains Alpers, was persistent at this time, he suspects that the influence of *Jugend* on Mansfield's prose has not yet been properly ascertained: "The *pension* sketches, with their unannounced beginnings ('Bread soup was placed upon the table'), often suggest pictorial origins" rather than literary influences (ibid. 113). Alpers's findings provide further proof that Mansfield tapped into the visual imagery of her time specifically for her own literary purposes. The motifs she identified with, and which she considered good copy, are

¹⁰² KM to S. S. Koteliensky, early August 1919.

¹⁰³ Sickert gifted Murry several of his etchings in an appreciative response to Murry's art criticism in the Westminster Gazette, see CL1:179, n.1. Mansfield writes, "Get your Sickert's framed... I'd love to turn up my eyes at them when I come home", KM to JMM, 8 May 1915, CL1:178.

¹⁰⁴ *The New Age* 7. 23 (6 October 1910) 545.

¹⁰⁵ *The New Age* 7. 19 (8 September 1910) 453.

¹⁰⁶ *The New Age* 7. 13 (28 August 1910) 307.

¹⁰⁷ For example, the thermos flask, the Auto-stop, the Vest-Pocket Kodak, the Zeppelin and cannons.

those prevalent within not only the modern journals and magazines which she was reading and to which she was contributing, but were also the subjects of Impressionist paintings which, owing partly to the recent exhibitions, were gaining in popularity in London at precisely this time.

Through Orage, Mansfield met, socialised and, in some cases, had affairs with various contributors to *The New Age*, including J. M. Kennedy, then a foreign editor on the *Daily Telegraph*, who had translated Nietzsche; and the author, Edmund B. d’Auvergne, whom she also encountered at the British Museum Reading Room – a popular meeting place at this time. It is impossible to accurately gauge the degree to which Mansfield’s writing was influenced by Orage and his mistress, Beatrice Hastings during the initial two years of her association with *The New Age*; as their relationship was both professional and personal there were mitigating factors. While the *pension sketches* were well received by both Orage and the critics,¹⁰⁸ Orage rejected her imitative efforts at French Symbolism by publishing Mansfield’s “Along the Gray’s Inn Road” within the Letters to the Editor, though it was clearly a prose-poem. Open to various possibilities, Mansfield was writing under the influence of both writers and visual art trends at this time, and furthermore, she altered her writing to suit its intended audience. In New Zealand, she had been writing for a very limited audience. Readers there were less interested in the local – the view from their own windows – and instead hoping for a glimpse of that which was imported from their other ‘Home’. Mansfield tailored her early vignettes for the Antipodean market; for example, before submitting her story to *The Native Companion*, she dropped the geographical signifier from the title of “In the Botanical Gardens”; and “In a Café” is self-consciously cosmopolitan. In London there was a market for colonial literature, hence *Rhythm*’s keen acceptance of “The Woman at the Store”. Pioneering stories were also popular there, as were tales of pre-European contact Maoriland society. Realistic depictions of modern Maori life were not considered interesting subjects.¹⁰⁹ Picturesque and sublime representations of the New Zealand landscape – both literary and painterly – were met with enthusiasm by English audiences.

¹⁰⁸ A review of *In A German Pension* in the *Daily Telegraph* finds noteworthy an “impishness” which distinguishes the work from other English Literature, excepting Lawrence Sterne’s, and which aligns it with the work of “a few modern Russian and French writers”, cited in Alpers 1982:129.

¹⁰⁹ Realism, in general, was not encouraged [within New Zealand literary journals and newspapers]. The public preferred what Patrick Evans describes as “senile Victorian romanticism” and it is precisely this that European modernists rebelled against from 1912, *The Long Forgetting: Post colonial literary culture in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2007) 104. One exception included literature surrounding women’s suffrage following New Zealand’s 1893 legislation which gave women voting rights. Indicative of the social experiment that was colonial New Zealand, British audiences were interested to see how the Suffrage movement would affect society.

As has been stated, Mansfield was not a Maoriland writer. Nevertheless, she had been raised there and as she was determined to realise her own true life and experiences in her stories. She needed an aesthetic which would act as a vehicle for representing the country she perceived as a real treasure. In the Summer of 1911 Mansfield visited the port city of Bruges; a trip that resulted in two stories which, explains Alpers, demonstrate a subtle change in her focus and which point ahead to something which would characterise her style: “that intricate delineation of the spaces between people which ... Mansfield later captured as the Impressionists had captured light” (1982:127). Alpers attributes this ability of Mansfield’s to her colonial status:

In English fiction generally, the nuances of class had always performed this function, as they do in Jane Austen. For a colonial writer, unattached to class, the viewpoint had to be somewhere else, and somewhere insecure: it had to float; and it is evident that Katherine assumed it most readily in the context of travel and movement, among other *deracinées* (127).

Firstly, Mansfield was not strictly unattached to class; class consciousness permeates her stories within which she juxtaposes the working class and middle-upper classes, subtly exposing the disparities between them just as the Impressionists did in their canvases.¹¹⁰ In the context of British society, however, Mansfield unarguably lived outside of class parameters. Secondly, Alpers points out that these new stories coincide with Mansfield’s first bout of lung illness – then diagnosed as pleurisy but which was, in fact, tuberculosis, exacerbated by a sexually transmitted disease, and only properly diagnosed six years later. Understandably, Alpers is reluctant to attribute this subtle change in Mansfield’s vision to the onset of illness, although the idea that ill health, if not the precursor or catalyst, at least shares an intimate relationship with artistic creativity is a well established theory and one that Mary Burgan investigates in relation to Mansfield.¹¹¹

Mathilde Blind attributes a portion of Bashkirtseff’s creativity to her tuberculosis: “The dark shadow ... threw the high lights of life into sharper relief... her life burned with a clearer more concentrated flame than ever before. She herself is taken by the surprise at the increasing acuteness of her sensations” (712-13). Blind notes that Bashkirtseff vented this increasing sensitivity in writing, painting, sculpting and piano-playing. Also of significance, however, is that Durand-Ruel had between 1870 and 1871 opened a Gallery in Brussels and continued to exhibit Impressionist works there in the twentieth century. Mansfield’s 1911 visit to Bruges was brief and it is unknown whether she ventured further at that particular

¹¹⁰ For example, Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*.

¹¹¹ Mary Burgan, *Illness, gender and writing: the case of Katherine Mansfield*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. See also: Tobi Zausner “When Walls become Doorways: Creativity, Chaos Theory, and Physical Illness”, *Creativity Research Journal* 11. 1 (1998): 21-28. Online: <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=76997914#>

time as there are no extant letters relating to the journey. However, it is possible Mansfield encountered Impressionism there. She might even have done so during the Easter that she and her sisters along with Aunt Belle Dyer spent in Brussels in 1906. She was again in Brussels in April in 1909 where the colours of the landscape made a very strong impression on her.¹¹² Colour, which had always been a significant aspect of her writing, certainly became a more significant feature of her writing from this point.¹¹³

The New Age was not the only journal claiming to uphold modern ideas pertaining to literature and art. While Mansfield was taking in the “green & mauve” landscape of Belgium in the summer of 1911, another aspiring writer was about to launch a periodical aimed at a similar market (NB1:164). Mansfield’s future husband, John [Jack] Middleton Murry (1889-1957), was in 1910 in Paris immersing himself in the café society that welcomed him more readily than did his class-conscious peers at Oxford. With pretensions towards literary criticism, Murry read and participated in the lively debates at the Café d’ Harcourt on the Place de la Sorbonne frequented by writers such as Hemingway and Joyce. Here Murry became acquainted with Francis Carco, then working for the literary review *La Flamme*, who would go on to write novels based in Montmartre, and with whom Mansfield had a brief affair which she would later partly fictionalise in “An Indiscreet Journey”. Carco’s associates included Picasso, Modigliani, Apollinaire and Colette – such connections cannot have failed to make an impression on Murry and in turn, on Mansfield, particularly as possible contributors to their literary ventures.¹¹⁴ At this time, Murry also met a female Scottish painter who went by the name of George Banks, and who introduced him to the work of Picasso, and to Fergusson whose work at this time showed the influence of the Fauves. It was Fergusson’s painting *Rhythm* – exhibited in the recent Autumn Salon – that supplied Murry and his friend and colleague, Michael Sadleir,¹¹⁵ with the name and, in part, a style-model for their literary journal. The first issue of *Rhythm* (June 1911) included the first

¹¹² She was also at this time travelling under the pseudonym of Mrs K. Bendall – her artist friend Edie Bendall. This suggests that she saw herself as an artist figure.

¹¹³ Debussy’s attention to colour is discussed in *Rhythm* 1.2 (1911): 29-34.

¹¹⁴ Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918). In Apollinaire’s visual poetry the form and content strikes the reader simultaneously; they are text pictures of sorts – typographical arrangements. His poetry was directly inspired by the work of various artists with whom he associated including Robert Delaunay, Picasso, Braque, Vlaminck, Gris and Marie Laurencin. He collaborated on both Cubist and Futurist manifestoes: *Les Peintres Cubistes* 1912 and *L’Antitradition Futuriste* 1913.

¹¹⁵ As Alpers explains, born M. T. H. Sadler (1888-1957), he later added an ‘i’ to his surname to become Sadleir to avoid confusion with his father, Professor Michael Sadler, then Chancellor of Leeds University and a well-known art patron, 1982:133. For the sake of consistency, he is referred to as Sadleir henceforth.

reproduction of Picasso in England and an article by Sadleir on Anne Estelle Rice's Fauvist paintings.¹¹⁶

Her relationship with Orage having cooled, Mansfield needed a new publishing outlet. Initially, she sent a fairy story to the new journal *Rhythm*; this, however, did not interest the editors nearly as much as the story that followed: "The Woman at the Store", the murderous tale of life in the Colonial outback, met the aims and ideals statement advertised in the journal: "Before art can be human again it must learn to be brutal." The story so impressed Murry that he sought to meet the writer. It is unknown if Mansfield was familiar with *Rhythm* prior to her initial correspondence with Murry in early December 1911; however, given her literary aspirations, aesthetic impulses and the magazine's content and reputation it seems highly likely that prior to her own successful submission she familiarised herself with the first two instalments. In *Rhythm's* first issue, in an article entitled "Art and Philosophy", Murry describes art alternatively as "the golden thread that runs through a varied texture, showing firm, brilliant, and unbroken when the fabric has fallen away"; and the result of "the artist's vision [which] is a moment's lifting of the veil, a chord caught and remembered" (9). Murry's analogies call to mind Mansfield's own as expressed in the aforementioned journal entry of May 1908 – "To weave the intricate tapestry of one's own life it is well to take a thread from many harmonious skeins" – and, therefore, cannot have failed to strike a chord with her then, and later when she describes "an unfinished memory which has been with me for years... [and which will make] a very good story if only I can tell it right"; and which she can "see so clearly" now "the mists are rising" (NB1:110; 2:58-59).¹¹⁷

Murry upheld the art theoretical ideas he expressed in the first issue of *Rhythm*. In his interpretation of Bergson's philosophy Murry notes specifically the privileging of intuition, "of the spiritual vision of the artist, in form, in words and meaning... [which] by its own heightened workings conquers the crude opposition of subject and object – an idea not at odds with Impressionism's privileging of atmosphere over subject (1.1, 1911: 9). More importantly, he alights on theories which validated Mansfield's own methodologies which involved a deceptively complex interweaving of the example provided her by her literary predecessors including Whitman, Flaubert and Zola, the motifs prevalent in contemporary Continental society, and childhood memories. Murry writes:

Only a creed which is of and for this world can give us art... Art ... holds within itself all the past. The artist must take up the quest where his fathers left it. He must identify himself with the continuity that has worked in the generations before him.

¹¹⁶ Initially *Rhythm* was published as a quarterly with four issues in 1911, seven in 1912 and three in 1913; it was then relaunched as *The Blue Review*.

¹¹⁷ May 1908; 14 February 1916.

His individuality consists in consciously thrusting from the vantage ground that he inherits..." (*Rhythm* 1.1, 1911: 10).

He stresses the importance of blending the past and the present:

The present is the all-in-all of art. Derives its very elements, the matter of its being, from the past if you will; it remains the creation of a new thing.... To say that art is revolutionary is to say that it is art. In truth, no art breaks with the past. It forces a path into the future. The flesh and the bones of the new creation may come from the past; but the form is new (ibid. 11).

And he concludes that: "Art is the true and only expression of reality" (ibid.). Murry's theories correspond with the Impressionists' who in addition to choosing new subjects, such as café society and the street, also painted traditional subjects – nudes, still-lives and portraits. Their unconventional painterly techniques lent their work an avant-garde quality, and their subjectivity owed to their desire to render their personal vision – their individual reality. Similarly, the Post-Impressionists, though they sought new methods of construction using pure colour and outline for decorative purposes, did not break with the example set by the Impressionists; rather, they followed their lead: Cézanne, particularly, whose primary goal remained to render his personal vision of a landscape or scene.

While she was strongly independent and well read, Mansfield, by association – their relationship was both professional and personal within mere weeks of their meeting – must also have been influenced by Murry's aesthetic impulses. By September 1912, Mansfield had assumed the role of assistant editor of *Rhythm* and the pair wrote collaboratively on aestheticism, philosophical matters, and in an article entitled "Seriousness in Art", on the commercial nature of writing, arguing that modern English literature had "become a trade instead of an art" (2. 6, 1912: 46). Their association brought about further fruitful introductions to writers and painters alike whose contributions they both actively sought and were furnished with, such as Henri Charles Manguin (1874-1949), a Paris-born artist who was heavily influenced by Impressionism as seen in his bright palette and modern painterly treatment of landscapes, particularly of the Mediterranean region.¹¹⁸ He was, however, considered a Fauvist and associated with fellow Fauvists including Matisse. French-born artists, Orthon Friesz (1879-1949), who, like Monet, hailed from Le Havre, and Albert Marquet (1875-1947), contributed work to *Rhythm*, both having adopted the Fauvist style notable for its bold outlines and stylised forms. *Rhythm* featured drawings by Fergusson and Peploe. Peploe looked to the work of Dutch Masters, Rembrandt and Hals; but was also influenced by French Realism, especially Manet, as demonstrated in his use of thick impasto, fluid brushwork and contrasting tonality, particularly in his still life

¹¹⁸ A characteristic landscape of Manguin's featured in *Rhythm's* March 1912 issue. See: Manguin, *Landscape at St Tropez* (1905) and *Walk in St Tropez* (1905), both oil on canvas, the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

compositions. Impressionism and Fauvism, however, proved the most influential painting styles, and lead to Peplow's lifelong affinity for light-filled landscapes and the use of bright, clear colours. Another regular contributor was André Dunoyer-Segonzac (1884-1974), a French painter and graphic artist whose stylistic development evidences various affinities including Post-Impressionism, as seen in his high colour palette; Cubism, notably in the geometric reductive treatment of his nudes and later Naturalism, as demonstrated in the refreshed emphasis on lyricism. Segonzac's progression evidences the futility of approaching art historical movements in a strictly linear manner. The 'isms' readily afforded to twentieth-century art movements by art historians, though accurate, were then of less importance than twenty-first century commentary suggests. Artists employing a high colour palette were not automatically Post-Impressionists; nor were those painting café scenes strictly Impressionists. Impressionists proved themselves more in their thematic approach to their subjects rather than in their painterly handling.¹¹⁹

Though its editors were both writers, *Rhythm* was very well illustrated and included many articles on art matters, many of which perpetuated the trend for a greater unity among the various arts, particularly poetry, prose and painting – a trend still current well into the twentieth century as far as the Dada period.¹²⁰ “The Return to Poetry” by Laurence Binyon was one such article.¹²¹ Binyon, whose books on Oriental art, including *Painting in the Far East* (1908) and *Japanese Art* (1909) inspired the poet Ezra Pound,¹²² discusses nineteenth-century artists’ “searching and pitiless quest of truth, their passionate untiring observation” (1.4, 1912: 1). He makes the broad and unsubstantiated claim that “Pre-Raphaelism [sic] and Impressionism” were both “but shifted phases of the same spirit of science working through art and through literature” (ibid.). Binyon theorises about the future of modern art which he perceives “is dissatisfied with itself. It has trodden such an arduous journey ... and it has reached what seemed to be the goal. The image on the eye’s retina; only what the eye sees” (ibid.). And that for too “long ... we [have] been sitting down before Nature and letting her impose herself upon us! Our imaginations have been schooled into passivity....” (ibid.). In conversations with Orage towards the end of her life, Mansfield echoes these same sentiments when she recognises that she too acted as a passive camera and that her attitude stood in need of change. Binyon suggests that the future of Western art

¹¹⁹ For example, Caillebotte’s work is immaculate and not at all sketchy, and yet his contemporary subjects, innovative angles and the melancholy that pervades his paintings, align him with the Impressionists whose cause he championed through private patronage.

¹²⁰ The cultural movement Dada originated in Zurich in World War I and peaked from 1916-1922.

¹²¹ Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), English poet, dramatist and art scholar.

¹²² See Qian Zhaoming. *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art: Pound, Moore, Stevens* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

entails looking the example of the East: “Within the last few years Oriental art has opened its treasures to us.... The secret of this art is in ... [the] doctrine of the Tao – the Way, – the ever-moving, ever changing, eternal and universal rhythm of life” (ibid., 2); and concludes that “Only from the poetic view of the world will come rhythmic simplicity into our art” (ibid.). In part, Binyon’s opinions point back to the Impressionists who were the first to attempt to render that sense of flux and capture the transitory across a broad range of subjects, and while the Naturalists battled with the influence of environment versus heredity, the Impressionists, in the wake of civil war, accepted or at least acknowledged the futility of fighting against the current.

Rhythm was undoubtedly a fertile source of aesthetic theory. M. T. H. Sadleir for instance, discusses Wassily Kandinsky’s (1866-1944) theories surrounding the psychological effect of colours, which the artist likens to musical instruments; and the interconnectedness of painting, music and poetry, which, as Sadleir duly notes, had already been a feature of the Symbolists’ theories, and realised in the work of Verlaine and Rimbaud, the latter of whom, bestowed colour values to vowels. Sadleir argues that “colour can convey a more immediate and subtle appeal to the inner soul than words, and this not only for the reason given by Kandinsky—that it is capable of greater variety of tone—but also from its greater freedom from this same association of ideas” (*Rhythm* 1.4, 1912: 26). These theories sit well within the context of Mansfield’s stories, where the role of colour is far greater than merely description. Sadleir points to Mallarmé’s theories relating to the unconventional arrangement of words to communicate an impression quite at odds with that conveyed when those same words feature as single units; he cites *L’Après midi d’un Faune* (1865-76), as a clear example of this “synthetic word-painting” (ibid. 26).¹²³ The articles, reviews and illustrations in *Rhythm*, and its successor, *The Blue Review*, demonstrate that the magazines were at the forefront of modern art theory and provided a lively forum for both Murry and Mansfield and their numerous contributors. Although financial losses caused *The Blue Review* to cease publication in 1913, Murry had in place other outlets for his art criticism. Employed by the *Westminster Gazette* from April 1912, he assumed the role of arts reviewer from February 1914. His contributions to the *Athenaeum* led to his being offered the role of editor in February 1919, which in turn provided another forum for Mansfield whose novel reviews were published there from April 1919 until December 1920 and her stories in June 1920.

¹²³ Mallarmé’s poem inspired Claude Debussy’s orchestral work *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* (1894) and the ballet, *L’après-midi d’un faune* (1912) by Vaslav Nijinsky; both were significant in the development of Modernism in the arts, and yet another example of the transference of aesthetic ideas transcending the media from which they originated.

Post *Rhythm* and The *Blue Review*

1915, though it brought the tragic death of her brother, proved a fruitful year for Mansfield. Two trips to Paris, in February and May respectively, staying at Carco's flat in the Quai aux Fleurs, inspired Mansfield to write. Trips to Paris in 1908 had cemented her love for this city of "lighted interiors" glimpsed "at night from the top of the tram" and "The picturesque aspect of it all" (CL1:77-78).¹²⁴ Alpers explains that Paris was to Mansfield a city of "visual pleasures" and it was in Paris that she began "The Aloe" which would later become "Prelude" – the story Alpers describes in impressionistic terms as a series of "episodes ... of atmosphere rather than action", "a picture of movement", without a discernable plot, told without recourse to the cause-and-effect structuring of conventional story-telling and instead told from multiple, shifting viewpoints (1982:178, 189-90).¹²⁵ It was also in 1915 that Mansfield was first introduced to the Bloomsbury Group and Garsington set – Garsington being the home of Lady Ottoline Morrell at which Mansfield, along with many artists and writers, congregated to discuss political, literary and artistic matters and to act out plays which reflected their shared obsession for Russian literature, particularly the novels of Dostoevsky, and to indulge the sordid infatuations which they developed for each other. Mansfield made eight trips to Garsington during 1916 and six in 1917 and she corresponded with Morrell almost until her death. At Garsington she read Eliot and Pound. Garsington provided her with a forum for her play-writing and an audience more than willing to participate; here, explains Alpers, her debt to Theocritus and her talent for both mime and pastiche was brought to the fore. Although often tenuous, her relationships with the 'Bloomsberries' – as she was known to call them – including Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Vanessa and Clive Bell, Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey – and with the Garsington crowd, including Aldous Huxley, Dora Carrington, Mark Gertler, Brett and Russell,¹²⁶ ensured she remained up-to-date with developments, criticism and theories in modern art and literature and this is reflected in her writing of the period, which, though intermittent, demonstrates subtle but significant changes and a shift in focus, out of which "Prelude" would confidently emerge.

Although extensive, Mansfield's extant papers do not provide the whole picture, merely being pieces of a larger puzzle; and in charting her responses to and affinities for developments in the arts, both literary and visual, and the various influences under which she wrote the researcher is forced to rely on the recollections of those close to Mansfield.

¹²⁴ KM to Garnett Trowell, 25 October 1908.

¹²⁵ Alpers notes the influence here of Chekov's story *The Steppe*, and Theocritus's XVth Idyll.

¹²⁶ Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), British writer and author. Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), British writer and critic. Dora de Houghton Carrington (1893-1932), British painter and decorative artist. Mark Gertler (1891-1939) British painter.

Conversations with Orage, Richard Murry and Brett with whom she discussed movements in art and her own artistic impulses and aspirations, would no doubt have contained many of the telling details that would provide further evidence of her link to the aesthetics of the Impressionists specifically; certainly, Brett's extant letters from Mansfield reveal more than any other the writer's specific thoughts on art. Orage, whose habit was to burn all private correspondence, claims Mansfield was "more explicit" in many of her conversations, especially regarding literature and her own artistic aims, than her letters and diaries reveal (1). In an interview undertaken in 1924, Orage recalls their final conversation at Fontainebleau shortly before her death:

'Suppose' she used to say, 'that I could succeed in writing as well as Shakespeare. It would be lovely, but what then? There is something wanting in literary art even at its highest. Literature is not enough.' 'The greatest literature', she said, 'is still only mere literature if it has not purpose commensurate with its art. Presence or absence of purpose distinguishes literature from mere literature, and the elevation of the purpose distinguishes literature within literature. That is merely literature has no object other than to please. Minor literature has a didactic object. But the greatest literature of all – the literature that scarcely exists – has not merely an aesthetic object, nor merely a didactic object, but in addition, a creative object; that of subjecting its readers to a real and at the same time illuminating experience. Major literature, in short, is an initiation into truth' (1924:1).

Here, Mansfield seems to be pooling the ideas gleaned from her early readings – Pater, Wilde, Maupassant (see *NB1*:164-65), and the theories espoused in *Rhythm*, amalgamating them with her own ideas which reflect her lifelong impressionistic tendencies which constituted exposing the truth by bringing it into the light, as revealed in a journal entry of 1921:

reality cannot become the ideal, the dream, and it is not the business of the artist to ... impose his vision of Life upon the existing world. Art is not an attempt to reconcile existence with ... [the artist's] vision: it is an attempt to create his own world *in* this world. We single out, we bring into the light, we put up higher (*NB2*:267).

In piecing together evidence of Mansfield's artistic affinities, Richard Murry's recollections are equally revealing. In an interview published in the *New Zealand Listener*, Murry tells Moira Taylor he first met Mansfield when he was only about twelve years of age: "I was in the most fortunate position of being influenced by Katherine at her liveliest, her most superficial" (11 May 1974, 18-19). He recalls that at this time,

[London] was alive with ideas spawned by new developments in painting on the Continent, the first wave of jazz from America and the brilliant exoticism and new colours of the visiting Russian Ballet. Katherine, an extraordinary individualist, wasted no time absorbing new ideas. He remembers the sensation she caused in her high heels and coloured stockings, the mode from Paris, unusual in London at the time and her Spanish-Japanese hairdo and little velvet jackets (*ibid.*).

Murry explains that their friendship developed further when he was seventeen and she was living in her own studio at Chelsea, a year before she married his brother in 1918. Taylor writes, “An aspiring artist himself, Murry deeply admired Katherine’s independent bohemian style and was flattered to take her on jaunts to the music halls, theatre, ballet and to his own personal interests, the Tate and National Galleries; ‘She was very interested in Degas,’ he says.” There is no mention of Degas, nor of his work in any of Mansfield’s extant papers and yet, of all the Impressionists, Mansfield’s work – the effects she achieves – and her own work habits, correspond most closely with Degas’s. Murry’s comments are, therefore, particularly illuminating.

Letters and diary entries from throughout her career reinforce that, fundamentally, Mansfield continued to share the Impressionists’ preoccupations and goals. In a letter of 1916 to Russell – to whom she “talk[ed] about ... all kinds of ‘odd’ things – like ... what is it one really wishes to convey in writing ...” – Mansfield describes her purpose and methods and reveals her artistic aspirations and creative vision (CL1:309):¹²⁷

Its true that my desire is to bring all that I see and feel into harmony with that rare ‘vision’ of life of which we spoke.... life never bores me. It is such strange delight to observe people and to try to understand them.... to arrive late at night in strange cities or to come into little harbours just at pink dawn ... to push through the heavy door into little cafés and to watch the pattern people make among tables & bottles and glasses, to watch women when they are off their guard.... To air oneself among these things, to seek them, to explore them and then to go apart and detach oneself from them – and to write ... (CL1:287-88).¹²⁸

Mansfield’s description calls to mind works such as Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies Bergère* which, like Degas’s café scenes, emphasises artificial light effects and reflections in glass or mirrored surfaces, creating confusion by blurring the boundaries between truth and illusion, and hinting at the ambiguous relationships between male and female within these environments (see Chapter 5). Her comment regarding watching women who are unaware of her gaze aligns her with the Impressionists who make this the subject of so many of their paintings, particularly Degas who epitomises the voyeur as revealed in his numerous intimate toilette scenes and snapshots of backstage at the ballet. Her summary is reminiscent too of the evocative descriptions of the city found in the work of Flaubert and Zola. And finally, Mansfield’s letter to Russell also points to her reading of Baudelaire and his notion of the *flâneur* – a keenly observant and yet detached spectator, albeit her

¹²⁷ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 22 May 1917.

¹²⁸ KM to Bertrand Russell, 17 December 1916.

commentary here seems less voyeuristic than that which characterises her youthful diary entries when she was exploring her bisexuality.¹²⁹

As Alpers's suggests, following the diagnosis of tuberculosis, Mansfield's creativity, which her association with the Bloomsbury and Garsington sets had given further impetus to, altered the nature of her work more profoundly and brought about a renewal; henceforth, Alpers perceives that her work turned "its back upon Goodyear's "café mirrors, dews and grasses, and outward appearances generally" [and] became, instead, an inward quest" (237). As has been argued in Chapter 2, the Impressionists were not primarily or solely interested in outward appearances. In fact, by illuminating the external character of a subject, they drew attention to and thus exposed its inner nature. The same theory applies to Mansfield whose tendency to assume a mask I see as indicative of her interest in the dichotomy between surfaces and interiors. Contrary to Alpers's reading, Mansfield did not, in fact, turn from outward appearances then, or at any other time.

Mansfield's last entries in her diaries and the content of her final letters reveal little of the direction in which she saw her literature developing. O'Sullivan explains that her final year was a search for, if not a physical cure, then at least a spiritual one, but that "her interest in the short story form diminished" (CL5:31). The lack of more direct reference to Mansfield's literary aims within her late papers (of 1921-3), is something Orage believes he can explain. He claims that late in 1920 Mansfield became increasingly secretive, not even confiding within her diaries or personal letters the plans she had for a new body of stories in a different style. However, according to Orage who was her mentor at this time, she confided much to him, particularly during his visits to the Gurdjieff Institute in her last days. He recounts her new formula: "To widen first the scope of my camera, and then to employ it for a conscious purpose – that of representing life not merely as it appears to a certain attitude, but as it appears to another and different attitude, a creative attitude" (cited in Orage 3). Mansfield confesses to having previously:

made ... observations ... of people, however cruel they may [have] seem[ed] I did observe these things, and I had to set them down. I've been a camera. But that's just the point. I've been a selective camera, and it has been my attitude that has determined the selection; and with the result that my slices of life (thank you Mr. Phillipots!) have been partial, misleading, and a little malicious, further, they have no other purpose than to record my attitude, which itself stood in need of change if it was to become active instead of passive (ibid.).

Mansfield's summation of her early methods – a selective camera, a passive attitude – is entirely in keeping with Kronegger's definitions of impressionism. Orage's recollections,

¹²⁹ See NB1:99-101, early June 1907, regarding her affair with Edith Bendall. See also NB1:103-104, 29 June 1907, regarding her passion for Maata Mahupuku with whom she was at Miss Swainson's and had later seen in London. Finally, see Alpers 1982: 46-47, 49, 91, 94, 96.

assuming that they are reliable, suggest that Mansfield's winning formula corresponds with that of the Impressionist painters. Though she may not have acknowledged this, the parallels are too close to deny.

CHAPTER 4

DOMESTIC INTERIORS

Mansfield's best loved stories, and those which are considered amongst her greatest literary achievements, are the ones which draw upon her colonial upbringing. These stories take domesticity as their subject matter and in them the writer pays homage to the lifestyle she had rejected upon leaving New Zealand. Mansfield observes the smallest, most homely details: "even how the laundry basket squeaked at '75'", and the "Snip! Snap!" undoing of grandma's stays (NB2:33, "The Voyage" (1921) 326). As a woman, and an *artiste* of her time, Mansfield privileges the role and place of the modern female. She depicts women's rites of passage: childhood, adolescence, maturity, pregnancy and motherhood; the cycles of life and death; and the monotony of everyday occurrences, including the ritual of the toilette. Mansfield considers the role of the bourgeois wife, and exposes the peculiarities of bourgeois marriage and of modern suburban living. Her characters – both young and old, male and female – are depicted struggling to abide by the static, or stale social conventions which govern their personal and professional lives while simultaneously negotiating the new and increasingly fluid perimeters within those realms – something Mansfield alludes to in the children's playacting scene in "Prelude":

'I don't think you ought to introduce me to the servant. I think I ought to just begin talking to her.' 'Well, she's more of a lady-help than a servant and you do introduce lady-helps, I know, because Mrs Samuel Josephs had one.' 'Oh, well, it doesn't matter,' said the servant, carelessly, beating up a chocolate custard with half a broken clothes peg (40).

The concept of the domestic interior in art was not new in Mansfield's time. In English literature, domestic subjects traditionally served as vehicles for moral instruction, a theme which was perpetuated within eighteenth-century novels – epitomised in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) – and which informed mid-nineteenth-century novels, such as those by the Brontë sisters, though these became less overtly didactic, and increasingly enjoyable, with Dickens's novels offering a readable mixture of scandalous indiscretion and moral lesson.¹ In the visual arts, fifteenth-century Flemish painters incorporated homely details within their portraits to provide clues to the sitter's character, tastes, position and lifestyle.² The domestic interior was a popular and familiar theme in Dutch seventeenth-

¹ For example, Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847); Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), and *Great Expectations* (1860-61).

² Frances Borzello – whose recent book constitutes a survey of the domestic interior in painting – cites Jan van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Portrait* (1434), oil on panel, National Gallery, London, as the first true domestic interior in painting by virtue of the equal attention accorded to rendering the details of the room and to its occupants, whose marriage is being depicted, *At home: The Domestic Interior in Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006) 26.

century genre painting, within which the subject's domestic situation served to reflect and uphold their society's value system, meaning that most were "imbued ... with a moral subtext" (Borzello 30).³ This tendency was upheld by eighteenth-century artists, such as William Hogarth – most famously in his series *Marriage à-la-Mode* (1743-45), from which Mansfield may or may not have borrowed the title for her own story.⁴ The domestic interior was further popularised by the Impressionists, for whom the subject was highly favoured, both for its accessibility and for its everydayness. The Impressionists dispensed with the moralistic narrative inherent in European painterly scenes of domesticity, right up until the mid-nineteenth century. Instead, they told modern stories – evident in both the economy of telling and in the viewpoints they adopted. By virtue of her voracious consumption of art and literature, Mansfield's domestic interiors owe something to the legacy of, amongst others, these aforementioned artists who were her cultural predecessors. However, drawing from domestic spaces became the prerogative of the Impressionists and they made it their own in a distinct way. In particular, Impressionism proved a good medium for exposing disjunctions between tradition and change and thus offered crucial lessons from which I believe Mansfield learned. Mansfield's ambiguous evocations of motherhood, for instance, seem to align her more closely with female Impressionists, Morisot and Cassatt, than with the Brontës; and her family portraits provide interesting models for comparison with Degas's painterly equivalents. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to demonstrate how Mansfield's treatment of domestic subjects functions within the context of Impressionism – both pictorially and thematically – and to consider which works might legitimately have influenced her own representations.

In their ambiguous representations of women and children, bourgeois marriage and domesticity, Cassatt, Morisot, Degas, Caillebotte and, to a lesser degree, Manet – artists whose careers were most active some three decades before Mansfield's, but whose achievements were still influencing avant-garde painting during her own career – provided Mansfield with subjects and themes she identified with. They also validated her desire to fictionalise her own experiences, both in New Zealand and abroad, particularly those relating to the role and condition of modern women within the domestic and public realms. Although an entirely different medium, painterly Impressionism provided Mansfield with an

³ See, for example, Pieter de Hooch, *A Mother and Child with its Head in her Lap* (1658-60), oil on canvas, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, which celebrates the maternal role and the importance of hearth and home.

⁴ William Hogarth (1697–1764), *Marriage à-la-Mode* (1743-45), oil on canvas, National Gallery, London; entitled respectively, *The Marriage Settlement*, *The Tête à Tête*, *The Inspection*, *The Toilette*, *The Bagnio*, *The Lady's Death*. Hogarth's series of six works constitutes a scrutiny of both the aristocracy and the newly moneyed bourgeois class. The artist depicts the arranged marriage, and subsequent ruin, of the son of a bankrupt Earl to the daughter of a prosperous merchant.

alternative and yet proven formula by which she might mould her “copy”: “we have to take into account and find new expressions, new moulds, for our thoughts and feelings” (CL3:82).⁵ In addition to the domestic subjects they chose to address, the sensibilities demonstrated in Morisot and Cassatt’s paintings particularly, provided Mansfield with positive affirmation of her rapidly developing ideas and aesthetic ideals – some of which are now recognised as definitively feminist. For, in spite of the greater social freedoms Mansfield enjoyed in her short life, as an early twentieth-century female artist operating within the male dominated world of letters, she was, nevertheless, fighting some of the same battles and still facing many of the same prejudices that had informed and influenced the work of those who had gone before her.⁶

Rejecting the Domestic Interior: Mansfield’s Bid for Independence

Upon their return to New Zealand following their London schooling all three of the elder Beauchamp girls were restless. Like Mansfield, Charlotte laid recriminations on her home city, claiming it was “absolutely devoid of art and so naturally the people are most uninteresting ... I can’t tell you how miserable it is ...” (cited in Alpers 1982:42). Ultimately, though, it was only Mansfield who refused to accept the respectable bourgeois lifestyle her parents had in mind for her.⁷ In a letter to Vera, she writes, “You know exactly what this life is like and what life means here... I can’t stand this life much longer ...” (CL1:42).⁸ Mansfield remained determined upon a professional career in the arts – a career that she believed was impossible in her native New Zealand:

I know I ought to get to London to work & study. I have been writing a great deal here but I can’t do all that I know is in me.... You know that, situated as I am – I shall never make all that I mean to make of my life – Also – were I not convinced that I have a real *call* a duty which I owe to myself I’d give the project up (ibid.).

She campaigned tirelessly for her release from the shackles of Beauchamp domesticity and to be allowed to return to England to become a writer.

⁵ KM to JMM, 10 November 1919. Regarding Woolf’s *Night and Day* which Mansfield found wanting in many respects. Anna Snaith describes it as “a novel about social transition”, though not entirely experimental in terms of technique, with the structure adhering to conventional modes of narration. However, it did address the concerns and condition of the modern woman, “Night and Day”, *The Literary Encyclopedia* (9 March 2001), accessed 22 September 2008: <http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=3287>

⁶ One instance of this prejudice or gender stereotyping occurred when Mansfield was appointed the role of fashion editor for *Rhythm*’s short-lived successor *The Blue Review*, a decision Alpers feels must have been made in her absence, 1982:157.

⁷ Mansfield’s sisters were quick to settle into bourgeois respectability. Kathleen Jones writes about Mansfield’s reluctance – inability even – to explain to her sisters her reasons for entering the Gurdjieff Institute in the last months of her life: “How could Jeanne and Chaddie, with their Kensington and country house mentalities, ever understand what she’s doing here”, *Katherine Mansfield: A Biography*, to be released Spring 2010; Introduction and Chapter One, online at <http://www.katherinemansfield.net/biography/chapter1.htm>.

⁸ KM to Vera Beauchamp, late March 1908; Vera was vacationing in Sydney.

While Mansfield did not identify herself as a feminist, nor align herself with the political movement, she espoused proto-feminist theories nevertheless:⁹

I feel that I do now realise, dimly, what women in the future will be capable of achieving. They truly, as yet, have never had their chance. Talk of our enlightened days and our emancipated country – pure nonsense. We are firmly held in the self-fashioned chains of slavery. Yes – now I see that they *are* self-fashioned and must be self-removed (NB1:110).¹⁰

Mansfield's feminism, according to Fullbrook, "came as a matter of course, so much so that overt discussion of it as a political principle is absent from her writing while its underlying presence is everywhere" (22). Mansfield claimed to have rejected five marriage proposals and instead remained focused on the literary success she believed awaited her in London.¹¹ To her cousin in England, she asserts, "I am so keen upon all women having a *definite* future.... The idea of sitting still and waiting for a husband is absolutely revolting – and it really is the attitude of a great many girls" (CL1:18).¹² In this respect, her sentiments echo Cassatt's who felt that "women should be *someone* and not *something*" (cited in Pollock 1980:6).

In 1908, at just nineteen years of age, Mansfield returned to London, unchaperoned, and provided for with a generous allowance by her father; this financial support continued for the remainder of her life meaning that she never fully escaped the patriarchal chains she railed against. Seven years later, Mansfield began questioning the life she had chosen – a life she found lonely, isolating and not entirely fulfilling. Walking in the gardens of the Notre Dame, she observes that:

Every bench and every chair was occupied by a mother or a nurse or a grandfather and little staggering babies with spades and buckets made mud pies.... after I had watched a long time I realised I was in the middle of a dream. Why haven't I got a real "home", a real life – Why haven't I got ... two babies who rush at me and clasp my knees – Im not a girl – Im a woman. I *want* things. Shall I ever have them? (CL1:177).¹³

Having rejected conventional domesticity, Mansfield now regretted the rigid career-oriented lifestyle she had built for herself. Enjoying very little reprieve from her self-imposed writing schedule, Mansfield laments: "all this love and joy ... fights for an outlet – and all this life drying up, like milk, in an old breast" (ibid.). Her letters demonstrate that she perceived it to

⁹ In her early career, Mansfield attended a Suffrage meeting, but was decidedly put off by the "strange looking ... deadly earnest.... women who looked like very badly upholstered chairs", KM to Garnett Trowell, 17 September 1908, CL1:60.

¹⁰ May 1908. Alpers notes that New Zealand's progressive legislation, to which KM implicitly refers, included voting rights for women in 1893 and the establishment of the old-age pension in 1898, 1982:61.

¹¹ See KM to Sylvia Payne, 4 March 1908, CL1:40.

¹² KM to Sylvia Payne, 24 April 1906.

¹³ KM to JMM, 7 May 1915.

be impossible to have both a happy home life and a successful career; in fact, it was possible, as the example of Morisot demonstrates. Like Morisot – whose images of domesticity evidence a constant negotiation between her marital and parental responsibilities and her career – Mansfield’s ambivalence filtered into and informed her work. Continually, she arrived back at the realisation that, whichever the path, “how ... isolated we each of us are – at the last” (*CL4*:252).¹⁴ This belief became the most pervasive theme in her stories, resulting in blunt images of domestic entrapment which undermine conventional notions of femininity and family in a manner which begs for comparison with the domestic interiors of the Impressionists.

Morisot and Cassatt: Operating in a Limited Sphere

Morisot and Cassatt enjoyed successful professional careers¹⁵ receiving due recognition from their colleagues, but only limited fair acknowledgement from the contemporaneous art public and within pre-1970 scholarly art historical accounts.¹⁶ Their modern painterly style, artistic aims and exhibition history firmly align them with the leading French Impressionist painters, including Monet, Degas and Renoir, with whom they associated and exhibited. However, the narrow subject matter of their respective oeuvres points directly to the more limited sphere in which they moved. Like Manet, Degas and Caillebotte, both women were from comfortable, upper-middle class families and enjoyed the entertainments that their social class afforded them, attending the ballet and theatre regularly. However, while Manet and Degas were able to move through the streets of Paris at their leisure, assuming the gendered role described by Baudelaire, Morisot and Cassatt enjoyed no such liberties. Adler explains that during this era, women, particularly those of the middle and upper classes, operated within a sphere “where closely observed rituals of social behaviour prevailed” (1990:37). Neither artist was able to go about unaccompanied – only women of the lower classes and of dubious morals did so.¹⁷ Nor were they permitted to join their colleagues at their regular soirées where contemporary artistic debates prevailed. Instead, their rightful

¹⁴ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 24 July 1921.

¹⁵ Tellingly, her marriage certificate (of 1874), her daughter’s birth certificate (of 1878) and her death certificate (of 1895) record Morisot as being “without a profession”, see Suzanne Glover Lindsay, “Berthe Morisot: Nineteenth-Century Woman as Professional”, *Perspectives* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990) 79.

¹⁶ Adler and Garb explain that post 1970 feminist art historical scholarship constitutes a re-evaluation of the role, place and achievement of female artists and has endeavoured to attend to the omissions in so-called authoritative and definitive art historical accounts; see: Introduction to *The Correspondence of Berthe Morisot*.

¹⁷ Susan Buck-Morss observes that “The popular literature of flanerrie may have referred to Paris as a ‘virgin forest,’ but no woman found roaming there alone was expected to be one”, cited in Pollock, 1998:37.

place was seen to be at home and their “paramount function ... to provide domestic bliss” (ibid.).¹⁸

The conventions which governed Cassatt and Morisot’s lives, and the limited experiences they had available to them, dictated the subject matter of their paintings which feature almost exclusively women and children, within three distinct spaces: domestic interiors, domestic exteriors – by which I mean flower gardens which are an extension of the home – and at the more public, mixed-gendered environment of the theatre, where the codes that dictated their behaviour within the home informed their behaviour outside of it. A letter to her sister reveals that this had long been a contentious issue for Morisot: “I am going to do my mother and Yves in the garden; you see I am reduced to doing the same things over and over again. Yesterday I arranged a bouquet of poppies and snowballs, and could not find the courage to begin it” (Rouart 38).¹⁹ Nevertheless, determined to meet Baudelaire’s injunction, Morisot and Cassatt took what was available to them within their restricted sphere – specifically, the “small-scale daily rituals and occurrences” – and represented them using modern painterly techniques (Adler 1990:38). The iconography was the stock standard of the female artist but their treatment of domestic subjects was as innovative as their daring painterly handling.²⁰ While this seems to have escaped the notice of the majority of early critics, post 1970 feminist scholarship has afforded new insights into the nuances at play within the respective artist’s oeuvres and such findings reveal links with Mansfield’s concerns.

The Feminine Tradition

The catalogue of the Salon of 1864 – at which both Morisot and her sister, Edma, debuted – lists contributions from about eighty women painters, which demonstrates that, although marginalised, women were actively pursuing careers within this patriarchal domain. It was not, however, considered an appropriate career for any female and the nineteenth-century bourgeois woman was not encouraged to make a living from her paint-box. Certainly young women were encouraged to ‘draw from nature’ and there existed an amateur feminine tradition which encouraged proficiency in watercolour and pastel – something Morisot’s teacher, Guichard called “minor drawing room accomplishments” (cited in Rouart 19). In 1858, Guichard was both impressed and shocked at the abilities Morisot and Edma already possessed and implored their mother to reconsider allowing them to continue on a path

¹⁸ Additionally, nineteenth-century propriety meant that aside from family members, female artists were denied access to male models, which further limited the range of their subject matter. Griselda Pollock lists the handful of portraits Cassatt executed of men, 1980:11.

¹⁹ Berthe Morisot to Edma Pontillon, 11 May 1869.

²⁰ See Charles F. Stuckey & William P. Scott, *Berthe Morisot, Impressionist* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1987) 65, 69-71.

which could jeopardise the respectability of their home. In order to demonstrate just how limiting contemporary attitudes were towards the advancement of women, Griselda Pollock quotes from Mrs. Elis's popular book *Family Monitor and Domestic Guide* (New York, 1844):

... the writer is [not] one who would advocate, as essential to woman, any extraordinary degree of intellectual attainment, especially if confined to one particular branch of study ... To be able to do a great many things tolerably well, is of infinitely more value to a woman than to be able to excel in any one. By the former, she may render herself generally useful; by the latter she may dazzle for [merely] an hour ... (13).

Whether amateur or professional, a "woman's world" was seen as the only appropriate subject matter for a female artist, and the qualities that the jurists, critics and art public expected to see conveyed in the works of a "*peinture feminine*" included "women's most appreciable qualities: sparkling coqueties, gracious charm, and above all tender emotion" (Garb 1990:61, 59, 63).²¹

According to most contemporary criticism, Morisot and Cassatt's work met this criterion: Raoul Sertat perceived Morisot's work as "entirely imbued with the essential virtues of her sex" (cited by Garb, 1990:59). Mauclair labelled it a "feminine art", the characteristics of which, explains Garb, included "its sensuality, its dependence on sensation ... and its capriciousness" (ibid. 58). Cassatt's work was also understood within the limiting context of the feminine tradition. Contemporary reviewer Joris Karl Huysmans draws parallels between Cassatt and Caillebotte's painting, "but [Cassatt's is] more harmonious, more elegant ... a flutter of feminine nerves passes through her painting" (cited in Pollock 1980:23). Huysmans's opinion undermines Cassatt's belief that, in France, "women do not have to fight for recognition ... if they do serious work" (ibid. 6). If women were to insist on professional careers, the genre and manner in which they painted or wrote would have to be defined as and designated feminine – as critic, Roger Marx in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1907, intimates: "The term impressionist announces a manner of perception in noting what is beautiful which corresponds so well to the hyperaesthesia and sensitivity of a woman" (ibid. 21).

Morisot and Cassatt would find it difficult to escape from the concept of the feminine tradition, and perhaps this owes as much to the anxiety brought about by the independence they demonstrated in eschewing the Salon and exhibiting with the avant-garde, and to their unprecedented achievement within that realm, as it does to their feminine subject matter.²²

²¹ Here, Garb quotes scientific populist, Gustave Le Bon in his "La Psychologie des femmes et les effets de leur éducation actuelle," *Revue scientifique* 46 (11 October 1890).

²² The anxiety was mutual. The art public felt it owing the reasons stated above (see Stuckey & Scott 69) and Morisot and Cassatt felt it too which is why they more often than not chose to paint domestic scenes (see Pollock 1980:10-11 and Stuckey & Scott 65).

Successful female artists were perceived as not only a threat to the patriarchal domain of the arts but to society in general. At this rapidly industrialising and politically-turbulent time, women who honoured their “natural duties” were held to be the saviours of France’s future (Garb 1990:60). Not wishing to be associated with the amateur feminine tradition, Cassatt refused to allow selected works then owned by Durand-Ruel to be shown within an exhibition organised by the Ladies Art League in Paris – “I believe that you will not profit at all in showing my work in this exhibition” and she was disappointed that he had allowed her work to be shown in amateur female artists exhibitions in America: “I doubt that this practice will do me any good, nor you” (Mathews 1984:267).²³ Nor did Cassatt wish colour reproductions of her pastels to be included within the fashion magazine *La Mode*.²⁴ However, although as an Impressionist Cassatt rebelled against the establishment and, in remaining unmarried and pursuing a professional career, against society in general, she nevertheless acknowledged a widely held ideology: “After all a woman’s vocation in life is to bear children” (cited in Pollock 1980:7). By contrast, as an “elegant hostess ... [and] a suitably womanly woman” Morisot was considered an “acceptable female artist” (Garb 1990:60). However, although Morisot enjoyed a thirty year career, French late nineteenth-century society still perceived her primary role as that of a “bourgeois wife and mother” (Lindsay 1980:79). Garb observes that for most critics, Morisot’s “work was full of freshness and delicacy, executed with a lightness of brush, a finesse which flows from a grace which is entirely feminine”; thus, her art was perceived as “unthreatening to the social order” (1990:61-63).²⁵ Huysmans, however, finds in Morisot’s work “a turbulence of agitated and tense nerves” (ibid. 63).²⁶ By contrast, Huysmans praises Cassatt’s images of “quiet bourgeois scenes painted with a delicate and charming tenderness” (cited in Pollock, 1980:12).²⁷ He observes “the happy contentment, the quiet friendliness.... This is family life painted with distinction and with love ...” (ibid.). Although positive, Huysmans’s comments are condescending and effectively relegate Cassatt’s achievements to the so-called feminine tradition due to both the physical or literal handling of the subject matter: “only a woman can pose a child, dress it, adjust pins ...”, and to the subject itself, which “only a woman can paint ...” (ibid.). Huysmans’s evaluation of Morisot’s work is closer to the truth – and something Morisot’s letters confirm. Like Mansfield’s, Morisot’s letters provide a telling contrast to the idealised mythic representation of the enigmatic, muse-like figure which so

²³ Cassatt to Durand-Ruel, 22 January 1898.

²⁴ Cassatt to Paul Durand-Ruel, 1903, following a request from the art dealer Monsieur Manzi of Manzi, Joyant et Cie., in Paris (see Mathews 1984:284).

²⁵ Garb quotes from “L’œuvre de Berthe Morisot”, *Moniteur des arts* 2227. 12530 (March 1896); original author not noted.

²⁶ Review of 1883.

²⁷ Review of 1881.

many accounts of Morisot construct.²⁸ Furthermore, his summation applies equally as well to Mansfield's most interesting work. Mansfield's stories and Morisot and Cassatt's images of domesticity, cry domestic entrapment – a description which far better characterises the feminine tradition.

Mansfield is now recognised as one of the founders of modernist fiction and her achievements are discussed alongside those of Woolf, Joyce and Eliot. Prior to more recent scholarship, her oeuvre had been subject to the same prejudices which devalued the achievements of the female Impressionists. According to New Zealand novelist and short story writer, Frank Sargeson (1903-1982), Mansfield's stories are "mainly about children", and throughout her work there is "a rather startling lack of variety" in her characters, most of who are "unprepared ... young women" (32). He notes that for one English critic, Kathleen Raine, Mansfield evidently "lacked the gift for inventing characters" (ibid.). However, Mansfield did not aim to invent characters; like the Impressionists, she took them from real life. While Morisot was held to have feminised Manet's art,²⁹ Sargeson implies that Mansfield merely feminised Chekhov's short stories, noting her particularly feminine method of presenting the narrative through a character's inner thoughts – in fact, this became a modernist trait irrespective of the author's gender. Sargeson, whose evaluation of Mansfield's achievements is entirely unsatisfactory, identifies her "tendency to be concerned with the part rather than the whole", and her reliance upon "the isolated details and moments of life" – techniques which he fails to recognise as those of an Impressionist's, but which he feels characterise works within the feminine tradition of which he claims Richardson, with his epistolary novel, *Pamela*, is the founder (29). Sargeson describes *Pamela* as a "minor novel.... saturated with ... feminine sensibility", and concludes that Mansfield too belongs within "the feminine ... [and thus] the *minor* tradition", effectively echoing the sentiments of Cassatt and Morisot's contemporaneous critics (29).³⁰ Even Murry asserted that "In scope Katherine Mansfield was a tiny artist; but because she was a perfectly pure, and perfectly submissive, artist she was a great one" (90). A claim Mansfield would have refuted citing Wilde: "It is only the Philistine who seeks to measure a personality by the vulgar test of production. Life itself is an Art" (NB1:164).³¹ In an early letter to her sister,

²⁸ See Adler and Garb Introduction to *The Correspondence of Berthe Morisot*.

²⁹ Garb explains, "While many critics commented on her indebtedness to Manet, most praised her for successfully transforming his art into one of grace and charm befitting a lady of her class and background. She translated his lessons into 'a language which is very much her own'", 1990: 60-61. Garb quotes from from "L'Oeuvre de Berthe Morisot", *Moniteur des arts*, 2227 (30 March 1896) 125.

³⁰ New Zealand novelist David Ballantyne (1924-1986), in turn labelled Sargeson a "splendid miniaturist", cited by Lawrence Jones, 1998, "'An appropriate New Zealand language': the making of critical realism", 170-174, 171.

³¹ Late April-May, 1909.

Mansfield outlines those characteristics of “feminine [literary] productions” she obviously wished to avoid herself (CL1:37);³² recommending Mrs Henry Dudeney’s “brilliant book” which she cites as “clever from start to close ... alive with epigrams written in a fluent, fascinating style” but “Like most feminine productions – there is much introspection ... and the plot is the inevitable two men and a capricious incorrigibly dimpled girl” (ibid.).³³ Primarily, Mansfield admires Dudeney’s portrayal of modernity: “She catches the very quintessence of the suburban atmosphere” – which is of course, precisely what Mansfield would achieve within her own domestic interiors (ibid.).

Like Morisot and Cassatt, Mansfield privileges the interior world of her female characters – both psychologically and physically. If, as Sargeson claims, this is basis enough to consign Mansfield to the feminine tradition, which, in literature at least, is dominated by love stories with happy endings – Richardson, Austen – how does one reconcile the *femme seule* theme prevalent within her work? As evidenced in a number of her stories, including “Six Years After” (1921), “Je ne parle pas français”, “Marriage à la Mode” (1921), “Bliss”, and “The Lady’s Maid” (1920), Mansfield did not subscribe to happily-ever-after. Rather, in fictionalising her own experiences and observations of others within her immediate environment – she demonstrated an allegiance to Impressionism, which her reading of Baudelaire helped to ignite. She articulated as much in a letter of 1921: “life and work are two things indivisible. It’s only by being true to life that I can be true to art” (CL4:170).³⁴ Thus she depicts those small-scale daily rituals that her predecessors had immortalised in paint, indicating that not only was she influenced by their imagery but that despite the more modern times in which she lived, if not strictly governed by the social conventions which had informed her privileged colonial upbringing, she was at least aware of those “Custom[s which] hedge... [a woman] in” (NB1:101).³⁵

“The Suitable Appropriate Existence”

The Impressionists’ domestic portraits of women show them participating in the very conventional and genteel lifestyle that their social status affords them; specifically, they draw attention to the daily rituals and social customs which dictated how their days were organised. Mansfield explicitly mocked this life – though it was her cultural inheritance – calling it “The Suitable Appropriate Existence” and describing it as follows: “The days full of perpetual Society functions, the hours full of clothes discussions – the waste of life. The stifling atmosphere would kill me ...” (NB1:67). Various Impressionist paintings can be

³² KM to Vera Beauchamp, 17 January 1908.

³³ Alice Dudeney, *The Orchard Thief* (1907).

³⁴ KM to ? [MS lacking]; written at Villa Isola Bella, Menton, early 1921.

³⁵ 1 May 1907.

viewed as a series which provide a narrative that supports Mansfield's fears.³⁶ One recalls Pearl Button's mother "In the kitching, ironing-because-its-Tuesday" (520), Laura's reluctance to be seen eating "bread-and-butter... out of doors" ("The Garden Party" 246), and Constantia's tentative suggestion that the dressing-gowns be dyed black – fearing that their mourning might otherwise seem insincere ("The Daughters of the Late Colonel"). Mansfield's writing is everywhere permeated by an awareness of the ways in which women are constrained by the codes society constructs about sexuality and gender; however, Mansfield pushes these evocations further than the Impressionists by ridiculing the expectations that were placed upon woman of the middle and upper classes.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century well-born young women were expected to be accomplished in appropriately feminine pursuits. In addition to painting in watercolour, these included the ability to play a musical instrument, to sing, embroider, crochet, and arrange flowers. Both Morisot and Cassatt duly attend to these subjects.³⁷ Pollock explains that within the middle and upper classes these skills were considered social necessities (1980:13). Mansfield and her sisters met the criterion – Vera painted and composed music, Charlotte sang and fashioned camisoles, Mansfield sang, played the cello and wrote poetry.³⁸ Often at their father's request, young women would then employ these skills when entertaining to help entice a husband. This ideology was long-standing, widespread and perpetuated in painting, illustrations and literature by artists and writers and not just in Impressionism.³⁹ Such ideas were just as current amongst Mansfield's contemporaries. Tomalin writes that both Vera and Kathleen received piano lessons and accompanied by Charlotte's singing "were prepared to entertain guests around the ebony piano on its dais" (16). Tomalin also points out that even the cargo ship *Niwaru* on which the Beauchamps sailed for England in 1903 provided its small number of female passengers "with a clavichord and a sewing machine as well as a caged canary" (19). Alpers notes that Margaret Wishart, a fellow student at Beauchamp Lodge and the daughter of a Rear Admiral, who "was less driven by ambition and much more likely to make a contented marriage ... had

³⁶ See Morisot, *Woman at her Toilette* (c.1875), oil on canvas, painting currently missing; formerly Private Collection, France; Cassatt, *The Fitting* (1891), colour print with drypoint, softground, and aquatint, The National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C., Chester Dale Collection; Cassatt, *A Cup of Tea* (1880), oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts; Morisot, *Figure of a Woman (Before the Theatre)*, (1875-76), oil on canvas, Galerie Schröder und Leisewitz, Kunsthandel, Bremen, Germany.

³⁷ See Cassatt, *Lydia Crocheting in the Garden at Marly* (1880), oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; *A Musical Party* (1874), oil on canvas, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris; Morisot, *Julie Playing the Violin* (1894), oil on canvas, Mr Herman Mayer; *Lucie Léon at the Piano* (1892), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

³⁸ See CL1:42.

³⁹ See James Jacques Tissot, *Hush* aka *The Concert* (1875), oil on canvas, Manchester City Art Galleries, England.

been expected to spend her days trailing round naval stations as a musical ornament to her parent's life, in Malta or wherever they might be posted" (1982:66). Mansfield addresses this theme: Jose "want[s] to hear what the piano sounds like, just in case I'm asked to sing this afternoon" ("The Garden Party" 250); Beryl, "pouting at pretending to be a little girl when she was asked to play the guitar", revels in the attention it affords her ("Prelude" 59); one also recalls Beryl's painting of "surprised-looking clematis" (ibid. 52). Mansfield also uses this theme to highlight class distinctions: in an imaginary dialogue with her employer, Alice acknowledges, "I may be only a common servant girl as doesn't know how to play the guitar but ..." ("Prelude" 49, KM's ellipsis). Citing Susan Gubar, Mary Paul suggests that Bertha's fruit arranging in "Bliss" and the artistic vocabulary employed to describe the action may represent Mansfield's attempt at "redefining art so that it ceases to exclude woman's crafts and instead pays tribute to the domestic mythology of the female community" (219).⁴⁰ I disagree with Gubar entirely. Mansfield is highlighting the limited opportunities women had for artistic expression; her characterisation here is almost mocking. Like Paul, I understand the story as a satire, particularly targeting the milieu of Bertha's social circle (224).⁴¹

The reality of the bourgeois woman's existence was the amount of spare time she had at her disposal – hours she was expected to fill in pastimes befitting her social class. An abundance of enforced leisure-time was itself an indicator of a father or husband's commercial success – something Mansfield alludes to in "Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day" (1917): "If you don't want to cook the breakfast ... why don't you keep a servant? You know we can afford one, and you know how I loathe to see my wife doing the work" (147). Far from enjoying their obligatory spare time, many women felt that it rendered their existence somewhat purposeless. Unprecedented growth within the industrial and commercial sectors during the Victorian and Edwardian eras meant that the wives of the increasingly wealthy bourgeoisie had very little to do; with their houses kept by servants and their children watched over by nurses or governesses, they found themselves increasingly superfluous to the household's needs, as is the case for Mansfield's Bertha: "She stood watching them [nurse and baby], hands by her side, like the poor little girl in front of the rich girl with the doll.... Why have a baby if it has to be kept ... in another woman's arms?" ("Bliss" 93). Instead, Bertha's trivial demands include selecting and arranging fruit to "tone in with the new dining-room carpet" prior to that evening's dinner party (93). Linda Burnell too is at a loose end in her own home: "Isn't there anything for me to do?" ("Prelude" 32). Often

⁴⁰ Gubar is in fact specifically referring to "The Doll's House".

⁴¹ Paul also understands Mansfield's "position as a colonial subject" facilitated her "parodic distance", 228.

alone, Linda's days are spent in quiet meditation: "... she seemed to be listening with her wide open watchful eyes, waiting for someone to come who just did not come, watching for something to happen that just did not happen" (ibid. 28). Paul points out that Mansfield makes "their loneliness and isolation a measure of their social status" which reinforces the stories' status as critiques of bourgeois social mores (214). Significantly, the boredom that Mansfield captures so acutely, particularly through Linda, permeates images of Morisot – for example in Manet's *The Balcony* (1868-69) – and her own images of women: *Young Woman in a Conservatory* (1881), and *Young Woman at a Window (The Artist's Sister at a Window)*, (1869), (see fig. 20) both of which depict women like Linda, quiet, solitary, watching, waiting.⁴²

While ostensibly creating images of tranquil domesticity in keeping with public taste and expectations, particularly from the brush of a female artist, both Morisot and Cassatt undermine traditional notions of femininity in subtle ways. In their almost exclusively female portraits, Morisot and Cassatt take the viewer not only inside the woman's world, but into the female mind itself. Within the paintings which contemporary critics considered duly appropriate, the artists expose female duality by depicting women in their prescribed place – the domestic interior – but as lonely, bored, at odds, emotionally detached, even alienated within that environment. In a number of works, Cassatt paints her sitter lost in private meditation, temporarily unconscious of her surroundings; for example, *Lady at a Tea Table* (1883-85), (fig. 19). These fleeting moments of quiet contemplation primarily acknowledge the boredom and resignation which so often constituted the female existence. In *The Masterpiece*, Christine remembers her mother "always sat at the same window painting her fans, a slim, silent little figure ..." (117). Morisot's portraits of her sisters provide revealing examples of the enforced isolation which constituted their domestic existences.⁴³ It is the most pervasive theme in their work, and the quality which sets them apart from comparable images by non Impressionist artists.⁴⁴ This is where Mansfield really demonstrates her allegiance to Impressionism – in giving expression to interior worlds and revealing the minor but potent resistances of protagonists who ostensibly fitted into bourgeois life. It represents one of her major contributions to modernist writing.

⁴² Manet, *The Balcony* (1868-69), oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay; Morisot, *Young Woman in a Conservatory* (1881), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

⁴³ See also, Morisot, *On the Balcony* (1871-2), (two versions exist), oil on canvas, Private Collection; watercolour on paper, the Art Institute of Chicago. Morisot's sister and child modeled for the works.

⁴⁴ Compare, for example, Academician, C. E. A. Carolus-Duran's *Lady with a Glove (The Artist's Wife)*, (1869), oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris; a decorative portrait within which the woman poses artfully for the portraitist. Carolus-Duran was a contemporary and hostile opponent of the Impressionists.

Limited Experiences

As female artists, Cassatt and Morisot arguably remained aware of the type of paintings they must produce in order to please, and appease, initially the Salon jury, but also the art public. However, neither Morisot's nor Cassatt's representations are entirely conventional. Cassatt's females in particular are less passive and instead more active in their everyday roles within and without the home. Her images of women reading or attending the opera are not idealised or merely decorative portraits as conventional iconography would have it, but are instead individualised portraits of women actively engaged in private pursuits, seemingly unselfconscious of the scrutiny of another. Nor do they exist merely as submissive receptors of the spectators' gaze, but are often engaged in their own thoughtful study, such as in *Young Girl with a Portfolio of Pictures* (1876), which contains an autobiographical element – hinting at the artist's own youthful interests and aspirations which were now being realised.⁴⁵ Cassatt's choice of reading – or study material – is very telling. *The Map* (1890) depicts two young girls fully absorbed in the wonders of geography.⁴⁶ Both the map and portfolio serve as windows to the outside world, specifically to interests and even the potential career opportunities, outside of motherhood.

The theme of women reading appears throughout Cassatt's work, a chronological survey of which shows the artist increasingly challenging mainstream contemporary ideology. An early example, *Mrs. Duffee Seated on a Striped Sofa* (1876), is superficially an unchallenging portrait;⁴⁷ here the colouring, tone, composition and overall effect aligns it more closely with the Old Masters whose works informed her early art training. However, Mrs. Duffee appears to be reading a novel, and novels were considered a dangerous genre owing to their often risqué content and their potential to inflame feminine passion, which may lead to immoral thoughts and/or behaviour. Furthermore, Mrs. Duffee is indulging in a private, almost idle pastime; while occupied in reading she is not contributing to the good of the household. By contrast, an earlier work, *The Young Bride* (c.1875), shows a young woman appropriately occupied in crocheting an item for her trousseau.⁴⁸ In Cassatt's portraits of her sister, *Lydia Reading in a Garden* (1880) and *Lydia Reading the Morning Paper* (1878), newspapers are the sitter's chosen reading material.⁴⁹ Pollock points to the portraits' most significant

⁴⁵ Cassatt, *Young Girl with a Portfolio of Pictures* (1876), oil on canvas mounted on panel, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, J. J. Haverty Collection.

⁴⁶ Cassatt, *The Map* (1890), drypoint etching, third state, New York Public Library, S. P. Avery Collection. And Cassatt's career did involve travel including from America to France, and painting trips to Italy and Spain.

⁴⁷ *Mrs. Duffee Seated on a Striped Sofa* (1876), oil on wood panel, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

⁴⁸ Cassatt, *The Young Bride* (c.1875), oil on canvas, Montclair Art Museum, New York.

⁴⁹ Cassatt, *Lydia Reading in a Garden* (1880), oil on canvas, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; *Lydia Reading the Morning Paper* (1878), is also known by the title *Portrait of Lydia*

features – the figure’s “self-absorption and sustained activity”– ideas at odds with both traditional iconography of women, and contemporary ideology perpetuated within art criticism (1980:7). Such imagery, Garb explains, gave rise to concerned social commentary regarding the “overeducation [sic] of women” which threatened the very foundations of French art (1990:60). In the informal portrait of the artist’s mother, *Reading: Le Figaro* (1883), the various signifiers of femininity, typical to feminine subjects within works executed by male artists (flower arrangements, gauzy blinds), are absent from Cassatt’s strikingly simple portrait.⁵⁰ Pollock observes that while this work bears similarities to Cézanne’s portrait of his father: *Portrait of Louis-Auguste Cézanne Reading ‘L’Événement’* (1866), the gender of the reader in Cassatt’s painting constitutes its novelty and defies its comparison with conventional images of women within domestic interiors.⁵¹ Cassatt makes her mother’s intellectual activity the subject of the painting, which, in Pollock’s opinion warrants its comparison with portraits of intellectuals.⁵² Significantly, *Le Figaro* is a political newspaper which, in the nineteenth century at least, was not considered suitable reading material for a lady. Cassatt’s portrait of her mother is, therefore, challenging then current ideologies regarding not only the suitability of the actual activity of reading, but the nature of the reading material deemed appropriate for women.⁵³

Throughout the nineteenth century, contemporary attitudes were largely informed by the published research of medical and anthropological establishments. Garb observes that these often pseudoscientific findings which focused on gender difference in terms of

Cassatt (No. 1) (1878), oil on canvas, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska; a second slightly different version of this work exists and is in the Norton Simon Collection, Fullerton, California.

⁵⁰ Cassatt, *‘Le Figaro’* (1883), oil on canvas, Haverford, Private Collection. By contrast, in Manet’s *Reading* (1868), oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris, the artist depicts his wife (though the title does not specify the woman’s identity), being read to by a man from over her left shoulder. She is entirely passive and physically inactive. Impressionistically-rendered gauzy blinds, the woman’s gown and the upholstery of the sofa on which she is seated, lend the work a luminosity which forms a stark contrast with the dark top right corner of the painting – the area which contains the cropped masculine figure. Typically, the voile curtains occlude a view of the world outside the drawing room. Her focus, if not her thoughts, are trained upon the artist painting her picture. The painting is primarily an exercise in rendering light and shade, and although Cassatt’s painting also evidences her endeavours to capture the effect of natural sunlight, it is less ornamental.

⁵¹ Cézanne, *Portrait of Louis-Auguste Cézanne Reading ‘L’Événement’* (1866), oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C. Cassatt admired Whistler whose own portrait of his mother privileges the woman’s psychological state without attention to the typical trappings of femininity: Whistler, *Arrangement in Grey and Black: The Artist’s Mother* (1871), oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

⁵² Pollock cites the example of Louis-Michel Van Loo, *Portrait of Denis Diderot* (1767), oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris, 7.

⁵³ Founded in 1826, *Le Figaro* was as a satirical journal initially published irregularly which soon became a weekly. By 1866 it boasted the widest circulation of any newspaper in France and by the start of WWII it was France’s leading newspaper. Following WWII, it became the voice of the upper middle classes and continues to maintain a conservative position, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Figaro, accessed 5 March 2009.

psychologies and intellectual capabilities, found that “women were not equipped to deal with the superior mental functions, especially those for abstract thought. In organizing thoughts, synthesizing material, and making judgements based on evidence, women and people from so-called inferior races were stunted” (1980:61-62). “Such inferiority,” Garb explains, “was physically determined” and quantifiable, and far from proving disadvantageous, this mental shortcoming was, according to theorist, Alfred Fouillée, “credible”, as it corresponded with women’s prescribed domestic role, which “involves a development of heart-life and moral force rather than brain force and intellectual life” (cited in Garb, 1980:62). Such opinions were widespread and led to discourse questioning the appropriateness of various pursuits, particularly regarding the type of literature suitable for women, given that they were such excitable creatures innately subject to nervousness and irritability. Zola alludes to this in *The Masterpiece* – “Brain work” gives Christine headaches, “but working with her hands ... did her a world of good ...” (122); and he makes it explicit in *Thérèse Raquin* (1867). The adulterous and murdering Thérèse, having

joined a subscription library ... developed passions for all the heroes of the stories she read. This sudden love of reading had a strong influence upon her temperament; she developed a nervous sensitivity that made her laugh and cry without cause. The balance ... in her was disturbed, and she fell into a sort of vague dreaminess (121).

Early in her marriage – prior to her fall from grace – Thérèse had been a figure of “tranquillity” with “supreme self-control” and had “devoted her whole will-power to making herself a passive instrument, completely acquiescent and free from all self-interest.... [able] to stay pensive and silent throughout a whole evening without being tempted to pick up a book” (39, 47). Now, however, “She was prey to a nervous crisis that had unhinged her, and the truth was that she was scarcely using her reason at all, but throwing herself into passion with a mind unbalanced by the novels she had been reading ...” (139). Mansfield, herself a voracious reader, often of highbrow literature, plays on these same ideas in her short stories, indicating that such concerns were to some degree still current over forty years later.

In “The Tiredness of Rosabel”, Mansfield’s protagonist’s days are spent at a millinery establishment serving her social superiors, and her evenings lost in romantic reverie. On the bus home, Rosabel “sat ... next to a girl very much her own age who was reading *Anna Lombard*....

She glanced at the book which the girl read so earnestly, mouthing the words in a way that Rosabel detested, licking her first finger and thumb each time she turned the page. She could not see very clearly; it was something about a hot, voluptuous night, a band playing, and a girl with lovely white shoulders. Oh heavens! Rosabel

stirred suddenly and unfastened the two top buttons of her coat ... she felt almost stifled (513-14).⁵⁴

Despite her inclination to mock the girl's absorption in the popular novel, Rosabel cannot entirely distance herself from the romance the story offers. She alternates between flights of fancy – perceiving fairy palaces in rain streaked store windows – and the reality of her emotionally and physically deprived, solitary existence. In her mind, Rosabel lunches at the Carlton with her client, Harry, where the “music fires her blood like wine”; they attend the Opera, she in “white tulle over silver”, the most desired woman at the ball (517). “The real Rosabel got up from the floor and undressed slowly.... slipped [on] ... her coarse, calico night-dress.... and groped her way into bed ... cuddling down in the darkness ...” (517-18). Mansfield's characterisation is somewhat sympathetic, but contains an element of criticism nevertheless, as she alludes to the popular idea that romantic novels fill impressionable young girls' minds with fanciful ideas, essentially obscuring their better judgements, and that such reading material perpetuated archaic ideologies which posited the female as decorative object and the male as both the provider and the consumer of this product.⁵⁵ In “Violet” (1913) the self-confessed over-emotional woman to whom the story owes its title admits that “the Russian novelists have made an upheaval of all ... [her] conclusions” (587). The woman to whom she makes her confessions – no doubt Mansfield modelled this character on herself – enjoys mocking Violet, and though she enjoys the Russian novelists herself – as we know Mansfield did – she refers to the more esoteric Percy Bysshe Shelley's *To a Skylark* (1820) – a poem which represents the poet's struggle to articulate the incomprehensible; needless to say, “Violet looked vague” (588).

In “Prelude”, while preparing the afternoon tea Alice reads furtively from “a dirty, greasy little book, half unstitched, with curled edges ...” (48). The language of dirt and grease here is rather like the image of the waiter in “Je ne parle pas français” who flicks at a dead fly with his dirty napkin, and is partly a literary convention; when describing the lower classes, Mansfield tends to become either naturalistic, or sentimental, as in “Life of Ma Parker” (1921).⁵⁶ Alice hurriedly conceals the book from Beryl's condescending glance for at least

⁵⁴ Annie Sophie Cory, *Anna Lombard*, first published in 1901, under the pseudonym, Victoria Cross; described as a sensation novel, it deals with themes of pre-marital sexual relations, inter-class relationships, marriage, birth and infanticide.

⁵⁵ In a letter to her sister Edma regarding the education of Edma's daughter, Jeannot, Morisot advises, “I would be particular in the choice of reading – no drivel, nothing sentimental, nothing affected, as many good old French authors as possible. We are all born monkeys before we are ourselves; therein lies the danger of bad examples”. Summer 1884, Rouart 139.

⁵⁶ Like “The Tiredness of Rosabel”, “Ma Parker” has been the subject of debate in regards to plagiarism. Frank O'Connor claims it is a reworking of Chekhov's *Misery*. Alpers notes, however, that Mansfield's favourite charwoman, Mrs Bates, was the model for the character of Ma Parker, Alpers 1988:568. Significantly, Mansfield gave her working-class women a voice. Woolf, by contrast, did not. Eve M. Troutt Powell writes “The limits of Virginia Woolf's otherwise powerful

two reasons: firstly, reading jeopardises her efficacy within the work place; secondly she is embarrassed by the reading material: "To dream of black-beetles drawing a hearse is bad.... If beetles crawl backwards as you watch them it means death from fire or from great height" (48). Like Cassatt's *Mrs. Duffee*, Alice is indulging in private reveries. And like Zola's Thérèse, Alice's reading unhinges her so that when she leaves the security of her domestic realm, she "feel[s] so queer.... all weak in the spine. She couldn't believe that someone wasn't watching her. And yet it was silly to turn round; it gave you away" ("At the Bay" 228). "Alice did wish there'd been a bit of life on the road though"; but there is not, because everyone is in his or her rightful place – the women are at home and the men are work (ibid.). Alice instinctively knows where she too should be; the very mention of the word "Freedom!" produces "a loud silly little titter. She felt awkward. Her mind flew back to her own kitching. Ever so queer! She wanted to be back in it again" (231).⁵⁷ Similarly, Morisot depicts her staff in their appropriate and designated zone in *The Little Servant Girl (In the Dining Room)*, (1885-86). Arguably, in Impressionism, space is coded in a way that is distinctive from the more heavily narrative-inspired canvases and novels of earlier generations.

The Decorative Role of Bourgeois Women

The Impressionists in general attended to the notion of woman as spectacle, painting their female subjects at their toilette and dressed for occasions which took them out into the public realm.⁵⁸ However, whereas Renoir celebrates the decorative role of women, particularly within his portraits of women at the opera, Morisot's correspondence reveals how contrived the process is.⁵⁹ On holiday in Saint-Jean-de-Luz in 1872, having failed to catch the eye of any would be suitors Morisot writes, "I am surprised at being as unnoticed as I am.... The advantage of it is that since no one looks at me, I find it unnecessary to dress up" (Rouart 85). Impressionists' images of women at their toilette, at the seamstress or milliner's, and assuming formal dress, remind the viewer of the obligatory ornamental role of women, both within the realm of the arts as models and subjects, and within society. Morisot doubly makes this point in *The Coiffure* (1894) which depicts a young woman having her hair styled, while in the background the artist includes an earlier portrait, *The*

imagination left her maids-of-all-work, cooks, and cleaners ... silent, "The Empire and Its Other Servants", *Journal of Women's History* 21. 3 (Autumn 2009): 144. Troutt Powell explains that, "As voluble as ... Woolf was about her servants in letters to family members and as productive as she was in the output of essays and novels ... she lost her touch with words when it came to writing about servants, her own in particular.... Woolf seems often to have been at a loss for words when it came to her own working ladies", ibid. 146.

⁵⁷ Morisot *The Little Servant Girl (In the Dining Room)*, (1885-86), oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., Chester Dale Collection.

⁵⁸ During the nineteenth century, women's fashion plates abounded in women's periodicals such as *Le Moniteur de la mode* and *L'Illustrateur des dames*; these were another source of inspiration to the Impressionists. Anne Higonnet has shown Morisot's particular debt to these illustrations.

⁵⁹ See for example, Renoir, *The Loge* (fig 16).

Black Bodice (1876), depicting the woman dressed and ready for display – consumption even.⁶⁰ In both works, the woman’s purely decorative role is emphasised in the sketchy handling of the subject; in *The Black Bodice* the decorative wallpaper is barely distinguishable from the foliage of the indoor plants – the room’s dressings – and the sitter’s shawl, with all the pictorial components merging to produce a deliberately ornamental image.⁶¹ In a letter to her daughter shortly after her marriage, Mme. Morisot advises Berthe “that you owe it to your husband to dress well for him and to please others in order to please him more ...” (Rouart 95). Anne Higonnet suggests that in her dual roles as wife and mother on the one hand, and professional artist on the other, Morisot lived behind a façade of her own careful creation. Higonnet points to Morisot’s art which she perceives is “radiant and calm, [and indicative of] a life led soberly” and the letters which reveal the doubt and struggle that constituted the life and career which was a constant negotiation (*Berthe Morisot* xii). Similarly, Kathleen Wheeler notes Mansfield’s tendency for theatricality: her characters “adopt, and then adapt, masks, costumes, make-up, [they function within various] scene settings, lightings, [they make] entrances and exits... This drama of life ... constitutes a public performance of propriety behind which Mansfield reveals an interior life of terrors, passions, and cruelties” (123-24).⁶²

Like Morisot and Cassatt, Degas also made the woman’s toilette the subject of numerous sketches, studies and paintings – three of which were shown at the Impressionist exhibition at the Grafton in London in 1905. Unlike Renoir, Degas points to the laborious nature of their preparations, and, in his repetitive imagery, to the monotony of female existence.⁶³ Morisot and Cassatt, however, specifically draw attention to the artifice of social convention and to the indoctrinated superficiality of female development – as Pollock describes it: “the process by which the child was made the feminine woman” (1980:23). Both themes recur in Mansfield’s stories – “The Garden Party” is an excellent example: Laura alternates between childish feelings of indignation: “[her] upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye”, and the naive idea that “these absurd class distinctions” prevented her from entertaining more meaningful relationships with real men as opposed to “the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper” (247). Mrs. Sheridan puts a stop to Laura’s flighty behaviour by

⁶⁰ *The Coiffure* (1894); oil on canvas, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires; *The Black Bodice* (1876), oil on canvas, The National Gallery of Ireland.

⁶¹ See also, Morisot *Young Woman in a Ball Gown* (c.1876), oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

⁶² Of course the era in which Mansfield lived and wrote witnessed the popularisation of cinema meaning that, in addition to theatre, she had films from which to learn these techniques.

⁶³ Such monotony is particularly evident when held up for comparison with the typical male bourgeois lifestyle of which horse racing, café society and late-night soirees were all a part and which the male Impressionists attended to in their painting.

drawing attention to her decorative role – a role she obviously sees as social and obligatory: “People like that don’t expect sacrifices from us” she explains while placing an ostentatious hat onto her daughter’s head: “My child! ... the hat is yours.... I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!’ And she held up her hand-mirror” (255).

The looking glass is a recurring motif within Cassatt, Morisot and Mansfield’s respective oeuvres. By depicting their subjects in front of mirrors, the artists point not only to the façade that constitutes femininity but to the narcissistic nature of female lives. Specific painterly examples include Morisot’s, *The Cheval Glass* (1876), (exhibited London 1905), (see fig. 21), which depicts a young woman in her petticoats critically appraising her figure in a full length mirror; and Cassatt’s *Antoinette at her Dressing Table* (1909), within which a Beryl Fairfield-like, unmarried woman admires her reflection in a hand-held looking glass, her freshly coiffured hair reflected in the larger mirror behind.⁶⁴ In “At Lehmann’s” (1910) flattered by the attentions of a male patron a mildly sexually-awakened Sabina retires to her room for the night, wishing that “there was a great big looking-glass in this room” so that she might appraise and admire herself in the way that the young man had done so earlier (726). In Cassatt’s *Mother Wearing a Sunflower on Her Dress* (c. 1905), (see fig. 22), the mother is seen initiating her very young daughter into the ritual of the toilette, suggesting that Cassatt perceives this narcissism is learned rather than inherent; specifically, it is something passed down from mother to daughter.⁶⁵ Similarly, Kezia is learning from her Aunt:

‘mother says will you please come down? Father is home with a man and lunch is ready’... [Beryl] went over to the dressing-table and powdered her nose. Kezia crossed too, and unscrewed a little pot of cream and sniffed it. Under her arm she carried a very dirty calico cat.... she sat the cat up on the dressing-table and stuck the top of the cream jar over its ear. ‘Now look at yourself,’ said she sternly (“Prelude” 59-60).

The cat topples, the jar lid falls to the floor, and “the moment” was broken; Kezia, “hot all over ... put it back on the dressing-table. Then she tiptoed away, far too quickly and airily” (60). Kezia does not yet understand the implications of her actions or her feelings here; however, like Beryl, in due course her real self will be repressed and she will also be

⁶⁴ Morisot’s *The Cheval Glass* was exhibited at the Grafton entitled *Before the Looking-Glass*; Cassatt, *Antoinette at her Dressing Table* (1909), oil on canvas, Collection of Mrs Samuel E. Johnson, Chicago, Illinois. See also: Morisot *Young Woman with a Mirror (Interior)*, (c.1875), oil on canvas, Private Collection; Morisot, *Woman at her Toilette* (c.1879), oil on canvas, The Art Institute of Chicago, The Stickney Fund (also exhibited at the Grafton in 1905, entitled *Before The Mirror* and dated 1884; the names and the dates of Morisot’s paintings of women at their toilette vary between publications; the latter of these works is also known as *Young Woman Powdering Herself*.

⁶⁵ The artist hints at the same idea in Cassatt, *Mother and Child* (1908), oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

expected to be at the beck and call of visiting men – serving as a decorative object within her father's home.

In “The Lady's Maid”, Mansfield pushes these evocations further, casting a grandfather in the role of initiator, with the female a child, and not only objectified, but commercialised:

‘he'd taken such pride in my hair. He used to sit me up on the counter, before the customers came, and do it something beautiful—big, soft curls and waved over the top. I remember the assistants standing around, and me ever so solemn with the penny grandfather gave me to hold while it was being done.... But he always took the penny back afterwards’ (377).

Note Mansfield's word order and punctuation; she might have written: ‘Before the customers came, he used to sit me up on the counter’, which would have suggested it was more of a bonding time between grandfather and granddaughter before the toil of the real work day began. However, in ordering it as she did, Mansfield stresses that the child was one of his business props which had to be readied or prepared in time for the anticipated clientele. The narrative takes on a decidedly sinister tone when the child is deliberately burned as punishment for rejecting her enforced decorative role and simultaneously jeopardising her grandfather's business and personal pleasure: “one day I ... cut off all my hair; snipped it all off in bits.... Grandfather was *furious!* He caught hold of the tongs ... and shut my fingers in them” (ibid.). The scar remains into adulthood: “It was a fearful burn. I've got the mark of it to-day” (ibid.). Symbolically, the mark reduces her beauty, and thus her marriageability – an idea evoked by Dickens through Esther Summerson's pox in *Bleak House*. Although the maid terminates her own engagement, she does so rather than risk disappointing her employer who, like her grandfather, has been her provider.

The concept of female as commercial and consumable product was being played out in Mansfield's early writing: “At the head of the centre table sat the bride and bridegroom, she in a white dress trimmed with stripes and bows ... giving her the appearance of an iced cake all ready to be cut up and served in neat little pieces to the bridegroom beside her” (“Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding” (1910) 706). At Pension Lehmann, pink-cheeked Sabina's many roles include serving in the shop and cafe where there is a direct relationship between consummation and commerce:

As a rule his wife served in the shop ... but she had chosen the quiet season to have a baby ... she had grown so enormous in the process that her husband told her she looked unappetising, and had better remain upstairs and sew. Sabrina took on the extra work.... She loved to stand behind the counter, cutting up slices of Anna's marvellous chocolate-spotted confections, or doing up packets of sugar almonds in ... striped bags.... counting out handfuls of small change (“At Lehmann's” 722-23).

Sabina is as much a consumable product as the sweet treats she sells and one particular male patron takes the liberty of using her as a model for a nude sketch – “his restless gaze

wandering over her face and figure" (724). In "Frau Fischer" (1910), within which the narrator describes child-bearing as a profession, young women are again seen as commodities, with maturity heralding marriage and thus, in this instance, financial security for their widowed mother: "'Bertha' ... 'how changed! What a bust! Frau Hartmann, I congratulate you'" (697).⁶⁶

Mansfield plays on the theme of woman as ornament particularly through the character of Beryl who moves to stand under the flattering lamp light, or who is poised before her reflection, at mirrors and windows.⁶⁷ Beryl grapples with the self she shows Stanley and Nan Pym; and the real self who cringes at the enforced vanity: "Beryl slammed the letter case to. She jumped up and half unconsciously, half consciously she drifted over to the looking-glass.... 'Yes, my dear, there is no doubt about it, you really are a lovely little thing' ...

But even as she looked the smile faded from her lips and eyes. Oh God, there she was, back again, playing the same old game. False—false as ever.... 'I'm always acting a part. I'm never my real self for a moment.' And plainly, plainly, she saw her false self ... laughing a special trilling laugh if they had visitors, standing under the lamp if a man came to dinner, so that he should see the light on her hair.... 'It's marvellous how you keep it up,' ('Prelude' 57-59).

Beryl's entire persona is revealed to be a charade with the real Beryl deemed unsuitable for public consumption. As demonstrated earlier, the emphasis on light entirely corresponds with Impressionist aesthetics thus Mansfield's Impressionism is thematic and stylistic: "She saw the real Beryl—a shadow.... Faint and unsubstantial she shone" (ibid. 50).

Mansfield exposes the various poses that people assume within their different roles and shows that both males and females are susceptible to falsity: Harry Kember was "so incredibly handsome that he looked like a mask or a most perfect illustration in an American novel rather than a man" ("At the Bay" 218); the androgynous Mrs. Kember looks "like a horrible caricature of her husband" (ibid. 220). Mona likes to watch her husband dress and shave before heading to the office each morning: "How fantastic he looked, like a pierrot, like a mask" ("All Serene!" 476).⁶⁸ Mansfield also shows that this falsity is enduring and that having secured a husband only meant adopting a new mask for that role. In a passage which echoes Mme. Morisot's advice to her daughter: Mona "made a point of looking her best in the morning; she thought it part of her duty to him—to their love, even, to wear charming little

⁶⁶ Significantly, these girls are all lower-working-class girls, the implications of which are discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

⁶⁷ In "Father and the Girls" (an unfinished story published within *The Doves' Nest and Other Stories* (1923)), like the Colonel's daughters Constantia and Josephine, Edith and Emily, having been forced to care for their widower father, are now past the ideal marriageable age, thus their role is no longer decorative but functional, rather like Mrs. Fairfield's: "So without even a glance at the mirror—they had reached the age when it is as natural to avoid mirrors as it is to peer into them when one is young—Edith and Emily were ready", 472.

⁶⁸ An unfinished story which Murry published within *The Doves' Nest and Other Stories* (1923).

caps, funny little coats ...” (ibid. 472). Delighted in her comfortable bourgeois marriage of three years, she saw herself “showing their house and him to her other self, the self she had been before she had met him. Deeply admiring, almost awed by so much happiness, that other self looked on ...” (ibid. 476). Once alone, however, Mona reflects upon her role as wife and upon their marital home: “How different it looked in the morning, how severe and remote.... It was like a stage setting with the curtain still down. She had no right to be there, and as she thought that a queer little chill caught her ...” (ibid. 477).

The self-fashioned chains which Mansfield claims must be cast off are in part related to the masks both men and women adopt within their relationships. Fullbrook explains, “Oppression is thus contingent on the acceptance of a fixed identity and it is in acquiescing to such fixture that Mansfield ... believes that women have betrayed themselves most deeply” (9). Paul concurs citing the example of Bertha who “appears to identify herself with particular objects in her house and garden” and who “objectifies herself as a beautiful thing” on a par with her pear tree – the significance of which is ambiguous and indeterminable (214).⁶⁹ Like Mona, Bertha judges her own worth and happiness by the objects she is surrounded by within her home. However, Bertha is not as narcissistic as Paul suggests – Bertha is not “more interested in seeing herself as an object” but rather she knows no other way (215); her true development has been stifled – or as Fullbrook understands it, oppressed (9, 95-102). Society has moulded Bertha into a materialistic person who is taught to see and think of herself as an object and thus she identifies with other beautiful objects such as the bowl of fruit and the pear tree. Mansfield’s own chameleon-like behaviour and inconsistencies are evidence of her refusal to submit to society or to any one person’s idea of who (and what) she should be.

Through her female protagonists primarily, Mansfield demonstrates the pitfalls of adopting the roles society ascribes. Like Mona’s, Beryl’s life is theatrical; she has been playing a part so long that she no longer recognises herself: “What had the creature in the glass to do with her, and why was she staring? (“Prelude” 59) The looking glass motif features again in “The Lady’s Maid” with the mirror revealing the duplicity of both the maid, who looks, and the employer, who is being watched: “I was looking in her glass; of course, she didn’t know I could see her”; in fact, the maid’s employer does know she is being watched and acts out accordingly (379-380).⁷⁰ In “A Married Man’s Story” (1921) the husband reflects on his loveless marriage and marvels over the fact that although “nobody is

⁶⁹ Mary Paul offers three readings of ‘Bliss’ based on student responses: Freudian, feminist and modernist. “‘Bliss’, and Why Ignorance Won’t Do: The Use of Criticism and Theory in Current Reading Practices”, eds. Mark Williams and Michele Leggott, *Opening the Book* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995) 211-231.

⁷⁰ In Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* the mirror again serves duplicitous purposes; see Chapter 5.

going to ... take her in his arms, to kiss her soft hair.... being a woman, deep down ... she really does expect this miracle to happen; she really could embrace that dark, dark deceit, rather than live—like this” (425). In exposing such duality in women, Mansfield undermines conventional notions of femininity and the ideological role of women at its very core.

Marital Entrapment

Like Berthe, Edma Pontillon (née Morisot), had hoped to pursue an artistic career. Once married, however, she was whisked away to “life in the country and to domesticity” (Rouart 34).⁷¹ Unaccustomed and unprepared for such a life, she grappled with her domestic and marital responsibilities and moreover, with the boredom that ensued: “I have nothing ... to do.... Life here is always the same. The fireside, and the rain pouring down” (ibid.).⁷² To Morisot she writes, “I read a few pages ... when I am tired of doing nothing.... In my thoughts I follow you about in your studio, and wish that I could escape, were it only for a quarter of an hour ...” (ibid. 32).⁷³ Their correspondence provides a good overview of bourgeois marriage. Prior to her own marriage and motherhood, Morisot attempted to console her sister in her new married lifestyle:

Come now, the lot you have chosen is not the worst one. You have a serious attachment, and a man’s heart utterly devoted to you. Do not revile your fate. Remember that it is sad to be alone.... this work that you mourn for [her art], is the cause of many griefs and many troubles (ibid. 33).⁷⁴

New Zealand-born artist Frances Hodgkins who gained fame in England during Mansfield’s career, offered the same advice to her own married sister Isobel upon the latter’s disappointment at being forced to give up painting following the birth of her children: “... what better work can you do than bring up four beautiful children? My work is as nothing compared to it ...” (cited in Harris 77).⁷⁵ However, once married herself, Morisot’s acknowledged the loneliness, the isolation and the difficulties: “my life is becoming complicated, I have little time [for painting], and then I have days of melancholy, my black days when I am afraid to take up a pen for fear of being dull” (Rouart 115).⁷⁶ Morisot’s mother’s observations following her career-driven daughter’s marriage are perhaps the most revealing: “Whenever she works she has an anxious, unhappy, almost fierce look.... This existence of hers is like the ordeal of a convict in chains ...” (ibid. 84).⁷⁷

⁷¹ Berthe to Edma, 23 April 1869.

⁷² Edma to Berthe, 21 March 1869.

⁷³ Edma to Berthe, 15 March 1869.

⁷⁴ Berthe to Edma, 19 March 1869.

⁷⁵ Hodgkins’ work and life in the context of Woolf and Mansfield’s is discussed in Chapter 5.

⁷⁶ Berthe to Yves, early 1879.

⁷⁷ Mme. Morisot to Edma, late 1871. Nevertheless, images of Morisot prior to her marriage still reveal a figure in deep introspection; see for example, Edma Pontillon’s *Berthe Morisot Painting* (c. 1865), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

Pollock explains that “it was the lack of undisturbed time that so impeded the majority of women from attaining any degree of professional competence”, as Florence Nightingale’s observation demonstrates (1980:7):

How different would be the heart for work, how different would be the success if we learnt our work as a serious study and followed it up as a profession. If a man were to follow up his profession or occupation at odd times, how would he do it? ... Women themselves acknowledge that they are inferior in every occupation to men. Is it surprising? They do everything at ‘odd times’ (Nightingale cited in Pollock, 1980:8).

Owing to ill health following the birth of her daughter, Morisot was unable to either prepare or participate in the fourth Impressionist exhibition of 1879. Consequently, she became doubtful of her own abilities and of her painting future.⁷⁸ Like Morisot, Cassatt’s artistic production and participation in the Impressionist exhibitions was hampered by ill health – in this case her family’s. Cassatt played nurse to Lydia for a good deal of 1882, and to her parents from around that time until father’s death in 1892 and her mother’s death in 1895. Echoing Nightingale’s sentiments, in a letter to Durand-Ruel in the summer of 1894 Cassatt asserted “What I want is the freedom to work” (Mathews 1984:260).

For Mansfield whose marriage was more bohemian than bourgeois, the role of wife versus that of serious writer was a constant struggle which entailed frustration rather than boredom, at being forced to keep house when she wanted to devote her time to writing. Mansfield’s frustrations also partly echo Nightingale’s sentiments:

Am I such a tyrant – Jack dear – or do you say it mainly to tease me?... when I have to clean up twice over or wash up extra unnecessary things I get frightfully impatient and want to be working... Yes, I hate hate HATE doing these things that you accept just as all men accept of their women. I can only play the servant with very bad grace indeed. Its all very well for females who have nothing else to do... & then you say I am a tyrant and wonder because I get tired at night!... & you calling (whatever I am doing [“]Tig – isn’t there going to be tea. Its five o’clock[“].) As though I was a dilatory housemaid! (CL1:125-6).⁷⁹

In addition to the moves which her intermittent ill health demanded, her desire to work undisturbed by the demands of her husband led her to live separately from him at various times throughout their relationship. At one stage Mansfield rented rooms next to Murry’s informing him in a letter: “you can dine with me every night & go up & work after.... We mustn’t start houses or big flats.... This is best, for then we *are* so free to fly (CL1:344).⁸⁰

Despite assuming the role of the poverty stricken artist forced to keep house while trying to earn an income as a writer, Mansfield lived far more comfortably than her letters

⁷⁸ See Berthe to Yves, early 1879.

⁷⁹ KM to J. M. Murry, [?May-June 1913].

⁸⁰ KM to JMM, 13 December 1917.

necessarily suggest – O’Sullivan notes that in 1919, with Murry’s role as editor of the *Athenaeum* earning him £800, Mansfield’s allowance at £300, as well as the monies received from their stories and journalism, they enjoyed nothing short of “middle-class comfort” (CL2:xii).⁸¹ It is, then, in her representations of the bourgeoisie in their domestic realm – the subject which dominates her oeuvre) that she captures the essence of that sphere in a manner comparable to that realised by Morisot and Cassatt. In the early sketch “A Marriage of Passion”, Mansfield satirises bourgeois marriage; Alpers summarises her representation: “velvet bedspreads, pink-shaded lights, and boredom when the party guests have gone” (1982:136).⁸² It is a theme she returned to throughout her stories which time and again reveal the inherent loneliness of the individual in modern society. Bertha realises “something strange and almost terrifying... ‘Soon these people will go. The house will be quiet—quiet. The lights will be out. And you and he will be alone together ...’” (“Bliss” 103). In “Marriage à la Mode” William “hadn’t the remotest notion ... that she [his wife Isabel] ... was desperately lonely, pining for new people and new music and pictures and so on” (313). The highly strung Monica “could not stand this silent flat ... this ghostly, quiet, feminine interior” (“Revelations” 193). She makes a bid for freedom, but has nowhere to go; she flees one “noiseless ... feminine interior” for another – the hairdressers – only to discover it alarmingly quiet too and desolate too: “Oh, how terrifying Life was, thought Monica. How dreadful. It’s the loneliness which is so appalling” (195). In “Prelude” and “Bliss” and in numerous others, Mansfield’s female characters, and in some cases, her male characters, long to escape from their prescribed roles within the domestic realm and from the social conventions which imprison them. The slightly effeminate Jonathan Trout is equally as repressed in his roles as an office clerk and a father: “On Monday the cage door opens and clangs to upon the victim” (“At the Bay” 236). Linda observes the constant “look like hunger in his black eyes” but, perceiving their fates as not dissimilar – both are “wasted, wasted” – is quick to point out that “one gets used to it. One gets used to anything” (ibid. 237, 221, 236). Linda remembers her own father’s promises: “As soon as you and I are old enough, Linny, we’ll cut off somewhere, we’ll escape. Two boys together” (“At the Bay” 221).⁸³ But Linda had paused and “along came Life and one was swept away” (ibid.); more specifically, along came “a very broad young man with bright ginger hair” and “she was seized” (ibid. 222, 221). “Old Mr. Neave” prefers the office to the oppressively “glittering” frivolity in his own house, full of grown yet unmarried daughters, a spoiled son and his listless wife: “He’d been

⁸¹ Throughout Mansfield’s letters, there are references to the various servants whose services she and Murry retained (see for example CL1:126 and CL1:143).

⁸² Published in *The New Age* 7 March 1912

⁸³ In a diary entry of December 1920, KM recalls her mother telling her she would have preferred not to have married, and had her own father not died, she would have liked to travel and perhaps have become an explorer (see Tomalin 10).

forgotten. What had all this to do with him—this house and Charlotte, the girls and Harold—what did he know about them?” (“An Ideal Family” (1921) 374). A gnawing realisation dawns: “They were strangers to him”; “he was alone” – “Life had passed him by” (370; 374).

The theme of domestic entrapment is everywhere present in Impressionism – both painterly and literary. Mansfield could neither live happily with Jack, nor live absolutely without him; Brett observed, “Poor Katherine she is torn in two I believe – Pity for the shy gentle clinging man she lives with and the passionate desire for freedom” (CL1:284).⁸⁴ Certainly Mansfield rejected “the conjugal ‘we’” (CL1:201).⁸⁵ Any attempts to explain to Murry how important her work was were always tentative for fear of upsetting him:

Whenever I try & talk about this all over with you my positive horror of hurting you always prevents me from really speaking my mind – My one overwhelming feeling is that we must both be free to write this year – and that even our full life together must mark time for that.... Time is passing, and we cannot afford to waste another year (CL1:291).⁸⁶

Morisot’s concerns were not dissimilar; in a letter to her married sister, she acknowledges that indeed marriage was not the be all and end all:

Men incline to believe that they fill all of one’s life, but as for me, I think that no matter how much affection a woman has for her husband, it is not easy for her to break with a life of work. Affection is a very fine thing, on condition that there is something besides with which to fill one’s days (Rouart 34).⁸⁷

Morisot’s portraits, like her correspondence, point to the loneliness, the isolation and the inescapable boredom which constitutes what Mansfield so aptly coined the suitable appropriate existence: the obligatory social round and subsequent bourgeois marriage and motherhood – though for Mansfield, this existence constituted suffocation more so than boredom. Morisot writes, “As for me, I am more or less alone; Eugène sleeps in Paris and spends part of the day there” (ibid. 133).⁸⁸ *Self-Portrait with Julie* (1885) conveys a sense of this emptiness; barely more than a preliminary sketch in oil, the work’s unfinished state seems to reinforce the artist’s lack of enthusiasm for the subject, or rather for the role which she found unfulfilling.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Brett to Ottoline Morrell, 2 November 1916; also cited in Alpers 1982:221.

⁸⁵ KM to S.S. Koteliansky, 28 November 1915.

⁸⁶ KM to JMM, early January 1917; soon after this letter was written Mansfield and Murry opted to live apart, though they agreed to see each other in the evenings. Taking separate studio flats allowed Mansfield the mental and physical space she required to begin writing again. Having achieved little during 1916, by May 1917 she was again contributing sketches to *The New Age*, and had begun rewriting *The Aloe* into “Prelude”.

⁸⁷ 23 April 1869.

⁸⁸ Her daughter’s whooping-cough forced her to leave Paris temporarily for their summer house in Bougival where the weather was milder.

⁸⁹ Morisot, *Self-Portrait with Julie* (1885), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

The self-portrait explains Higonnet, is “an act of self-revelation and an act of professional self-declaration” (1990:73).⁹⁰ It was not by accident that Morisot chose to withhold her self-portraits from exhibitions during her lifetime. Presumably she did not wish to incite criticism for the contradictory roles she upheld as professional artist, wife and mother, the first of which was culturally opposed to the latter; this disjunction underpins Morisot’s self-portraits. Nor is it a coincidence that Morisot painted *The Cage* (1885), the same year as she executed the self-portrait with her daughter – the caged bird and the bird cage itself existing as a potent symbols of feminine entrapment across the arts and one that Mansfield continually experimented with: “‘I dreamed about birds last night,’ thought Linda” (“Prelude” 27); Mrs. Carsfield’s mother dreams of the “five little canaries” bought for her daughter by her overbearing husband (“New Dresses” 548).⁹¹ Morisot’s letters reveal that, like her sister, she too struggled to adapt to the increasingly limited experiences she had available to her as a wife and then mother: “Chichi [daughter, Julie] is charming but leaves much to be desired as an intellectual companion; and I live in such great solitude ...” (Rouart 117).⁹² Higonnet explains that throughout Morisot’s career, her paintings were a vehicle for the exploration of her identity, specifically the feminine self. Her oeuvre reveals a multiplicitous self: “Object of masculine vision,⁹³ divided personality, sister, artist, mother” (1980:77). Her ambivalence, which is explicitly revealed in her correspondence, is also clearly demonstrated in her representation of pregnant women, and mothers and children.

Detached Mothers

An important way in which Mansfield and Morisot, and to a lesser degree, Cassatt, undermine traditional notions of femininity is by depicting women as physically separate or aloof from their children, a disjunction which becomes more overt when held up for comparison with Renoir’s saccharine portraits of mother-and-child.⁹⁴ In marrying and bearing one child, Morisot at least partly accepted the vocation that late nineteenth-century French society prescribed her. She also managed to achieve an elusive and precarious balance within her roles as artist, wife and mother – although her letters and diaries

⁹⁰ Which is why the majority of self-portraits feature the emblems of the sitter’s trade – the poet’s quill, the painter’s palette.

⁹¹ Morisot, *The Cage* (1885), oil on canvas, The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D. C. See also, *Parakeet at a Window* (1889), coloured pencil on paper, Galerie Hopkins and Thomas, Paris, within which the window frame echoes the enclosure of the cage. Kezia’s first impression of her new house is of passing “down a narrow passage where the parrots persisted in flying past [her] ...”, “Prelude” 18.

⁹² Berthe to Edma, 1881.

⁹³ As evidenced in the eleven different portraits Manet painted of Morisot, the first executed ten years prior to Morisot’s own first attempt at the self-portrait.

⁹⁴ See, for example, Morisot, *In a Villa by the Seaside* (1874), oil on canvas, Pasadena Museum of Art, Norton Simon Foundation versus Renoir, *Madame Charpentier and Her Children* (1878), oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Catherine Lorillard Wolfe Collection.

continued to reveal her constant battle to work in a professional capacity while maintaining harmony in the home: “Julie ... has been baptized ... and vaccinated. Two necessary chores are thus behind me” (Rouart 115).⁹⁵ The result of this balancing act is a pervasive ambiguity in her images of mothers with their children. *The Cradle* (1872) is on the surface a modern-take on the traditional Madonna subject conveying a sense of maternal tranquillity in keeping with public expectations, particularly from a female artist (see fig. 2). However, here and elsewhere in Morisot’s work, the woman’s mood is difficult to gauge – boredom, resignation or indifference? There is no real hint of affection. In fact, it is difficult to judge whether she is looking at her baby; rather she seems absorbed in a private reverie – not unlike Linda Burnell. Underlying this seemingly innocuous image of motherhood, are Morisot’s reflections on the plight of women; the gauzy blinds which slightly obscure the sleeping baby and the backdrop reinforce this notion; Mansfield readily admitted: “delicate veils hide... the truth” (*Novels and Novelists* 110).

The ambivalence which informs Morisot’s paintings of women and children, specifically where they are depicted as detached from their dependants was being played out in her work from the time of Edma’s marriage in 1869 and her subsequent confinement. Prior to this, Morisot produced landscapes and semi-rural scenes, many of which were unpeopled and instead pre-Impressionist exercises in *plein-air* painting.⁹⁶ Following Edma’s marriage and then her own in 1874, Morisot painted more of the works which came to characterise her oeuvre – the domestic scenes – which address the place and condition of women. Many of these images are of family members and, therefore, represent an intimate understanding of women’s rites of passage.⁹⁷ The aforementioned painting *The Cheval Glass*, probably shows a woman in the early stages of pregnancy, hence the critical appraisal of her changing profile. Though he does not point to the woman’s condition, Charles F. Stuckey notes the sharp contrast between “the quiet, private meditations of Morisot’s figure” and Manet’s “saucy” *Nana* (1876-77), paintings which are otherwise similar in their subject matter and composition.⁹⁸ In the portraits of her sisters with either their mother, or with their own daughters, the women are entirely absorbed within their own thoughts and there is no real interaction between the figures despite their physical proximity. Even when Morisot depicts her mothers and children jointly engaged – for example, *The Fable* (1883), within which the

⁹⁵ Berthe to Edma, early 1879.

⁹⁶ See Morisot, *Thatched Cottage in Normandy* (1865), oil on canvas, Private Collection and *The Seine below the Pont d’Iéna* (1866), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

⁹⁷ Such images include *Mme Morisot and Her Daughter Mme Pontillon (The Mother and Sister of the Artist)* (1869-70), see fig. 3; *Mme Pontillon and Her Daughter, Jeanne* (1871), [the artist’s sister and niece], watercolour on paper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Ailsa Melon Bruce Collection; and *Mme Gobillard and Her Daughter, Paule* (1871), [the artist’s sister and niece], watercolour on paper, Private Collection.

⁹⁸ Manet, *Nana* (1876-77), oil on canvas, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany.

mother is supposedly reading to her young daughter – there is a sense of the mother’s mental detachment;⁹⁹ often perceived as merely sentimental or quintessentially feminine reverie, such evocations evidence the female mind at work behind the closed doors.

Although in her quest for “fame and money” Cassatt eschewed the maternal role, she nevertheless paid tribute to the various stages of womanhood in her painting, some of which unarguably celebrate motherhood – both *Mother about to Wash her Sleepy Child* (1880), and *The Family* (c.1886), depict attentive mothers and bonny children (Pollock 1980:7).¹⁰⁰ However, while Cassatt’s work appears more celebratory of domesticity than does Morisot’s – something one might attribute to her unmarried and childless status – her characterisation still differs from the norm. While outwardly they appear to be functioning as attentive mothers, the artist hints at the private but important inner world of these women who have been temporarily cast in the maternal role – and my reason for suggesting that this role is only temporary corresponds with Impressionism’s characteristic representations of transitory phenomena; even motherhood is but a series of fleeting moments – perhaps more enduring than the daily sunsets which Monet raced to capture, yet, essentially, as ephemeral as anything else in nature. Despite the different perspectives Morisot and Cassatt brought to the subject, a number of Cassatt’s images of maternity resonate with that sense of boredom, entrapment and resignation which characterise Morisot’s images of motherhood; see, for example, *The Caress* (1902).¹⁰¹

A close scrutiny of Cassatt’s images of supposedly content mothers and babies reveals that the mother’s focus is rarely on the child; rather, her thoughts are quite evidently introspective, and any physical gesture made towards the child, though inherently natural, appears obligatory. For example, in *After the Bath* (c.1901), although physically she is seen to be attending to their needs, the mother’s attention seems miles away from the affections of her children.¹⁰² Again in *Margot Embracing Her Mother* (1902), Cassatt privileges the mother’s psychological state, showing her pensive though mindful of the baby whose arms

⁹⁹ Morisot, *The Fable* (1883), oil on canvas, Private Collection; also known as *The Story*.

¹⁰⁰ Mrs Cassatt to the artist’s brother, 23 July 1891. Cassatt *Mother about to Wash her Sleepy Child* (1880), oil on canvas, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; *The Family* (c.1886), oil on canvas, The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia.

¹⁰¹ Cassatt, *The Caress* (1902), oil on canvas, The National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D. C.; see also, *Reine Lefebvre Holding a Nude Baby* (1902), oil on canvas, Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts. Perhaps *Young Mother and Two Children* (1908), is an exception? The Mother embraces her two children with what seems like intention rather than reluctance; however, there is no hint of a smile or any real affection. The children seem almost like weights against her; see also, *Young Mother and Two Children* (1908), oil on canvas, The White House, Washington, D. C. In an earlier work, *Mother About to Wash Her Sleepy Child* (1880), Cassatt’s characterisation does seem genuinely sentimental.

¹⁰² Cassatt, *After the Bath* (c.1901), pastel, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio.

encircle her.¹⁰³ Furthermore, several of Cassatt's mothers are depicted with their backs to the viewer – a gesture that creates tension within the composition which corresponds with the complex role of motherhood.¹⁰⁴ In privileging the image of the baby, the mothers are allowed greater privacy, but whether directed by the artist, or spontaneous, the mother's back view might also suggest either a degree of reluctance within the maternal role – widely perceived to be a defining feminine role – or alternatively their resignation to this fate – the latter of which is supported by the fact that none of Cassatt's mothers are willing to make eye contact with the perceived viewer, perhaps fearing what they might unwittingly reveal.¹⁰⁵

Cassatt and Morisot's imagery closely corresponds with Linda's various moods of detachment and indifference in "At the Bay" and "Prelude". Mansfield's representation of motherhood, however, is far less subtle than Morisot's: "Was there no escape?"; "As to the boy—well, thank heaven mother had taken him; he was mother's, or Beryl's, or anybody's who wanted him. She had hardly held him in her arms. She was so indifferent about him ..." ("At the Bay" 221, 223). In "A Married Man's Story", the husband reflects that

though one might suspect her of strong maternal feelings, my wife doesn't seem to me the type of woman who bears children in her own body. There's an immense difference! Where is that ... animal ease and playfulness, that quick kissing and cuddling one has been taught to expect of young mothers? She hasn't a sign of it (424-25; KM's ellipsis).

Through the character of Linda, Mansfield clearly demonstrates that marriage, childbirth and the raising of children enslave women, which, in addition to the societal expectations placed upon them, reduces them to shells of their former selves, ultimately making them prisoners within their own homes:

There were glimpses, moments, breathing spaces of calm, but all the rest of the time... was spent in rescuing him, and restoring him, and calming him down, and listening to his story. And what was left of her time was spent in the dread of having children ("At the Bay" 222).

Mansfield based the character of Linda on her mother who, Alpers explains, was a happy wife, conscious of having married well but a somewhat reluctant mother who "didn't handle babies" (1982:3). But Annie Beauchamp's aversion to maternity only partly informs

¹⁰³ Cassatt, *Margot Embracing Her Mother* (1902), oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts.

¹⁰⁴ See: Cassatt *Baby Charles Looking over his Mother's Shoulder, No. 3* (c. 1900), oil on canvas, Brooklyn Museum, New York; *Pensive Marie Kissed by Her Mother* (1897), pastel on paper, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; *Baby in a Dark Suit, Looking over his Mother's Shoulder* (1889), (unfinished), oil on canvas, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati.

¹⁰⁵ See Cassatt's *The Family; Emmie and her Child* (1889), oil on canvas, Wichita art Museum, Wichita; *Marie Looking up at her Mother* (1897), pastel on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; *Breakfast in Bed* (1897), oil on canvas, present whereabouts unknown, formerly Youngstown, Private Collection.

Mansfield's characterisation – Mansfield did like to “pervert” things to make them more “fascinating” (*NB1:101*).¹⁰⁶ An unplanned teenage pregnancy leading to the first of two miscarriages, ensuing complications and an undiagnosed sexually transmitted infection ultimately prevented Mansfield from having any children of her own, though for a time it was something both she and Murry strongly desired.¹⁰⁷ Her intermittent but persistent and often debilitating ill health coincided with her first miscarriage in Bad Wörishofen, Bavaria in 1909.¹⁰⁸ Owing to conflicting and incorrect diagnoses Mansfield did not learn the truth of her condition until 1918 at which time tuberculosis was formally diagnosed – she would never again enjoy a period of absolute health.¹⁰⁹

Of utmost significance is that from the time of her first miscarriage, though she remained sexually promiscuous – at least by early twentieth-century standards – Mansfield would associate sexuality and the child-bearing process with pain, illness and death.¹¹⁰ This ambivalence informs her writing, particularly in her representation of male-female relationships and women and children. It is pronounced – crude even – in the early satirical *Pension Sketches* and perpetuated to varying degrees throughout her writing. In “At ‘Lehmann’s’”, the male patron’s attentions “gave her [Sabina] a curious thrill deep in her body, half pleasure, half pain” (724). Sabina’s flirtations with the young man are cut short by a “frightful, tearing shriek” from her employer during childbirth (729). Frau Brechenmacher, “the mother of five children.... lay down on the bed and put her arm across her face like a child who expected to be hurt as Herr Brechenmacher lurched in” (“Frau Brechenmacher Attends A Wedding” 711).¹¹¹ Stead suggests that Mansfield’s females fully realise their identity “only in a sexual relationship which at the same time is the source of pain, fear and ultimate destruction” (cited in Paul 212). Certainly Mansfield’s most significant relationships with men follow this pattern; Garnett Trowell refused to marry her even though she was carrying his child; Floryan Siobienioski preyed upon her at perhaps her most vulnerable

¹⁰⁶ 1 May 1907.

¹⁰⁷ See *CL1:177*; *CL2:12*; *CL2:227-28*; *CL2:311*; *CL3:7*; *CL3:23*; *CL3:42*; *CL3:114*; *CL 3:190-91*; *CL3:278*.

¹⁰⁸ See Alpers 1982:127. Kathleen Jones best deals with the specifics of Mansfield’s gynaecological history in her soon-to-be Mansfield released biography from which she drew for a keynote address at the Katherine Mansfield Centenary Conference, London, 2008, at which I was present.

¹⁰⁹ Mansfield suffered her first haemorrhage in February 1918 which she describes delicately in a letter to Murry; see KM to JMM, 19 February 1918, *CL2:79*. Her journal entry is far more interesting, see *NB2:125*.

¹¹⁰ Her fear was not unfounded with difficulties in childbirth then a leading cause of mortality.

¹¹¹ Sarah Shieff conducts an insightful reading of “Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding” and shows how “women are entirely complicit in their own entrapment”, and explains how the mothers indoctrinate their daughters into womanhood ensuring the entrapment is perpetuated. “Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding”, *Katherine Mansfield: Stories and Pictures*, Ed. Ralph Crane and Sarah Shieff, Waikato, New Zealand: Department of English, The University of Waikato, New Zealand, 2003, 15-30.

following the miscarriage of Garnett's child, then later blackmailed her; and Murry whose love was real but who continued to fail her: "our marriage – You cannot imagine what that was to have meant to me.... It was to have shone ... And it was only part of the nightmare, after all. You never once held me in your arms & called me your wife" (*CL2*:197-98).¹¹² The little Frau, berating herself for her perceived weakness, asks herself "'Na, what is it all for?'" (710), and in a stolen moment, Linda ponders the cross married women have to bear:

Yes, that was her real grudge against life; that was what she could not understand. That was the question she asked and asked, and listened in vain for the answer. It was all very well to say it was the common lot of women to bear children. It wasn't true. She, for one, could prove that wrong. She was broken, made weak, her courage was gone, through child-bearing. And what made it doubly hard to bear was, she did not love her children. It was useless pretending. Even if she had had the strength she never would have nursed and played with the little girls. No, it was as though a cold breath had chilled her through and through on each of those awful journeys; she had no warmth left to give them ("At the Bay" 222-23).

In his analysis of the human condition according to Mansfield, Toby Silverman Zinman writes,

Each stage and condition of life has inescapable satiations peculiar to it. Women are victimized by the basic fact of their sex: demanding and insensitive men brutalize them [Frau Brechenmacher], childbirth exploits them [Linda], and female self-sacrifice is regarded by the male world as routine and expectable [Constantia and Josephine] (457).

In their respective evocations of motherhood, Morisot, Cassatt and Mansfield reveal the various stages of resistance, reluctance, and acquiescence to their prescribed fates – which they eventually believe to be beyond their absolute control – and finally, their acceptance and understanding that their lot is not necessarily the worst – as revealed in Morisot's reminder to Edma (previously quoted in greater detail: "the lot you have chosen is not the worst one. You have ... a man's heart utterly devoted to you. Do not revile your fate").¹¹³ In a quiet moment Linda reflects, "What am I guarding myself for so precious? I shall go on having children and Stanley will go on making money ..." ("Prelude" 54).

Mansfield's ambivalence towards specifically the 'natural' role of motherhood was constantly reinforced by that which she observed around her: "I went in to see Baby Gomm this morning. He was sucking. Such a pretty sight as a rule. But Mrs Gom's sharp worn face above him somehow filled me with horror" (*CL1*:127).¹¹⁴ No doubt Lawrence and Frieda's tumultuous relationship, which Mansfield was forced to witness first-hand when living as neighbours at Cornwall, further affected her perception of marriage and motherhood, with

¹¹² KM to JMM, 27 May 1918.

¹¹³ See Rouart 33, 19 March 1869.

¹¹⁴ KM to JMM, June 1913.

Frieda enduring violent beatings from Lawrence then retiring to her room to cry over photographs of her children from her previous marriage whom she had left behind.¹¹⁵ Her own experiences of pregnancy, her inability to have a child, coupled with the reluctance and disinterest she witnessed in her mother within her designated maternal role all contributed to her narratives which address the place and role of women; these ideas were further exacerbated, however, by her own experiences of domestic confinement, and ultimately resulted in a far blunter characterisation than one sees in the work of her painterly counterparts. Specifically, the adulthood battle Mansfield waged against ill health entailed long periods of confinement: “I can’t walk about or go out. Nearly all my days are spent in bed or if not in bed on a little sofa. I have seen hardly any people at all ...” (*CL3*:176).¹¹⁶ At one stage she spent six weeks in bed with only one day’s interval.¹¹⁷ This aligns her more closely with nineteenth-century women than with her modern counterparts who were by then enjoying greater social freedoms, and which partly explains why, when she had an inexhaustible store of subjects and experiences from which she could draw, her preference remained with the domestic.

Domestic Entrapment

There is a striking sense of claustrophobia in Morisot, Cassatt and Mansfield’s work which speaks volumes about the conditions under which they worked. Their personal response to what Mansfield called “the common lot of women” was not dissimilar despite Mansfield’s working at a more progressive time in history (“At the Bay” 222). In “The Doves’ Nest”, Milly and her widowed mother never leave the house but instead move between the dining room and “the balcony beyond the salon admiring for the five-hundredth time the stocks, the roses” (437). Mrs Fawcett asserts, “I could live here for years without going outside the garden gate” (ibid. 439). “New Dresses” opens with Mrs. Carsfield and her elderly mother confined to the dining room sewing dresses for “the two Misses Carsfield” (537). In “A Married Man’s Story”, the wife moves between the dining room, the sitting-room, the nursery and the kitchen. Correspondingly, in all of Morisot’s interiors and in her domestic exteriors, the artist alludes to the narrow role and place patriarchy prescribed for women. She does so in two ways: in her depiction of feminine activity, as has been established, and

¹¹⁵ See *CL1*:260-62, KM to Beatrice Campbell, 4 May 1916; *CL1*:262-64, KM to S.S. Koteliansky, 11 May 1916.

¹¹⁶ KM to Richard Murry, c. 12 January 1920; see also KM to Anne Estelle Rice, 22 December 1917: “The reason why I have not replied ... I have been strictly in bed for days, nearly weeks, with my left water-wing (alias my lung) entirely out of action for the time and strapped up in plaster... the doctor says I must never stay in England for another winter ...”, *CL 1*:353; KM to Virginia Woolf, 2 August 1918 “I have been hoping to get the better of a beastly attack of my rheumatism ... but its no go.... the sofa leg has got me & I cant move from it.... and wont stand a journey”, *CL 2*:263.

¹¹⁷ See KM to Brett, 21 January 1922, *CL 5*:18.

secondly, by creating identifiable and seemingly impermeable physical boundaries within her compositions which spatially and psychologically restrict the females within that setting.

In the aforementioned work *Young Woman at a Window*, Morisot's seated figure, in quiet meditation, distractedly traces the outline of her fan, the open window before her signifying the opportunities beyond, though the high interior skirting and the balcony railings effectively serve as a barrier preventing her from entering or even engaging with this realm. Every component of the picture alludes to the female sitter's limited sphere: the gendered motifs of the fan, pink upholstered chair, piano and gauzy blind, reinforce that this woman's role is within the home. Interestingly, this portrait, painted around the same time as *Mme. Morisot and Her Daughter Mme. Pontillon* is of a pregnant Edma (see fig. 3); therefore, both paintings allude to her literal confinement. In the dual portrait the separate components within the composition contrive to create a sense of an enclosed realm. Mme. Morisot reads from a book whilst her daughter, absentmindedly toying with the fringing of the cushion, sits subserviently to her side on a plump, floral sofa in the drawing room. On the table to the left of the composition, Morisot paints a simple vase of flowers which, like the sofa and cushion, is a signifier of the feminine zone but what appears to be a newspaper, is cut off by the edge of the composition, reinforcing the idea that this is not part of their world; furthermore, it is out of Edma's reach. The wall-mounted mirror behind the two figures, the frame of which echoes the women's restricted space, reflects another floral arrangement and the window; however, the parted drapes do not afford the women a view of the street from their seated position, and thus deny them access to the world outside their domestic sphere. Thus, deprived of a certain place in society, female Impressionists had to contrive, within the circumference of their domestic interiors, little surreptitious signs that brought the outer world inside (the newspaper for instance) but simultaneously represented it as out of reach. Therefore these objects become highly charged: they become objects of desire; just as mirrors in Impressionist paintings reveal more than what they are literally intended to show: in this case, a woman's view. The mirror in Impressionism reveals the limits of the domestic realm; the Impressionist artist's eye 'behind' the mirror is capable of rendering the contradictory nature of the female artist who is both cloistered in a world of domestic still lifes and yet knows that these limits are gendered.

In Morisot's *On the Balcony* (1871-2), again themes of isolation and of domestic entrapment pervade the image. The two female figures are separated from the masculine realm of the city by the balcony railings of their suburban apartment. The woman's maternal role is one which confines her to the domestic realm and the feminine elements such as the flower arrangement at the edge of the composition and her daughter at her side anchor her. Although the mother's gaze follows her daughter's, the latter of whom peers through the

railings, intrigued by the goings on below and beyond, the mother's entire demeanour at the balustrade is indicative of both her boredom within that role and her resignation to her fate. Morisot's images of young women in contemplative, or quiet moments are never merely picturesque snapshots of domestic tranquillity; they are the vehicles for her implicit social commentary and serve as constant reminders regarding the role and place of the female subject in her modern society. Her own experience of confinement – following two doctors' visits, she records in her notebook: "Spend the day at my windows" (NB2:190)¹¹⁸ – meant that Mansfield readily identified with this imagery, and employed the same motifs and techniques in her stories. In the unfinished story "Such a Sweet Old Lady", Old Mrs. Travers' daughter secures her a room with a "balcony ... so that on wet days you can still have your chair outside and look at those lovely palms" (486).¹¹⁹ Mansfield and Morisot's compositions, then, are technically and thematically similar. There is no mention of Mrs. Travers being able to actually escape the confines of the room with its "satin-stripe wallpaper" (again the notion of bars), "the yellow brocade sofa and chairs" (symbols of her sedentary life), the "glass-covered table", "and the mirrors" (characteristically ornamental) (ibid.); rather this room "makes it so beautifully easy for Warner to keep her eye on you ..." (ibid.). Like Cassatt and Morisot's, Mansfield's objects are specifically gendered and limiting markers which resonated within the different media in which they were rendered and represented.

Caillebotte, who like Degas experimented with unusual angles and vantage points, had a special preference for balcony views; specifically, they serve to highlight gender distinctions, such as in the following works: *Woman at the Window/Interior* (1880) and *Man on a Balcony* (1880) (see figs. 23 and 24). In the former, a woman is seen before the window and while the drapes are parted, the window is closed which in addition to the balcony railings acts as barrier to the external world. The drapes merely serve to frame the woman within the sitting room. Her husband at her side is a reminder of her primary role as wife. Her view – of the closed windows of the apartment across the street – is ostensibly a mirror image – another signifier of the decorative role of women. And the figure behind that window reinforces the notion of voyeurism. By contrast, in *Man on a Balcony* the windows are wide open and the man is on the balcony embracing the vast views – indicative of the greater opportunities he has available; he is in his top-hat, suggesting that he is about to enter this realm. The red and white awnings overhead lend the work a light, bright quality which, in addition to the flag flying in the distance, which serves as a small symbol of the freedom this

¹¹⁸ 23 January 1920.

¹¹⁹ Published within *The Doves' Nest and Other Stories* (1923).

bourgeois man enjoys, provides a stark contrast to the darker, more sombre and stifling atmosphere conveyed in *Interior*.

Whether inside the home or immediately outside it on a balcony, veranda or in the garden, Morisot employs the same linear treatment, with strong verticals and horizontals provided by the doors, window frames, railings, fences, and, as T. J. Edelstein demonstrates, even baths, locking the female figures firmly within their domestic realm (34).¹²⁰ Stuckey points to Morisot's calculated divisional treatment of the composition in a manner which looks ahead to Mondrian's canvases of the 1920s and 30s, although he does not attempt to explain why either artist employed this reductive treatment.¹²¹ In fact, their reasons for abstracting the geometric properties within a given space were not entirely disparate. Inspired by the beauty he perceived in nature, Mondrian endeavoured to realise the truth of that beauty by abstracting and simplifying a composition to expose its foundations. Morisot was also exposing foundations – truths. Like their male colleagues, both Mansfield and Cassatt were influenced by Japanese wood-block prints, particularly the bold outlines, unconventional perspectives, linear treatment and the everyday subject matter; the stronger verticals and horizontals in their own work bear testament to this affinity.¹²² However, the structural frames of the conservatory within the composition echo the perimeters within which her sitter is able to operate. In *Little Girl Reading* (1888) (see fig. 25) the vertical and horizontal lines of the window frame, wicker chairs and porch railing act as boundaries between the domestic exterior space and the true outside realm, with the sweep of ferns in the garden beyond obscuring a broader view. Worth noting is that Mansfield's Mrs. Travers "never sat on that balcony.... she hated looking at palms.... they looked draggled like immense untidy birds" ("Such a Sweet Old Lady" 486). Mrs. Travers is the one who feels like an untidy bird – still caged, yet no longer beautiful: "the mirrors that showed you your side view, your back view your three quarters view as well" remind her of this (ibid). Morisot's girl is partially reflected in the window behind her which effectively relocates her back within, or at least nearer to domestic interior. Stuckey notes Morisot's particularly impressionistic hatched brushwork which lends a "latticelike texture" to all the objects within the composition, thus facilitating her experiments with rendering the play of light. While this is true, more significantly, Morisot's latticework effect resembles the bars of the domestic gaol in which her sitter is confined. In *Tea* – which was exhibited at the Grafton in London in 1905 – this idea is made explicit, with the bars, which all but dominate the canvas,

¹²⁰ Further examples include Morisot, *On the Veranda* (1884), oil on canvas, Collection of John C. Whitehead; *The Bath (Girl Arranging Her Hair)* (1885-86), oil on canvas, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts; *Little Girl Reading* (1888), (see fig 25); *Tea* (1882), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

¹²¹ Stuckey refers specifically to *On the Veranda* (1884).

¹²² As do Lily's in her final painting in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

undeniably locking the young woman within the conservatory, and the table and chair in which she sits, further anchoring her to that realm. Essentially, Mansfield realises a literary equivalent of lattice-work which is subversive because it is both 'decorative' and revealing.

In *Hélène Rouart in her Father's Study* (c.1886), Degas employs the same divisional methods characteristic of a Morisot to lend his work that sense of domestic entrapment, which indicates that both female and male Impressionists utilised the same techniques for thematic purposes.¹²³ Specifically, the proportions of the structures within the composition – such as Monsieur Rouart's chair – have been exaggerated, and the perspective manipulated, with the picture rail capping the top of Hélène's head so that she is firmly locked within this space, and thus under her Father's rule. As they mature Morisot's females show less and less interest in the outside world, indicative of their growing realisation and acceptance of their designated domestic role and the limited experiences it constitutes; an eight year old Julie in *Interior at Jersey* (1886), who is keenly interested in the view through the window, provides a good example for comparison with the almost adolescent girls in *Girls at a Window* (1892), whose gazes remain introspective.¹²⁴ Through Kezia and Isabel, Mansfield illustrates how early this transformation begins. Kezia chooses to wander "Oh, just away," and to explore on her own the sometimes frightening wonders of her new garden ("Prelude" 27). The elder of the still young sisters, Isabel, who "longed to find some light and menial duty that Kezia might perform and so be roped in under her government", prefers to "play ladies" which involved "go[ing] to church hand in hand" after which the children "come home and go to bed" (ibid. 43).

Morisot's images of women outside the home are bound by the same ideas conveyed in her domestic interiors and balcony scenes. *View of Paris from the Trocadéro* (c.1871-71) depicts two women and a young girl in a suburb on the outskirts of Paris. The figures are distanced and separated from the city by the horizontal bands of fencing. The women understand that they are not a part of this outside world of commerce and industry and are therefore shown with their backs to this arena, denying themselves even the view. They may or may not be engaged in conversation; rather, it appears that they are each temporarily caught up in their own private thoughts; the distance between them, though small, seems to accentuate this idea. By comparison, the gaze of the young girl is directed through the railings to the great bustling city. She is not yet fully aware of the limitations her gender will impose upon her in due course – though her tentative or halted footstep which would bring her closer to the fence suggests that she has some inkling that, like her mother, she will not

¹²³ *Hélène Rouart in her Father's Study* (c.1886), oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.

¹²⁴ Morisot, *Interior at Jersey* (1886), oil on canvas, Musée d'Ixelles, Belgium, Collection F. Toussaint; *Girls at a Window* (1892), oil on canvas, Galerie Hopkins and Thomas, Paris.

be a part of this world. The three individual figures seem isolated from one another – an idea quite at odds with conventional depictions of mother-and-child, and representations of the innately close bond between females throughout the history of art. Morisot's images of working-class women within the domestic sphere adhere to these same ideas. In *Laundresses Hanging out the Wash* (1875), the women are spatially confined within the area of clothes lines immediately adjacent to the house.¹²⁵ The wooden fencing running horizontally across the foreground of the canvas and the loosely sketched suggestion of hay bales, farm irrigation implements and shrubs in the background beyond the house represents both the property's perimeter and the point at which their opportunities terminate.

The horizontals and verticals in Morisot's compositions feature in exactly the same way in Mansfield's prose, with the interior spaces, particularly the kitchen and the pantry of the new family home in "Prelude", designated specifically female spheres and described in such a way that the characters within these spaces are not only confined to them, but are also identified by them: Mrs. Fairfield reflects upon her new zone:

It was hard to believe that she had not been in that kitchen for years; she was so much a part of it. She put the crocks away with a sure, precise touch, moving leisurely and ample from the stove to the dresser, looking into the pantry and the larder as though there were not an unfamiliar corner. When she had finished, everything in the kitchen had become part of a series of patterns (29).

The patterns formed by the stove, the dresser, the crockery and the surrounding frames of the pantry and the larder are the perimeters of Mrs. Fairfield's actual domain and serve to imprison her; however, as an older woman she has long been aware of what is expected of her and she is content within this domestic realm: "she thought it looked very nice, very satisfactory" (29).¹²⁶ Linda is not expected to help in the kitchen because her current role is to bear children. The narrative implicitly suggests that she is in the early stages of her fourth pregnancy and carrying the long-awaited son; she only comes to this space to refuel: "'I'm so hungry,' said Linda: 'where can I get something to eat, mother? This is the first time I've been in the kitchen. It says 'mother' all over; everything is in pairs'" (30).

The idea that the mother does everything in pairs, hints at the idea that a woman is not separate from, but rather an extension of her husband – she is 'satisfactory' when one half of a 'pair'. This is precisely why Beryl, the unmarried daughter, is so frustrated. She has not yet

¹²⁵ Morisot, *Laundresses Hanging out the Wash* (1875), oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

¹²⁶ Consider also Mansfield's comments in a letter to Richard Murry which reveals that she is planning a very similar home for her and Murry and Richard: "In your second drawing I note that the larder has shelves. I begin to fill them with strawberry jam and currant jelly. I think more fruit trees ought to be planted now.... I've learnt a lot from these drawings – more than from anything else" 20 June 1921, CL4:247.

met societal expectations; she is not yet part of a pair, nor is she a mother. She has no real purpose and her role is little more than decorative within this domestic sphere: "Her angry glance swept the placid kitchen.... She frowned at the top of her mother's head and bit her lip with impatience. Mother's deliberate way of doing things was simply maddening" ("Prelude" 30). And yet, as indicated in the games she plays with her sister's husband, Beryl wants this life for herself: "The cribbage pegs were like two little people going up the road together.... They were pursuing each other. They did not so much want to get ahead as to keep near enough to talk—to keep near, perhaps that was all" (ibid. 51). Mansfield drives home this point by allotting Beryl "two pairs" in the game, though not in life, versus Stanley's full house: "Fifteen two—fifteen four—and a pair is six and a run of three is nine..." (51).

Domestic Exteriors

Outside in the garden Mansfield sets up the same ideas pertaining to spatial boundaries that are at play within the home, with flower gardens defining female spaces and boxed borders restricting their movement beyond this realm, and fences and gates separating the domestic from the masculine realm. In "Prelude" Kezia's impressions of the grounds of her new home are very telling:

Twice she had found her way back to the big iron gates ... and then had turned to walk up the drive that led to the house, but there were so many little paths on either side. On one side they all led into a tangle of tall dark trees and strange bushes ... this was the frightening side, and no garden at all.... But on the other side of the drive there was a high box border and the paths had box edges and all of them led into a deeper and deeper tangle of flowers (32).

Kezia cannot pass through the "big iron gates"; something always forces her "back to the house". Though there are "many little paths", there are few options. In Mansfield's stories plants are symbols of masculine and feminine sexuality. The small yellow bell-shaped manuka flowers in "At the Bay" which "fell and were scattered" so soon after flowering is how Linda perceives of herself in her role as wife and mother; thus these flowers are feminine. The aloe is both: the "fat swelling plant" mirrors Linda's pregnant body and its "tall stout stem" is reminiscent of Stanley's physicality: naked and "knees bent, because the dressing-table was always ... a bit too low for him" he boasts: "I haven't a square inch of fat on me. Feel that", to which his wife replies "It's rock—it's iron" ("Prelude" 34, 25). Likewise the garden is segregated into masculine and feminine zones. On the masculine side - "the frightening side", symbolised by "tall dark trees" - Kezia faces "a tangle"; on the other - feminine - side, symbolised by flowers, she faces a "deeper tangle": puberty, marriage, pregnancy, childbirth. Kezia might choose from any one of the paths that Mansfield alludes to. In addition to, or instead of marriage and babies, she might forge a career, as Mansfield herself has done. Nevertheless, these paths still lead to something "strange" and

“frightening.” The feminine side – and the domestic realm – is neat, orderly, boxed, limited, and it is to this that Kezia retreats.

Mansfield’s characterisation and description is strikingly similar to Morisot’s imagery in *The Garden Chair* (1885) (see fig. 26). Lightly hatched strokes define trellising and iron gates which confine two young girls to the garden, one of whom, on tip-toes – a Kezia-type perhaps – peers inquisitively out over the gate though which she cannot pass. Decorative topiary bushes – trees which have been allowed to mature to a certain point before undergoing artificial pruning and shaping which prevents them from developing their natural form – mirror the curve of the path which will lead them back to the house. The ambiguity which permeates Mansfield’s symbols, such as the aloe plant in “Prelude”, is also a feature of Morisot’s iconography. The two chairs – one wicker, the other a bench seat, either of which might provide the painting with its title – are neither central to the composition nor accorded eminence; they are however significant motifs of female domestic entrapment hinting at their enforced sedentary lifestyle: a pregnant “Linda Burnell, in a long cane chair, with her feet on a hassock and a plaid over her knees, lay before a crackling fire” (“Prelude” 19). The wicker chair is rendered with the same hatched strokes reserved for the other structural components of the painting which limit female movement; the bench seat’s slats echo the bars of the metaphorical cages in which, like exotic pet birds, they exist. The borders of flowers and tall dark trees which demarcate female perimeters in Mansfield’s gardens mirror those in another of Morisot’s paintings: *In the Garden (Women Gathering Flowers)* (1879), a fence runs horizontally across the middle of the canvas, cutting the women off from the more densely planted area beyond, and instead keeping them within the perimeter of the flower garden.¹²⁷

Cassatt’s status as a foreigner and an unmarried, professional woman meant that she was somewhat less bound by convention than were her female colleagues; her work partly reflects this. Still limited in subject matter and scope, the idea that the domestic realm is a prison of sorts, while it is hinted at in the arrangement of figures within her compositions, is less overt than in Morisot’s.¹²⁸ Cassatt’s approach to domesticity and all that it entails is generally less negative – though it is not as celebratory as then contemporary and some current art historical accounts claim.¹²⁹ Her images of women and children, in their ‘natural

¹²⁷ Morisot, *In the Garden (Women Gathering Flowers)*, (1879), oil on canvas, National Museum, Stockholm.

¹²⁸ Although it is noteworthy that Cassatt’s parents and her elder sister, Lydia followed her to Paris, sharing an apartment with her from 1877. Bullard explains that “For nearly twenty years Cassatt was burdened with the care of her family. This not only interfered with her artistic production.... their presence was a [socially and romantically] restricting responsibility”, 14.

¹²⁹ Neither Frank Getlein (1990), nor E. John Bullard (1976), critiques Cassatt’s style in the context of domestic entrapment. Their focus is on the development of her impressionistic

environment' do not evoke the same degree of claustrophobia and subtle resentment (the latter of which is more pronounced in Mansfield's case), that permeates Morisot and Mansfield's work. Nevertheless, in various paintings there is clearly still that suggestion of the limited female sphere and definite delineated boundaries. In Cassatt's *The Family* (1886), the arrangement of the figures within the garden is representative of their gendered and indoctrinated roles, with the seated mother-figure turned away from the path leading from the house and thus the external world. To her right, her daughter is focused on neither her mother, nor on the baby, but is instead lost in private reverie – or as Frank Getlein describes her, with “that faraway look” characteristic of young girls (56).¹³⁰ The male baby is positioned at the head of that path indicative of the role and the opportunities he will have outside of the domestic sphere. In *Women Picking Fruit* (1891), marked horizontals create separate masculine and feminine zones, like those at play in Morisot's *In the Garden*.¹³¹ The two women in modern dress are situated in what is considered their “natural setting” which carries with it an implicit reference to the Garden of Eden: the seated woman holds an apple in her right hand and the other woman is poised to pick another from the tree (Pollock 1980:109).¹³² Behind the women, a fence separates them from the outside world and a row of flower bushes runs along its domestic perimeter, serving as a second boundary. And again, Mansfield does the same thing in her prose with physical and emotional realms clearly demarcated.

In “The Garden Party”, the garden – supposedly the site of the main activity – is described in evocative detail; most of the action, however, takes place within the home. The women flit between the kitchen and the bedrooms, between the cream puffs and the looking-glass. The men by contrast make their first appearance in the hall, issue a few orders, then leave for the office. When the main protagonist Laura attempts to go outside, she is prevented from travelling far from the kitchen by the “workmen [who] had shouldered their staves and were [themselves] making for the place”, and then by a cry from the house which forces her to return (247-48). The second time Laura attempts to escape the house she endeavours to do so covertly: “Let's go into the garden, out by the back way,’ suggested Laura.... But the back door was blocked by Sadie, Godber's man and Hans” (252-53). The tennis court and the

painterly style – the vigorous brushwork, lighter colour palette and rendering of light effects. Pollock's account in *Mary Cassatt* (1980) is far more insightful in this respect.

¹³⁰ Huysmans points to the influence of the English Pre-Raphaelites and the Symbolists, here evidenced in the girl's red hair, facial expression and profile, see Pollock 1980:69.

¹³¹ Cassatt, *Young Women Picking Fruit* (1891), oil on canvas, Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. See also Cassatt, *Simone and Her Mother in a Garden* (1904), oil on canvas, The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan.

¹³² Whereas Morisot and Cassatt's women are always dressed, male Impressionists Manet and Renoir paint their female figures either partially naked or nude in the garden, see Renoir, *Nude in Sunlight* (1875); Manet, *Luncheon on the Grass* (1862-63).

marquee, the latter of which hides the karakas so that the women are not even permitted a fair view of their enclosure, provide additional boundaries within the perimeters of the garden. In Mansfield's world, "Men hung over palings [but] the children played in the doorways"; and when the garden party draws to a close, Laura and her mother say their "good-byes.... side by side in the porch ..." (259; 257).

The perimeters of the domestic exterior set up by Mansfield in "The Garden Party" are permeable, but the author associates the world outside the "garden gates" with something ominous, leading ultimately to death:

It was growing dusky.... A big dog ran by like a shadow.... and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade.... Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realise it.... Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark (258-59).

Laura's initiation into the world outside her own insular realm of "garden-parties and ... lace frocks" is organised in the same linear method characteristic in Morisot's work (261); Laura's route is prescribed: leaving the lane, "she walked up the tiny path.... the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.... [and] to her horror ... she was shut in the passage", then led to "a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp" (259-60). Evidently painters and writers understood of the domestic realm in similar terms – specifically as a place of confinement as Zola makes the same association between death and the world outside the domestic sphere: a prisoner within her home, as an adult, Thérèse Raquin leaves the house on two significant occasions: once to commit adultery, then to commit murder.¹³³

Burgeoning Suburbia: a Topical Subject

Associated with the city/suburb, male/female dichotomy alluded to in Morisot's *On the Balcony* and *View of Paris from the Trocadéro* is the concept of the specifically bourgeois suburb, and the specifically bourgeois lifestyle that both Morisot and Cassatt along with a number of Impressionist painters and modernist writers enjoyed and illustrated. Significantly, the bourgeois suburb represents something of a transitional realm between the domestic interiors and the urban landscapes prevalent in Impressionism. Morisot painted the above works from her apartment in Passy, on the Western outskirts of Paris. According to historical documents, Passy was the epitome the new bourgeois suburb and considered desirable by all accounts – Morisot lived in Passy for over forty years. Adler writes, "it was situated on a hill at something of a remove from the city but close enough to central Paris to be convenient for traveling to work" (1990:37); it was a place where men

¹³³ Similarly ominous, in "The Little Governess", Herr Regierungsrat leads the Governess "out of the garden down a long alley.... The passage was quite dark", 187.

might “set up the home of the family in the good air and sunshine and in the semi-country, while keeping their offices in the central part of the city” (ibid. 36). Adler’s research reveals that there was extensive contemporary discourse surrounding the development of Passy which again evidences Morisot’s contemporaneity in the selection of her subject.

Interestingly, the descriptions of Passy call to mind the Karori home and environs that Mansfield’s father moved his family to – and to which Mansfield paid homage in her New Zealand stories, specifically “Prelude”: the Burnell’s new home was “a good six and a half miles ... [from] the office” (26); it boasted a tennis court, a vegetable garden, rhubarb beds and grape vines; the air was filled with “the milky scent of ripe grass” (37).

Ah, it was splendid to live in the country—to get right out of that hole of a town once the office was closed; and this drive in the fresh warm air, knowing all the while that his own house was at the other end, with its garden and paddocks ... cows and ... poultry (35).

Passy and like suburbs offered an attractive balance between the “the urban and the rural”, and were desirable because one could avoid “contact with other classes” – an issue at the heart of Mansfield’s “The Garden Party” and “The Doll’s House” (Adler 1990:37). Before and after the Karori interlude, the Beauchamps lived on Tinakori Road, an intersectional site of suburban development but still then home to a mix of classes. Mansfield explores burgeoning colonial suburbia as part of a greater issue: that of social class distinctions.¹³⁴ Although they live in the right house on the right lane, the Burnell girls are still forced to mix with “the daughters of a spry, hard-working little washerwoman” and “an equal number of rude, rough little boys as well” (“The Doll’s House” 386, 385).

For the fact was, the school the Burnell children went to was not at all the kind of place their parents would have chosen if there had been any choice. But there was none. It was the only school for miles. And the consequence was all the children of the neighbourhood, the Judge’s little girls, the doctor’s daughters, the store-keeper’s children, the milkman’s, were forced to mix together.... But the line had to be drawn somewhere. It was drawn at the Kelveys (385-86).

Mansfield’s home on Tinakori Road also provided the setting for “The Garden Party”: “in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of the steep rise that led up to the [Sheridan’s grand] house” sat a row of “little mean dwellings” (254). Mansfield’s notebooks reveal just how much she borrowed from her colonial childhood:

Tinakori Road was ... very mixed.... there were some good houses in it – old ones like ours for instance, hidden away in wildish gardens, & there was no doubt that land there would become extremely valuable, as Father said.... It was high, it was healthy,

¹³⁴ Of course, Mansfield’s “The Doll’s House” calls to mind Ibsen’s play “A Doll’s House” (1879) which reflects a similar critique of domestic space and nineteenth-century marriage and, by implication, class.

the sun poured in all the windows all day long, and once we had a decent tramway service, as Father argued [.]

But it was a little trying to have ones own washerwoman living next door who would persist in attempting to talk to Mother over the fence – & then just beyond her ‘hovel’ as Mother called it... across the road ... was Saunders Lane... there lived an endless family of halfcastes who appeared to have planted their garden with empty jam tins and old saucepans and black iron kettles without lids (NB2:24).¹³⁵

While Passy was a good deal smarter than Tinakori, like the Beauchamp/Burnell/Sheridan home, Morisot’s apartment was situated at the top of the rise – it was from this perspective that the respective artists saw their world and it was this view which subsequently informed their art.¹³⁶

The Masculine Domestic Perspective

As stated earlier in this chapter, Morisot and Cassatt were not the only Impressionists who took the domestic for their subject matter. Underlying Manet, Degas and Caillebotte’s representations of comfortable domesticity are often less than subtle messages hinting the increasing fragmentation within families and, like their female colleagues, they point to the individual’s alienation in modern society. In their portrayal of strained family relationships and uncommunicative couples the artists reveal the disparity between husbands and wives, sometimes implying such dissension is a by-product of their mercantile success and subsequent social ascension.¹³⁷ In *The Bellelli Family* (1858-67), (see fig. 27) – a portrait of his aunt Laura, her husband, Gennaro and their two daughters – Degas captures his sitters’ shared discomfort within their materially comfortable sitting room. It is an unconventional family portrait with the placement and poses of the figures reinforcing the fragmentation that has taken place within the family. Gennaro, shown in side profile, with his back almost to the viewer, is preoccupied with his paperwork and only reluctantly receives his family’s intrusion. He appears to be addressing the younger Giovanna, whose relaxed posture but inability to meet her father’s eye indicates she is mildly aware of, though not wholly understanding of, the dissonance between her parents. Her profile echoes her mother’s and serves as a reminder of the closeness Mrs. Bellelli once enjoyed with her husband, prior to the pressures of marriage, family and society fractured their intimacy. The elder of the two girls, Giulia is more awkward and fully cognisant of the estrangement; their interchange is a

¹³⁵ Originally Notebook 45, used predominantly for writing ‘The Aloe’.

¹³⁶ Adler sees the middle-class suburb as a key site of modernity and demonstrates the degree to which Passy informed and influenced Morisot’s painting, see: Kathleen Adler, “The Suburban, the Modern and ‘une Dame de Passy’”, *Oxford Art Journal* 12.1 (1989): 3-13.

¹³⁷ The bourgeoisie’s growing wealth afforded them increasing opportunities which took many husbands out of the home and away from their families more frequently. Like Flaubert, Manet and Degas depict bourgeois men indulging in the entertainments that their new status and fortune afforded them. Such imagery is the topic of Chapter 5.

mere formality before the females depart. One foot crossed behind the other, her hands clasped in a bid to prevent her fidgeting and thus make obvious her discomfort, Giulia looks out at the artist and perceived viewer as if to gauge his or her judgement of the family. Though Giulia's red hair aligns her with her father and reinforces their familial bond, her mother's proprietorial hand on her shoulder indicates that, no longer a child, she is now under her mother's rule and will be moulded into the young lady that her social class prescribes – “for according to the tenants of nineteenth-century feminine pedagogy, a mother inculcated in her daughter the roles of daughter, wife, and mother” (Higonnet 1990:73).

In another of Degas's unconventional family portraits, *Place de la Concorde (Vicomte Lepic and his daughters)* (1875), (see fig. 28) neither the figures nor the location which give the painting its title are the central focus of the composition. There is a void where one expects the subject – a stylistic technique which corresponds with Mansfield's 'plotless' narratives. The cropping reinforces both that sense of instantaneity, of its being a glimpse or a snapshot, and denies the work portraiture status. The figures seem lost in their own reverie, aloof from their surroundings and from one another. This is not, however, a painting about nothing; it is representative of the disunity prevalent in modern society, particularly within families – here between a father and his daughters. The painting's setting deems it an urban landscape but it is domestic too, owing to the familial relationship of the three main figures. Degas's representation in *Place de la Concorde* calls to mind Mansfield's characterisation in “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” which is replete with the cigar-smoking, top-hatted “Pa man” and daughters in matching costume, though Mansfield casts them somewhat older and thus more aware of their familial and social responsibilities (Alpers 1982:7). Despite their father's passing, they remain as terrified of displeasing him as they were when he was alive:

Josephine had had a moment of absolute terror at the cemetery, while the coffin was lowered, to think that she and Constantia had done this thing without asking his permission. What would father say when he found out? For he was bound to find out sooner or later. He always did.... She heard his stick thumping (268).¹³⁸

Mansfield continually returned to the theme of father-daughter relationships. In “Prelude” and “At the Bay” the symbol of the hat – here a bowler – and stick are again employed as symbols of Stanley's gender and status.¹³⁹ Burnell is the provider of a comfortable home and,

¹³⁸ So powerful were these symbols that they sufficed as subjects in their own right. Félix Edouard Vallotton (1865-1925), for example, made them the subject of his simple painting of a domestic interior: *The Top Hat* (1887), (originally entitled *Still Life*), oil on canvas, Musée Malraux, Le Havre.

¹³⁹ Again, in “Susannah”, Mansfield represents the estrangement between a father and his daughters – in this case instigated by their mother's inflated sense of gratitude.

in “Prelude”, of the home-grown produce and poultry which graces the dinner table – for which the girls are taught to be grateful, on cue and in unison.

Many of Mansfield’s stories offer estranged family portraits in which communication is stunted or limited, and where certain characters live in constant fear of displeasing one another, particularly their spouse. Linda is a prime example, as is Anne in “New Dresses” – both suppress their feelings and withhold information from their husbands just as Mansfield was often forced to do with Murry: “Oh Bogey I WISH that I had not told you the truth” (CL2:27);¹⁴⁰ “I cannot write to you as I wish.... Oh, that I should have hurt you so. No, I will never cry out again” (CL2:30).¹⁴¹ Mansfield’s highly strung Anne takes her marital frustrations out on her youngest daughter:

... alone in the dining room Anne’s frown deepened and her mouth drooped—a sharp line showed from nose to chin.... There seemed to be no air in the room, she felt stuffed up, and it seemed so useless tiring herself out with fine sewing for Helen. One never got through with children and never had any gratitude from them (“New Dresses” 539).

Helen is in fact, more like her mother than the elder daughter, Rose, whom Anne holds to be exceptional. Anne’s frustrations are born out of her repressed guilt, knowing that in due course as Higonet suggests, she will induct her own daughters into the life she finds both suffocating and a charade.

Like the Impressionists, Mansfield employs the motif of the balcony railings to suggest domestic or marital entrapment. However, in several stories she does so in reverse such as in “The Man Without a Temperament.” At his wife’s gentle but persistent request, “He takes a chair and sits on the balcony.... Far away lightning flutters—flutters like a wing—flutters like a broken bird that tries to fly and sings again and again struggles.... He gets very cold sitting there, staring at the balcony rail. Finally he comes inside” (141-42). In this case, both Robert and his wife are broken birds; she quite obviously suffers from tuberculosis – Mansfield often referred to her lungs as wings – but he too is broken by the demands of caring for her; it is a role which confines him to the domestic realm just as it does her. Zinman, who conducts an insightful analysis of the symbol of the caged bird and its implications in Mansfield’s stories and letters, writes, “The bird is Mansfield’s image of the victim: small, frail, and equipped with the means of escape, yet ultimately and inevitably defeated” (461). Mansfield often reveals marital estrangements and registers dysfunctional relationships through her characters’ interior monologues which are entirely at odds with

¹⁴⁰ KM to JMM, 20 January 1918.

¹⁴¹ KM to JMM, 22 January 1918.

their shared dialogue.¹⁴² While Linda ponders the simultaneous feelings of love and hatred she has for the husband she is “so fond of in the daytime”, but whose sheer physicality frightens and repulses her: “If only he wouldn’t jump so at her”, Stanley battles with what “he wanted to say.... but for some reason he couldn’t say it” (“Prelude” 53, 54; “At the Bay” 241).

Mansfield’s stories are peopled with uncommunicative couples, particularly brutish males and languid females, or hen-pecked men and their bird-like wives, as in “The Man without a Temperament”. Robert’s periods of aloof silence force his invalid wife to overcompensate but the gulf between them brought about by both his grief and his resentment of Jinnie’s condition is clear for all to see: “Oh, we all know Robert” (138). In “A Dill Pickle” Vera’s interior monologue contradicts the conversation she has with her ex-lover – another reminder of inherent female duplicity. The tone and mood of their conversation is reminiscent of the atmosphere rendered by Manet in *In the Conservatory* (1879). Manet’s male figure draped familiarly over the back of the seat recounts some past event – as indicated in the direction of his gaze as he battles to remember the specifics of who said what, and in his manner of pointing at his seated wife to indicate she was part of it all, and does she remember? She makes no effort to volunteer her side of the story, or to supply him with that phrase he cannot quite recall. Her posture is almost casual, indicative of their past intimacy, and her face reveals little but suggests something between ruefulness and blank resignation. She makes no attempt to physically engage with the man.

In Mansfield’s story, neither person is married. He finds Vera “changed very much” and for the better; she too finds him “far better looking.... Now he had the air of a man who had found his place in life.... He must have made money, too”; and “As he spoke.... the strange beast in her bosom began to purr” (“A Dill Pickle” 169; 173). But, she also remembers “that trick of his—the trick of interrupting her—how it used to exasperate her” and his delight and shock at her extravagance the night she dined on caviar at seven and sixpence: “No, really, that *is* eating money” (168, 172). The understanding which she believed they once had shared, life and experience has taught her to recognise as mere youthful naivety. She is soon reminded of his mocking ways, his meanness and his egotism, and brushing aside the fleeting hope that their unexpected meeting might lead to something, she is forced to

¹⁴² In a notebook entry of around June 1922, Mansfield describes a family living not far from her chalet at Randogne – it is an interesting observation of a marital relationship: “I have watched this big heavy woman, moving so sullen, plodding in and out with her pails and brushes, coming to the door at midday and evening to look for her husband and child. She looks neither happy nor sad; she looks resigned and stupefied. Sometimes when she stops and stares round her she is like a cow that is being driven along the road, & sometimes when leaning out of the window she watches her quick husband, so jaunty, cutting up logs of wood, I think she hates him. The sight of her suffocates him”, *NB2*:322.

acknowledge, “I am as alone as ever” (174). Manet’s painting and Mansfield’s story are unusual in that there is very little action; both convey that sense of a chance and soon forgotten encounter. Mansfield offers Vera no positive outcome. Unlike the male character, Vera’s gender will limit her from realising her dreams of intercontinental travel.¹⁴³ Manet’s portrait offers little other than a glimpse of a modern bourgeois couple caught, either in reverie, or in a one-way conversation.¹⁴⁴ Like many of Mansfield’s stories, “A Dill Pickle” is hinged upon the suggestion of anticipated romance and subsequent disillusion as the characters – often in fleeting ephiphanic moments – realise their ultimate aloneness.¹⁴⁵ Despite the very different medium in which she worked, Mansfield’s achievements mirror the Impressionists’ experiments in capturing the very real sense of despondency so prevalent in modern society.

The loneliness and sense of isolation which the Impressionists evoke in their family and group portraits, particularly through their unenthusiastic mothers and uncommunicative couples, is indicative of what was perceived as the modern human condition and, in part, reflected the unease brought about by the unstable political climate in which they worked – initiated by the Revolution of 1848 and further exacerbated following the Franco-Prussian war.¹⁴⁶ A little over a generation later, Mansfield was living and working in, and responding to similar circumstances, with World War I fracturing couples and families, sometimes irreparably. Ostensibly, she was free to write about whatever she wished, hence her experimentation with the different styles – satire, pastiche, dialogue, colonial – which evidence her various allegiances and influences. Her first collection of stories, *In a German Pension*, is much darker in tone than her second – *Prelude* (1916) – which is generally felt to carry Mansfield’s true signature. Different again were her magazine contributions, such as those she made to *The New Age* and to *Rhythm*, with “The Woman at the Store” – dubbed a ‘colonial’ story – evidence of Mansfield’s response to *Rhythm*’s editorial call “for an art that was contemporary, naturalistic, even brutal” – though it is worth noting that the story is still limited to the domestic realm, with the fragmented relationship between a mother and

¹⁴³ Just as Linda’s gender prevented her from realising hers.

¹⁴⁴ See also, Manet, *At Père Lathuille’s* (1879), oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tournai, within which an overly earnest young man stares imploringly into the eyes of his female companion whose physical uprightness and closed lips perhaps deny him the affirmation he seeks. The nearby presence of the waiter, paused, listening, also denies the man the intimacy he desires, indicated in his body language – leaning forward, his arms almost entirely encircling the woman whose hands remain firmly fixed, either side of her plate, to the cafe table.

¹⁴⁵ Such as in “In a Café”, “The Tiredness of Rosabel”, “Je ne parle pas français”, “Bliss”, “Psychology”, “Pictures”, “The Man Without a Temperament”, and “Revelations”.

¹⁴⁶ Morisot’s correspondence of this time offers interesting insights into the realities of living with the threat of not only the Prussians, but the riotous behaviour of the French (see Rouart 62). Cassatt’s career spanned three major wars – the American Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War and World War I. Mathews notes that Cassatt’s letters are permeated with an awareness of the historical context in which she lived and worked, 1984:10.

daughter – itself a product of her parents' previous marital estrangement, and the husband's subsequent murder – underpinning the plot. Like both Morisot and Cassatt, Mansfield often tailored her work to a particular audience's expectations; but unlike them, her audience was broader. Working as she was in a new century, and writing under pseudonyms when she required anonymity, her sphere – by which I mean the social parameters within which she operated and the cultural resources and opportunities she had available to her in the twentieth century – was greater than both Morisot and Cassatt's. Nevertheless, the subject that dominates her oeuvre, like theirs, is undeniably a woman's world – and the method in which she depicts this feminine realm is true to Impressionism's aesthetic and stylistic principles.

CHAPTER 5

URBAN LANDSCAPES

Cosmopolitan versus Colonial

London was for Mansfield everything that Wellington was not: “for the most part it was Art, Art, Art, and youth, scarlet youth, and morality, and life, and ... glorious irresponsibility ... intoxicating glamour” (“In a Café” 34-37). At Queen’s Mansfield enjoyed her first taste of freedom and relative independence. This formative period opened her eyes to the world outside of the one which her parents had in mind for their daughters and while her love of the natural landscape, especially New Zealand’s coast and bush would remain an important reservoir of story ideas, this early urban experience fuelled an insatiable desire for the cosmopolitan – not early twentieth century colonial Wellington: “It’s London ever calling me” (NB1:86).¹ And yet it was her colonial status that enabled her to so readily take up and draw from new places. Mansfield quickly assumed the role of the contemporary chronicler as described by Baudelaire in *The Painter of Modern Life*: she was “by nature a great traveller and cosmopolitan” and she captured in her respective medium “the moral and aesthetic feelings of ... [her] time” (Baudelaire 6, 2). Like Baudelaire, Mansfield was liberated and inspired by urbanity, and like him she imposed her own image upon it according to the mood – hence the stories which are less about character and plot, and instead focused upon those fleeting and contradictory impressions which shape the urban experience: “I do believe ... one’s *outlook* is the climate in which ones art either thrives or doesn’t grow. I am dead certain that there is no separating Art & Life. And no artist can afford to leave out Life. If we mean to work we must go straight to Life for our nourishment. There is no substitute” (CL4:148).² Secure in the knowledge of her bourgeois family’s financial backing – which she affected to despise but remained dependent on – she enjoyed a pseudo-bohemian transient existence. And for all her expressed regrets and introspection in the last tuberculosis-ridden years of her life, particularly those pertaining to city-living, the urban landscapes of London and Paris especially, and the disasters she encountered therein provided her with some of the best material for her stories.

Back in London in August 1908 following a nineteen month interlude in New Zealand (December 1906 – July 1908), Mansfield took up residence at Beauchamp Lodge. Her letters and diaries provide a paper trail which reveals that she immediately and absolutely immersed herself in the culture of her time – taking in the new wave of so-called

¹ 5 October 1907.

² KM to Richard Murry, c.10 December 1920.

Impressionist music,³ attending concerts at Queen's Hall, the Palace Music Hall, Bechstein Hall and Victoria Hall, visiting the Tate and the Guildhall Museum, and frequenting cafés such as the Café Royal near Piccadilly Circus,⁴ which drew other artistic and literary people including George Moore, Augustus John, Nina Hamnett and William Orpen. Mansfield drew directly on these experiences – both positive and negative – in her writing, with cafe society,⁵ train journeys to both local destinations and to European cities,⁶ topical events and various other markers of modernity such as the cinema, artists' private views and the World Fairs woven into her stories.⁷ The urban themes she explores therein parallel those explored by the Impressionists – loneliness, isolation, world-weariness, disillusion, and the exploitation of working-class women; and her technical rendering of these themes – the distinctive formal qualities employed to realise them, particularly via cropping – also correspond with Impressionism.

Nineteenth-Century Paris

The site of unprecedented growth, development and change during the nineteenth century and embroiled in political upheaval for an entire century, it is no wonder that the city of Paris itself became an icon in European Art. Despite the fatalities brought about by the repeated insurgencies, the population of Paris doubled during the first half of the Nineteenth Century as a direct result of industrial development, with many rural people either forced to abandon their pastoral or agricultural livelihoods as mechanisation increasingly made their positions redundant, or doing so voluntarily in the hope of prospering in the city.⁸ The influx was facilitated by improvements made to rail transport systems following the State's positive intervention in 1842. Consequently, the city became increasingly crowded and insanitary and much of the population lived in intolerable conditions. Upon his appointment as Prefect of the Seine in 1853, Baron Haussmann undertook the urban renewal of Paris – a project which dramatically changed not only the face of this once partly medieval, partly classical city, but came to alter the direction of modern French art.⁹

³ A concert review notes Mme. Marchesi's performance at Queen's Hall at which she sang Bizet's *Les Pécheurs de Perles/The Pearl Fishers* (1863) and Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (1845), and "a group of those 'Impressionist' songs", *The Times* (2 June 1905): 7. Marchesi also performed at the Bechstein Hall. See also Chapter 1.

⁴ See CL1:126, KM to JMM [?May/June 1913]; also CL1:198 and CL1:281.

⁵ For example, "Je ne parle pas Français", "In a Café", "The Young Girl", "A Dill Pickle".

⁶ For example, "The Journey to Bruges", "The Little Governess", "An Indiscreet Journey", "The Escape", "Marriage à la Mode", "Something Childish But Very Natural".

⁷ In "Pictures": Ada Moss visits four film agencies and has a letter from another. In "Daphne" Mansfield describes an artist's independent exhibition – "Private View", a late nineteenth-century concept, 463. In "Bank Holiday", she refers to the London, Paris and Brussels Exhibitions (the Great Exhibitions or World Fairs of 1851-1937), 367.

⁸ See Thomson, 19-26; and Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).

⁹ Maria and Godfrey Blunden provide a good summary of these political events, 89-90.

While early nineteenth-century French painting had been dominated by the work of Ingres and Delacroix whose subjects were drawn from history and literature, the artists emerging in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century registered the changing face of France, and contemporary Paris particularly. Their work represented a continuum of tradition – primarily in their profligacy within both institutional and independent practice which reinforced Paris’s position as the art capital of the world – and, simultaneously, a break from convention in that they adopted entirely new methods of representation. The Impressionists took for their subjects those which had previously been considered unworthy of representation – in some cases, even vulgar – but which they were witness to in their modern times including drunks and prostitutes in cafés.¹⁰ Thomson lists the motifs the new city of Paris offered its painters following the advent of Haussmannisation: wide open boulevards and avenues, spacious garden squares, modern lighting systems and gleaming train stations. The reconfigured geography of Paris provided a diverse range of viewpoints for the voyeuristic Impressionist’s observing ‘eye’. In the 1870s and ‘80s especially, Parisians were collectively determined to prove that the city and its residents could recover from the recent devastation brought about by the Franco-Prussian war in particular. Thomson quotes from the 1881 edition of Baedeker’s guide which advertised Paris as a “gay, splendour-loving, pleasure-seeking city” and she explains that the middle and upper classes quickly resumed the social habits for which they were famed, with the theatres, café-concerts and the bordellos enjoying great patronage (22).¹¹

This renewed social and industrial activity fuelled the imaginations of the Impressionists. In *Rue Mosnier with Pavés* (1878) Manet depicts the progress being made on the streets and hints at the licentious business taking place behind closed doors – the waiting carriages of gentleman callers indicative of the dubious nature of this area.¹² Caillebotte, in images such as *Le Pont de l’Europe* (1876), alludes to the severity and sterility of the broad new urban spaces.¹³ Caillebotte’s figures reveal which class most benefitted from the redevelopment, juxtaposing a bourgeois couple, oblivious to the laborious work being carried out beneath them, taking a leisurely stroll across one of the new bridges which spanned the rail lines exiting Gare Saint-Lazare, with two working-class men, both peripheral figures and relatively in shadow, who look beyond and below the bridge to the industry and labour

¹⁰ Mansfield was not above vulgar subjects herself. In ‘Ole Underwood’ (1912), the protagonist, having just served twenty years for murdering his wife, heads into the local pub and later murders a kitten.

¹¹ The theatre and brothels were also popular subjects in Japanese prints which justified the Impressionists’ interest in these topics.

¹² Manet, *Rue Mosnier with Pavés* (1878), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

¹³ Caillebotte, *Pont de l’Europe* (1876), oil on canvas, Musée du Petit Palais, Geneva.

which ultimately led to the displacement of tens of thousands of Parisians.¹⁴ In summarising the Impressionists' endeavours, Duranty points to their penchant for both natural and urban landscapes:

They have tried to render the walk, motion, hurry and intermingling of passers-by, just as they have tried to render the trembling of leaves, the shimmer of water and the vibration of air drenched with light, just as they have managed to catch both the iridescent play of sunshine and the soft envelope of cloudy skies (cited in Blunden 142).¹⁵

In *Boulevard des Capucines* Monet – who in due course turned away from urban landscapes, instead preferring the more rural or coastal outlooks which Mansfield also came to favour – depicts a popular Impressionist subject: the bustle of pedestrians and carriages on one of Paris's busiest commercial roads (see fig. 6). Despite brightening skies, a grey pallor lies over the city, snow lies atop the carriages, and the reflective wet street provides an impermanent ground for the multitude of tiny anonymous figures. These same city scenes could have inspired some of Mansfield's best prose. In "Life of Ma Parker" Mansfield's protagonist reflecting on her anguish-ridden and isolating life – "she'd kept herself to herself, and never once had she been seen to cry. Never by a living soul" – longs to find a space where she might finally have a good cry, but finds "There was nowhere" (307, 309): "It was cold in the street. There was a wind like ice. People went flitting by, very fast; the men walked like scissors; the woman trod like cats. And nobody knew—nobody cared" (308). In their urban portraits Impressionists reveal the displacement and the dispossession that constituted modernity, and how it affected men and women across the social classes.

In their multiple views of the city the Impressionists registered the pace of modern life and in doing so demonstrated how fractured society had become. T. J. Clark points specifically to the "unexpected desolation" in Caillebotte's urban landscapes (15). The Impressionists chose unusual vantage points, from transitional positions such as balconies, which attested to their innovation as painters but also, as Maria and Godfrey Blunden point out, to the ever-increasing pedestrian and vehicle traffic which meant that it was not always possible to set up one's easel in the street (137). In their images of the working class, including prostitutes, dancers, singers, laundresses and milliners, the Impressionists denied the haute bourgeoisie's eminence as subjects even though they relied upon their patronage. They also highlight the respective classes' interdependence, with the middle and upper classes providing the demand and their social inferiors providing them with an array of services from millinery to prostitution. Flaubert's immaculately tailored Frédéric satiates his

¹⁴ Although, as M. and G. Blunden explain, Parisians across the social classes were affected by the redevelopment of Paris (see 88-89).

¹⁵ Edmond Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture* (1876).

sexual appetite outside of the bourgeois homes in which he dines, for there were numerous “women at his disposal” (464). In “All Serene!” (1912) Mansfield hints at the liberties Hugh Rutherford takes with his servants, something his wife will not quite bring herself to admit: “Mona had never got accustomed to her husband’s smile.... other people felt the charm of it, too. Other women, she was certain. Sometimes she thought that even the servants watched for it” (473). In their representations of the bourgeoisie, particularly the women, in private (preparing for those activities which took them out into society) and in public (enjoying the various entertainments that the city offered) the Impressionists point to the spectacle of the middle-upper class lifestyles. On a purely aesthetic level, such scenes provided the artists with a rich and complex tapestry of colours, sounds and textures.

As explained in Chapter 1, although they exhibited collectively under their newly ascribed title, Impressionist practice was diverse. Monet quickly established himself as a landscapist rather than a figure painter. Renoir who experienced some degree of dispossession within the rapidly modernising city and yearned for the romantic old Paris, placed a greater value on the people within his landscapes, according them features which identified their place or role within society (Thomson 2000:23); for example, in *The Pont des Arts* (1867) the passengers on the ferry, the wharf workers and the fashionable women promenading receive equal painterly attention.¹⁶ Renoir’s images of women are often idealised portraits of middle-upper class women. By contrast, Manet demonstrated a preference for the sordid over the fashionable aspects of modern society. In his portraits of women – who were more often prostitutes than women of his own social class – the tone is often impersonal, indicative of his detachment; something Phoebe Pool suggests that the public possibly found more insulting than the vulgarity of the subject, or even the nudity of the famed *Olympia* (1985:6).

Irrespective of temperament and individual painterly style, the variety of stimulus available to the Parisians, and the pace at which the city continued to change became the focus of the avant-garde artists’ practice – from the glancing reverberations of artificial and natural light,¹⁷ to the fractured and distorted reflections in windows and mirrors and on marble surfaces;¹⁸ from the tantalising blend of crinoline, flowers – both real and artificial – and strings of pearls against powdered décolletages,¹⁹ to the image and the sounds of the musicians tuning their instruments in the darkened orchestra pit before the brightly lit stage;²⁰ the shrilling conversations emanating from the booths, the loges and the foyer,²¹ and

¹⁶ Renoir, *The Pont des Arts* (1867), oil on canvas, the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena.

¹⁷ See Renoir, *The Ball at the Moulin de la Galette*.

¹⁸ See Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (see fig. 5).

¹⁹ See Renoir, *The Loge* (see fig. 16).

²⁰ See Degas, *The Orchestra at the Opera* (see fig. 13)

in the cafés from the tables both inside and outside on the street;²² the clatter of horse drawn carriages on the old cobbles and the newly paved boulevards;²³ to the Seine, the city's heart, an "age-old natural artery" and an icon representative of both Paris and modernity which ensured a "commonality of urban experience" amongst old and new residents (Thomson 2000:24).²⁴ The Impressionists' collective ambition entailed capturing the quintessence of the modern experience in its totality in a manner which had never before been realised in French painting but which writers such as Baudelaire and Balzac had already been exploring. Echoing Baudelaire, Diane Wolfe Levy lists those characteristics which "transmit the essence of city life: simultaneity and fragmentation of action, change of perspective, anonymity and multiplicity of character" and points to the "kaleidoscopic" nature of modernity (70). In this respect, Christoph Heinrich concludes that the Impressionists' efforts to represent what Monet called "l'instantanéité" contained "an intrinsic and irresolvable contradiction in the aim to preserve in permanent form the passing moment" (32).

Mansfield's Urban Landscapes

Like the painters Manet, Degas and Caillebotte, Mansfield's recurrent motifs are those associated with modernity: cafes and boulevards, hotels and train stations, and her subjects include the bourgeoisie at balls, soirées and on holiday; the working-class women who facilitated their lifestyles; and her fellow passengers *en route* and in transit. In these environments Mansfield rapidly recorded the series of fleeting impressions made upon her. In a letter written from Paris in 1908 she describes the rail and boat journey from London:

... the doors were slammed – a last view of the wide platform and we had rushed our way into the country.... Newhaven: all change. Tired sleepy people, children crying fretfully ... stream along the platform up the dark gangway to the darker boat. I have a confused impression of rain and [? dancing] lights and sailors in great coats & boots like Flying Dutchman mariners (CL1:74-75).²⁵

Mansfield's contemporaries were responding to the same stimuli. Woolf, who like Mansfield developed an impressionistic narrative style, describes eavesdropping on a conversation between a man and a woman on a train, their physical appearances and the impression that the surroundings made upon her: "At the same time of course, we were rattling into London. past great buildings, flaring lights, sudden glimpses" (1986:508). Woolf claims that the woman's character imposed itself on her to such a degree that it almost demanded that a

²¹ See Manet, *Masked Ball at the Opera* (1873).

²² See Renoir, *Small Café* (1876-77), oil on canvas, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, Holland.

²³ See Pissarro, *The Place du Théâtre Français, Rain* (1898).

²⁴ See Renoir, *The Ponts des Arts*.

²⁵ KM to Garnett Trowell, 21 October 1908.

novel be written about her which recalls an excerpt in Mansfield's "Juliet": "She liked to listen to little pieces of conversation, create her idea of their lives" (NB1:52).

Mansfield was primarily and enduringly preoccupied with the ephemeral aspects of a scene or event, particularly those which created atmosphere and which hinted at the transitory nature of life. This is demonstrated in her description of the Canadian dancer, Maud Allen's performance at the Palace Music Hall: "As she dances, under the changing lights, coming and going to the sound of a thin, heady music which marks the rhythm of her movements like a kind of clinging drapery, she seems to sum up the appeal of everything that is passing, and coloured and to be enjoyed" (CL1:61).²⁶ Mansfield's observations are reminiscent of those characteristics most striking in Degas's images of ballet dancers, opera singers, musicians and café-concert performers – over twenty of which were displayed at the Impressionist exhibition at the Grafton in London in 1905. Degas's *Café Concert Singer* (1880), (see fig. 30) is a near perfect illustration of Mansfield's description and demonstrates that the two artists were similarly inspired by such images and endeavouring to reproduce the effect within their respective media. The same ideas are at play in Degas's *Orchestra Musicians* (1872) which contains an ethereal, almost melancholic quality in its suggestion of the passing moment (see fig. 12). Taking her final curtsey, Degas's prima ballerina provides a luminous contrast to the relative darkness of the stage set, to the subdued *corps de ballet* who lie in shadow to her right, and to the cropped figures of the sombre musicians who dominate the lower half of the canvas. Two brightly lit bouquets on the darkened stage echo the form of the dancer's rose-trimmed tulle tutu and serve as a further reminder of the transience of beauty and life.

Paris in particular inspired pictorial accounts that links Mansfield to the Impressionists:

I am more than sorry to leave Paris. Indeed it is easy to realise what Paris means....
The picturesque aspect of it all – the people – and at night from the top of the tram – the lighted interiors of houses – you know the effect – people gathered round a lamp lighted table – a little, homely café – a laundry – a china shop – or at the corners the old chestnut sellers (CL1:77-78).²⁷

Degas's perception was strikingly similar; he writes "I must work hard at evening effects, lamps, candles, etc. The point is not always to show the source of light but the effect of light" (cited in Blunden 156). Late in life the same effects were still making an impression upon Mansfield; arriving in Paris, she describes a scene that evidences her Impressionist's temperament, with a touch of Zola: "... warm and shadowy with wide open spaces and lamps a kind of glow worm red – not yellow at all. Then began the chase. It ended in a perfectly

²⁶ KM to Garnett Trowell, 23 September 1908.

²⁷ KM to Garnett Trowell, 24 October 1908.

FEARFUL room that looked like the scene of a long line of murders" (CL5:286).²⁸ For Mansfield and the Impressionists light had pictorial possibilities and symbolic qualities. Like the Impressionists – and as advocated by Baudelaire – Mansfield renders the life on the streets and in the cafes with that sense of being a participant in the action and yet simultaneously detached from it – and she does so with the same ostensible rapidity accorded to the Impressionists' endeavours.

Baudelaire espoused the artistic and historical value of "the beauty of circumstance and the sketch of manners", citing specifically "the depiction of bourgeois life and the pageant of fashion.... trivial life.... the daily metamorphosis of external things" as merit-worthy subjects, all of which, he advises, should be executed in "the most expeditious" manner correlative with the "rapidity of movement" which constitutes modernity (1, 4, 4). As seen in the excerpt above, entries in Mansfield's notebooks and descriptions in her letters are punctuated by dashes. In the stories she then derives from these entries, these and Mansfield's frequent use of ellipses at the end of sentences lend the works not only an unfinished quality but a sense of momentum which propels the action forward in a manner which mimics the haste synonymous with modernity. In response to Murry's query as to the precise nature of her dashes (specifically in "The Stranger" (1920)), Mansfield explains:

No, my dash isn't quite the feminine dash (certainly when I was younger it was). But it was intentional in that story. I was trying to do away with the three dots. They have been so abused by female & male writers that I fight shy of them – *much* tho' I need them. The truth is – punctuation is infernally difficult. If I had time I'd like to write an open letter to the A. [Athenaeum] on the subject. Its boundaries need to be enlarged. But I won't go into it now....If only there was time to write all one wants to write. There seems less & less time (CL4:118-19).²⁹

This overarching sense of urgency never left her; describing in her notebook the nature of story writing Mansfield writes, "It's always a kind of race, to get in as much as one can before it *disappears*" (NB2:318).³⁰ This exigency correlates to a series of glimpses, one after another, of shifting perceptions or viewpoints found in both painting – as epitomised in Monet's series works – and in literature, as demonstrated in Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*; later dubbed stream-of-consciousness, it became characteristic of modernist fiction.

Mansfield's early pictorial evocations of London, like those of Paris, are rendered in equally impressionistic terms, though with an underlying grimness:

Last night I went to the theatre ... and came right back here from Trafalgar Square in a hansom. It was close upon twelve o'clock. The sky was flushed with faint fires – hollowed into a perfect pearl. Dim men and women were clustering in broken

²⁸ KM to Brett, 3 October 1922.

²⁹ KM to JMM, 23 November 1920.

³⁰ 17 January 1922.

groups round the doors of the public houses. From some of the bars came the sound of horrible laughter. And all the streets stretching out on every side like the black web of some monstrous spider (CL1:70).³¹

The passage above might have come straight from Flaubert or Zola with both famous for their vivid descriptions of the city of Paris and its people. In July 1921, from Switzerland Mansfield again recalls the spider imagery articulated in several of the London letters of 1908: "How I have hated England! Never, never will I live there. Its a kind of *negation* to me and there is always a kind of silky web or net of complications spread to catch one. Nothing goes forward" (CL4:255).³² Ensnared in the Chalet des Sapins and at peace here for a time – "That queer chain of modern life seems to be unknown" – Mansfield enjoyed the forest outlook and "little hoarse streams & small flowery lawns, & troops of white goats", all of which she found a far cry from the South of France's "casinos ... motorcars ... and rich-an'-great" which no longer held any allure (CL4:254; CL4:274).³³ Again Mansfield draws on the motif of the spider web though here it seems to work in reverse so that the entangling web is eliminated, or rather one is freed from it: "One takes the train direct from Paris to Sierre – the valley town – & then one winds up the mountain like a spider eating its web" (ibid).³⁴

Mansfield's Love/Hate Relationship with the City

Murry insists that there was no separation between Mansfield's "living self and the writing self", that "her art was not really distinct from her life" (Murry 1959:73, 72). However, as a fiction writer, Mansfield readily admitted that "As I write I falsify slightly" – a confession which parallels Degas's claim that "one conveys a sense of the truth by means of untruth" (CL4:92, Degas cited in Grove 46).³⁵ Mansfield's declaration of guilt also echoes the recollection of a teacher who claimed that Mansfield was "imaginative to the point of untruth" (Mrs Smith cited in Alpers 1982:19). Nevertheless, in every story she drew on personal experience to lesser and greater degrees. Her early bitter experiences abroad – the miscarriages and recurrent and often debilitating bouts of ill health, the cramped and unsanitary conditions in which she lived and worked at 57 Chancery Lane during *The Blue Review* period, the intermittent periods of poverty, her perpetually testing relationship with Murry – and those she entertained with the Garsington and Bloomsbury Set, and

³¹ KM to Garnett Trowell, 13 October 1908.

³² KM to Brett, 25 July 1921; and yet, eight months later from Paris Mansfield wrote Baker that she would likely return to England annually (from April to September), to live with Murry: "I feel it is my duty to spend six months of every year there with him", KM to Baker, 14 March 1922, CL5:106.

³³ KM to Brett, 25 July 1921; KM to Sylvia Lynd, early September 1921.

³⁴ See also KM to Brett, 25 July 1921: "We are living on tops [of mountains] that are over 5,000 feet high and the only way to get here is to be drawn out of the valley up the sheer ride in a little glass carriage that pauses and winds and sways like a spider in mid air", CL4:254.

³⁵ KM to JMM, 31 October 1920.

Sobieniowski's betrayal and blackmail manifested in a demonstrable ambivalence to the city of London specifically.³⁶ In a late letter Mansfield sums up the feelings with which she was plagued her entire adult life: "London ... is an awful place to live in. Not only is the climate abominable but it's a continual chase after distraction. There's no peace of mind – no harvest to be reaped out of it" (CL5:115).³⁷ From an early stage she developed a corresponding tendency to idealise places other than London – the English countryside,³⁸ Paris,³⁹ Bandol,⁴⁰ Menton,⁴¹ even Wellington.⁴² Writing from Paris in 1915 Mansfield describes a sordid, almost hostile but nevertheless authentic environment which provides her with the impetus to write:

A wind like a carving knife cut through the streets – and everybody began to run – so did I into a café... It was a little café & hideous – with a black marble top to the counter... Against the window beat a dirty French flag, fraying out in the wind and then flapping on the glass... 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 should write here (CL1:157).⁴³

She was however, anything but consistent.

When war-time travel dashed Mansfield's enthusiasm for the city of Paris, her affinity for London returned: "London feels to me solemn and quiet and strangely safe after Paris – The charming people persist. Kind looks and smiles seem everywhere – but its the quietness which is such a rest" (CL2:165).⁴⁴ Following a severe attack of pleurisy Mansfield repaired to Cornwall to recuperate but confessed "*I shall always be homesick*" [for London] (CL2:177).⁴⁵ Settled in Menton in February 1921 Mansfield writes, "I shall never live in England again. I recognise Englands [sic] admirable qualities, but we simply don't get on" (CL4:178).⁴⁶ Ambivalence continued to plague her and she would soon entertain the same conflicting feelings towards Menton though it had been her sanctuary.⁴⁷ In August 1911 Mansfield escaped to Bruges to convalesce; the trip inspired two stories: "The Journey to Bruges"

³⁶ Her enduring love/hate relationship with the city manifested in the smallest of details; for example, in a Notebook entry c. 1906, Mansfield compares country primroses with those for sale in the city: "they were not like country primroses. As I bent over them, their weary pales faces looked into mine with the same depth of wondering strange fearful perplexity ...", NB1:41.

³⁷ KM to Harold Beauchamp, 18 March 1922.

³⁸ See KM to Sylvia Payne, 23 September 1914, CL1:141.

³⁹ See KM to Charlotte Beauchamp Perkins, 22 December 1913, CL1:133.

⁴⁰ See KM to JMM, 9 December 1915, CL1:204.

⁴¹ See KM to JMM, 20 April 1920, CL3:287. See also KM to Brett, 22 December 1920, CL4:151.

⁴² See KM to Sarah Gertrude Millin [?early March 1922], CL5:80.

⁴³ KM to JMM, 19-20 March 1915.

⁴⁴ KM to Baker, 14 April 1918.

⁴⁵ KM to JMM, 20 May 1918. In a letter to Baker, 12 April 1918, Mansfield calls London "HOME", CL2:164.

⁴⁶ KM to Sydney Waterlow, 9 February 1921.

⁴⁷ See Mansfield's letters of early 1921.

(1911) and “A Truthful Adventure” both of which reveal the narrator’s world-weariness.⁴⁸ In the latter, the narrator expresses her desire to escape modern London in favour of the slower pace of the mediaeval town: “Life is long since asleep in Bruges.... my tired heart, tucked away under a thousand and one grey city wrappings, woke and exulted within me” (529). Despite her plans to spend “At least a fortnight—perhaps a month”, in Bruges, before her first full day draws to a close Mansfield/the narrator, having realised that she cannot escape her inner demons, determines to return to “strenuous life in London” (531, 536). Frédéric (*A Sentimental Education*) and Claude (*The Masterpiece*) entertain simultaneously conflicting attitudes towards the city and seek peace in more rural climes only to find themselves again longing for Paris.

Within their respective urban landscapes Manet, Monet, Caillebotte and Degas point to the fragmentation taking place both geographically – in terms of the redevelopment of Paris, as epitomised in Caillebotte’s *Pont de l’Europe* – and from a more personal perspective, increasingly painting either solitary individuals or alternatively, bustling peopled landscapes within which the sketchy figures are denied personal identities and instead remain anonymous. In New Zealand expatriate Raymond McIntyre’s *London Street with Shadows* (c. 1918) – possibly a street in Chelsea – the artist draws on the Post-Impressionist colour palette and linear stylisation, but also the Impressionist aesthetic in the sketched figures whose forms are mimicked in the decorative filigree balustrades which undermines their individuality.⁴⁹ This technique, Thomson explains, forces the viewer “to see them as molecular units in a constantly shifting pattern whose surface movement interrupts the effect of perspectival depth” essentially evoking “one of the defining experiences of modern metropolitan life” (28). Mansfield describes a very similar scene at the famed Parisian department store Au Bon Marché which had inspired Zola’s novel *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883); she writes:

Its one of the wonders of the world. Having fought to the lift we got out on to an open gallery.... [which] looked over the entire ground floor & the whole of the ground floor was taken up with untrimmed ‘shapes’ & literally hundreds & hundreds of women – nearly all in black.... They were like some terrible insect swarm – not ants more like blowflies.... It was exactly like being in hell (*CL5:145*).⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Subsequently published in *The New Age* in August and September respectively.

⁴⁹ Raymond McIntyre, *London Street with Shadows* (c. 1918), oil on canvas, Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna O Waiwhetu, New Zealand.

⁵⁰ KM to Baker, 8 April 1922. Au Bon Marché, on rue de Sèvres was Paris’s first and most famous large department store, typical of those which developed in the nineteenth-century. Mansfield’s metaphorical treatment of insects culminates in “The Fly” (1922) within which a “plucky” fly is first saved then cruelly exterminated by a man grieving the loss of his own son in World War I, 417.

Her description recalls Monet's elevated view of the crowds below in *Boulevard des Capucines*, a disparaging contemporary review of which likened the figures to "black tongue lickings".⁵¹ In a vignette of 1907 Mansfield describes climbing to the top of Westminster Cathedral. Her description is remarkable for its pictorialism and heightened appreciation of coloration which recalls Whistler's palette, but also because it was written fifteen years prior to the letter describing her experience at Au Bon Marché. While more positive, the imagery is very similar – in both cases city-dwellers are perceived as little more than insects powerless against the greater forces of modernity which threaten to swallow them up:

... we stepped out upon the balcony, and, below us, London was spread out like a charming, intricate tapestry ... I think of it now ... as a wonderful fusion of amethyst and silver. And ... we watched the little people walking in the streets, like flies in the folds of some gigantic tablecloth. The sky was filled with grey clouds (NB1:130-31).⁵²

As noted in Chapter 2, de Certeau argues that an elevated vantage point "makes the complexity of the city readable and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text" (92). However, he then questions whether "the immense texturology spread out before one's eyes [is] anything more than a representation, an optical artifact?" – a notion which sits well with Impressionist practice which privileged illusionary effects and subjectivism over objectivity and realistic representations (ibid.).

Very late in life Mansfield laments "the numbers of writers who have begun full of promise ... [but] who have succumbed to London!" and asserts that "My husband and I are determined never to live in cities, always to live 'remote' – to have our own life" (CL5:80).⁵³ The perpetual love/hate relationship she entertained with London – as demonstrated in the notebook entry above – which by the end of her life was directed at cities in general, filtered into her stories from 1907 before she had even returned to London: "She, a pale dark girl with that unmistakable air of 'acquaintance with life' which is so general among the students in London" has her dreams of an "adorable life.... the infinite possibilities" bitterly dashed on Bond Street's wet pavement ("At a Café" 39). Mansfield's treatment of this theme in the early sketches owes little to her then well documented primary influences – Wilde and the Decadents, and the Symbolists – nor does it correspond with her enthusiasm for Whitman who loved the vitality of cities and even paid homage to the man-made structures

⁵¹ See Chapter 1.

⁵² This entry appears to have been written when KM was back in New Zealand; it is undated but falls sometime after April 1907 and before November 1907. Mansfield recalls the insect and tablecloth imagery in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel": Feeling frustrated and trapped "Josephine ... fastened her small, bead-like eyes on the tablecloth as if she saw a minute strange insect creeping through the web of it", 265; the story contains other insect metaphors too. Josephine imagines the mail runner in Ceylon scurrying "along glistening like an ant", 273.

⁵³ KM to Sarah Gertrude Millin [?early March 1922].

within the urban environment, from curbs to roofs to porches and doors;⁵⁴ and while it is a part of her nascent modernism which initially manifests itself more overtly in her technical innovations rather than thematically, it relates more directly to her burgeoning affinity for Impressionism.

Mansfield: a Painter of Modern Life

It was specifically the painter and illustrator Constantin Guys (1802-92) to whom Baudelaire initially awarded the title “painter of modern life”: “His interest is the whole world; he wants to know, understand and appreciate everything that happens on the surface of our globe.... the mainstream of his genius is *curiosity*” (7). Baudelaire’s commentary – above and below – recalls Mansfield’s letter to Russell (cited in Chapter 3), in which she describes the various stimuli that inspire her to write: “... life never bores me. It is such strange delight to observe people and to try to understand them ...” (CL1:287-88).⁵⁵ Baudelaire also placed great store by Poe’s short story *The Man of the Crowd* (1840), recalling its vivid imagery and describing it as “a picture ... painted ... by the most powerful pen of our age”:

In the window of a coffee house there sits a convalescent, pleurably absorbed in gazing at the crowd, and mingling, through the medium of thought, in the turmoil that surrounds him. But lately returned from the valley of the shadow of death, he is rapturously breathing in all the odours and essences of life; as he has been on the brink of oblivion, he remembers, and fervently desires to remember, everything. Finally he hurls himself headlong into the midst of the throng, in pursuit of an unknown, half-glimpsed countenance that has, on an instant, bewitched him. Curiosity had become a fatal, irresistible passion (7).

Baudelaire’s commentary here is interesting on several levels – not least, his theory pertaining to illness and creativity which, as discussed in Chapter 3, is directly relevant to Mansfield’s situation. Despite six years of ill health, once the official diagnosis of tuberculosis loomed Mansfield, still in denial, expressed her deepest fears – that she would run out of time: “I don’t want to find this is real consumption, perhaps its going to gallop – who knows – and I shan’t have my work written. *Thats what matters*. How unbearable it would be to die, leave ‘scraps’, ‘bits’, nothing real finished” (NB2:125).⁵⁶ Like Poe’s protagonist, Mansfield’s curiosity and her passion for new experiences – as Tomalin rightly suggests – will prove fatal (243). She clings to her work and to those forces which stimulate it. Following a

⁵⁴ See Walt Whitman “Song of the Open Road” in Oscar Williams, ed., *The New Pocket Anthology of American Verse*, 2nd ED. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1972) 506. In *Le Spleen to Paris* Baudelaire too professes his love of the man-made in scenes describing the urban environment.

⁵⁵ KM to Bertrand Russell, 17 December 1916.

⁵⁶ 19 February 1918.

haemorrhage she writes, “Since this attack... I feel that my love and longing for the external world ... has suddenly increased a million times” (CL2:81).⁵⁷

Mansfield was reading Poe as early as July 1904 and though he was probably not a significant literary influence she was again recalling specifically the “Atmosphere” and “the untidiness of the landscape” in his work when composing poetry (see NB1:81).⁵⁸ Back in Wellington after London she was closely imitating his work within her notebooks (Alpers 1980:45). Baudelaire’s evocative description of Poe’s story and Poe’s rich imagery – people at windows, the mingling crowd, the idea of a mere glimpse – corresponds with Mansfield’s preoccupations as evidenced in the letter to Russell, which read in the context of Baudelaire’s aesthetic and artistic theories demonstrates that in terms of subject matter, attitude and technique, like Guys and Poe and later the Impressionists, she in turn met Baudelaire’s criteria.⁵⁹ Both Alpers and Kimber have shown how Mansfield absorbed and modified the example set by Baudelaire in his volumes of poems, *Les Fleurs du Mal/The Flowers of Evil* (1857) and *Petits poèmes en prose/Small Prose Poems* (especially ‘*Le Spleen de Paris*’) (1869), specifically within “Spring Pictures”. Murry was equally responsive to Baudelaire’s work, producing critiques in 1913 and 1920.⁶⁰ Given Mansfield’s familiarity with and her not insignificant debt to Baudelaire’s poetry, it is highly likely that she read *The Painter of Modern Life* at an early stage, at least by 1907, and that the ideas espoused therein fortified and further influenced her own aesthetic theories forthwith just as they had the Impressionist painters during the preceding century and thus gave further impetus to her depiction of urban landscapes.

Mansfield as Voyeur

Both Mansfield and her school friend, Maata Mahupuku read the enormously popular *Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff* (1887), the Russian-born, French-raised artist whose premature death from tuberculosis cut short a promising career as a painter. Bashkirtseff (c. 1860-1884) proved an early and not insignificant influence; Mansfield emulated her style to such a degree that, in parts, her notebook entries are virtually indistinguishable from the Russian’s.⁶¹ Mathilde Blind, who translated Bashkirtseff’s *Journal* from French to English, describes the artist as “a born critic of life” (698):

It may be said she was a born impressionist. Long before she had ever heard of the existence of such a school she belonged to it. It was in the air; and being as sensitive

⁵⁷ KM to JMM, 20 February 1918.

⁵⁸ Poe is on Mansfield’s holiday reading list in July 1904, NB1:32.

⁵⁹ See KM to Bertrand Russell, 17 December 1916, CL1:287-88.

⁶⁰ Lawrence drew from *Les Fleurs du Mal* too; in *Women in Love* (1921) Birkin Crich’s sentiments echo Baudelaire’s, see Jeff Wallace, Introduction, *Women in Love* by D. H. Lawrence (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1999) xii.

⁶¹ See NB1:94 and 1:109.

as a thermometer she answered to all the changes in the intellectual atmosphere of her time.... She seems intuitively to feel the public pulse, and without any personal object in view to change as it changes as naturally as a chameleon... (701).

While it is debatable whether someone may be born an Impressionist, Blind's summation is useful in that might be just as readily applied to Mansfield to whom critics unfailingly ascribe the title of "chameleon" (Smith 2000:47); and who in her "search... for the style that best suited her" was prone to "deftly ... change tack" (O'Sullivan, *CL1*:xiii).

Blind points also to the Impressionist qualities of Bashkirtseff's painting: "She can paint atmosphere..." and her canvases are "noticeable for her effects of delicate gradations of light" (711-12). Categorically, Bashkirtseff's realistic and faithful reproductions of every-day life align her with the Naturalists. Nevertheless, as Blind points out, Bashkirtseff assumed the pose of the voyeur which underpins Impressionism:

There are passages in her Journal describing the drama of the street, that are like flashes of inspiration. She reads subtle meanings in the looks, the attitudes, the movements of passers-by, and suggestions of human tragedies in many a face caught sight of in the crowd. Mothers with children in arms, *boulevardiers* smoking in a café, the sight of a pretty girl leaning on a counter selling funeral wreaths with a smile on her lips – these strike her as ... fit for the brush ... (705).

Mansfield's observations of these very aspects inform her letters and her stories as demonstrated in Duquette's description of the staff at his favourite café:

Madame.... sits on a stool with her face turned, always, to the window. Her dark-ringed eyes search among and follow after the people passing, but not as if she was looking for somebody. Perhaps, fifteen years ago, she was; but now the pose has become a habit.... And then there is the waiter.... grey. Flat-footed and withered, with long brittle nails.... waiting to be photographed in connection with some wretched murder.... You've seen him hundreds of times ("Je ne parle pas français" 61-62).

Mansfield's observations here are acute and yet there is something universal in the stolen glimpses of characters which find their pictorial equivalents in the Impressionists' canvases, particularly the café scenes.

Because Mansfield partly modelled herself on Bashkirtseff, the similarity between the two artists' modes of expression is not revelatory in itself; what is interesting though, is that with all the literary models that were available to them, in their writing at least they both chose the Impressionist route. Their writing demonstrates a sustained response to the impressionistic mode of expression – something they learnt partly from reading the novels of those held to be proto-literary Impressionists, including Balzac and Flaubert, and Zola, but which was also owed to the aesthetics of the most dominant style in painting during their respective eras – in Bashkirtseff's Paris in the 1880s and Mansfield's London in the early 1900s. In particular, Bashkirtseff served as an intermediary between painterly and literary Impressionism and inasmuch taught Mansfield how to articulate voyeurism within a literary

medium. Though an ardent fan of music Bashkirtseff confesses that, “At a concert one is more occupied in looking at the audience than in listening ...” (15) – an idea brought to life in Cassatt’s *Woman in Black at the Opera* (see fig. 34). Similarly, on a train journey Mansfield writes, “Everybody sleeps but I”; instead she passes the time watching “The people” (NB1:164).⁶² Gordon Campbell, an Irish barrister and the Murrays’ close friend described how Mansfield would sit atop the double-deck buses “to see what ‘the people’ looked like” (Alpers 1982:146). Degas did exactly the same: “I do not like carriages. One sees no one. That is why I love the omnibus. One can observe the people. We were created to observe one another ...” – a fact which supports O’Sullivan’s claim for Mansfield’s Impressionist temperament (cited in Grove 58).⁶³ Campbell went so far as to claim that Mansfield could never completely love a man “because there would always be some part of her mind a foot or two above her head, observing what was happening (Alpers 1982:146); an observation substantiated by Mansfield in a diary entry regarding an uneventful encounter she had with a fellow cellist: “I shall pervert it - - - make it fascinating” (NB1:101).⁶⁴

Existing in a State of Suspension

While it is true that her lungs would not have withstood further English winters, Mansfield’s restlessness was as incurable as her tuberculosis: “I want to change ... everything – I want to sit at an entirely new table ... and unfamiliar music playing... Change the country – the climate, too” (CL2:255).⁶⁵ Like the main protagonists in *A Sentimental Education* and *The Masterpiece*, Mansfield believed that a change of city would restore her health and rejuvenate her creativity – a sentiment shared by Morisot as her mother’s letter indicates:

Berthe is sorry to have left Cherbourg now that the weather is so beautiful and warm. She could have worked as much as she liked, at least so she thinks. She’s always sure she could do such wonderful things in any place where she is not at the moment (Rouart 83).⁶⁶

Mansfield’s perpetual restlessness meant that she was constantly uprooting herself and never really considered anywhere home. Bridget Orr explains that, plagued by anxieties pertaining to her colonial status in London, Mansfield perceived herself a “hybrid” who failed to fit in anywhere (*De-scribing Empire* 166).⁶⁷ Orr’s claim calls to mind O’Sullivan’s much quoted phrase that Mansfield was destined to feel “discomposed *anywhere*” (1994:13). Nevertheless, this discomposure – her habitual and life-long sense of

⁶² April 1909 (Mansfield is on her way to Brussels).

⁶³ Degas recreates the slice-of-life which the view from the omnibus affords in *Place de la Concorde*; though an ‘urban landscape’ the work is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4.

⁶⁴ 1 June 1907.

⁶⁵ KM to Brett, 19 July 1918.

⁶⁶ Mme. Morisot to Edma, July 1871.

⁶⁷ She was, after all “a little savage from New Zealand ... [and, therefore, did] not count”; this was according to her principal, Canon G C Bell at Queen’s College, NB2:31.

“uprootedness” as Alpers puts it – was partly the key to her best writing (1982:127); it enabled her to observe life from the periphery, with a certain degree of detachment which, perhaps paradoxically, resulted in highly personalised and yet objective impressions.

In a letter written the year before she died Mansfield confesses: “Really I am sure it does a writer no good to be transplanted – it does harm. One reaps the glittering top of the field but there are no sheaves to bind. And there’s something, disintegrating, false, *agitating* in that literary life” (CL5:80).⁶⁸ In fact, this was an issue at the root of Sargeson’s argument:

Katherine Mansfield, both as a woman and a writer, spent much of her life in a state of suspension between two hemispheres.... I don’t think a state of suspension is a good state to be in when it is a question of inventing characters. You have to depend on yourself too much—and what you find *in* yourself. Suspension (or to use another word, freedom) always has its dangers ... (32).

Sargeson’s idea that Mansfield was somehow freer than others has some validity. However, a greater truth remains; this self-induced fragmentary life is probably what enabled her to produce the stories that Sargeson reluctantly acknowledges were amongst the finest. Had she remained in New Zealand no doubt she would still have drawn on that environment for her copy but her psychological perspective might have been entirely different. As far back as 1906/07, Mansfield had portentously and insightfully claimed that “When N[ew] Z[ealand] is more artificial she will give birth to an artist who can treat her natural beauties adequately. This sounds paradoxical but is true” (NB1:81).⁶⁹ This assertion reveals that she understood the importance of distance, or perspective – that while the subject might be local, only an imported style would provide the means by which to represent it. Mansfield’s constant upheavals contributed to her fractured subjectivity, which, as discussed in Chapter 3, was a condition of colonisation as well as of modernity – something she acknowledges in a 1921 letter: “Dont I live *in glimpses* only?” (CL4:236).⁷⁰ Her perspective corresponds with that experienced and utilised by the modern painters in late nineteenth-century Paris; collectively, theirs too was a fragmented subjectivity of multiple origin: in part a response to the political, architectural and geographical upheavals within Paris and Europe; to Japanese prints within which symmetry, form and perspective were all manipulated; and even to the increasingly popular mode of rail travel which enabled greater regional access, but also physically fractured the natural environment via its new rail lines and bridges; and, finally, to the advent and subsequent popularisation of photography in the 1850s which introduced the idea of a snapshot – a suspended moment in time.⁷¹ It is in fact a truism that the short

⁶⁸ KM to Sarah Gertrude Millin [?early March 1922].

⁶⁹ An undated entry probably of late October 1906; cited previously in Chapter 3.

⁷⁰ KM to JMM, 23 May 1921.

⁷¹ While modern photography dates from 1826 and the greatest advancements were made in first twenty years of investigations, it was not until the 1850s that artists like Lewis Carroll

story emerged as a genre around the same time as photography, and Impressionism, and all seem to some extent interested in capturing 'glimpses'. While Mansfield expressed less interest in still photography, she is likely to have been receptive to photography, film and developments in modern painting.⁷² Unarguably, it was a rich cultural field that informed her literary imagination and living in a state of suspension continually altered Mansfield's viewpoint and resulted in brittle, poignant, utterly modern narratives which correspond with Impressionism more than any other then popular mode of artistic expression.

Modernist Melancholy: the "snail under the leaf"

Like the Impressionists' canvases Mansfield's urban landscapes are permeated with that sense of melancholy ubiquitous in modern society. Throughout her stories her characters emanate an overwhelming sense of disillusion with life and seem alienated from one another and within their surroundings – Vera and her ex-lover in "A Dill Pickle"; Jinnie and Robert in "The Man without a Temperament" (1920); old Mr. Neave in "An Ideal Family"; Monica in "Revelations"; the married couple in "The Escape" (1920). For all his idealising of the woman herself, Murry accurately identifies the key impulse behind Mansfield's writing: "It was simply the conflict between the idealism of love and the bitterness of realising the cruelty of life ..." (1959:76). Murry also claims that in Mansfield's case, "The art corresponds to the human experience" and certainly the letters and notebooks substantiate that hers was a life characterised by joyous anticipation and marked disappointments (ibid. 73). Mansfield articulates as much in a purposely unfinished sentence in "The Escape": "Oh, to care as I care—to feel as I feel, and never to be saved anything—never to know for one moment what it was to ... to ..." (197, KM's ellipsis). The resultant ambivalence which permeates Mansfield's work – the juxtaposition of the sparkling with the sombre which Fullbrook also recognises as the defining characteristic of Mansfield's style, or in Mansfield's own words: "the snail under the leaf", is the most potent feature of Impressionism – both painterly and literary (Fullbrook 8, *CL3*:37).⁷³

Michel Benamou equates Impressionism with gaiety. Impressionism, he claims, "is sanguine and thrives on good air, sunshine, and things as they are" (cited in Johnson 282). Benamou is perhaps referring to the impressionism of Renoir whose preference for the celebratory aspects of modernity manifested in animated crowd scenes registering new experiences and opportunities and general frivolity, as depicted in *The Ball at the Moulin de la Galette* within which attractive couples dance and mingle upon a shimmering floor

amongst others utilised methods which cemented its popularity. The first Kodak camera became available in 1888 – the year of Mansfield's birth.

⁷² Hence my decision to not carry out an in depth discussion about the possible influence of photography on Mansfield.

⁷³ KM to JMM, 20 October 1919.

beneath glittering outdoor chandeliers. However, as the majority of the Impressionist painters and impressionistic writers including Mansfield, Flaubert and Zola, clearly demonstrate, happiness and youth are all too fleeting. While the motifs of the ballet, theatre, opera and café-society partly pay homage to the variety of entertainments available to modern urbanites, they also serve as vehicles for exploring, or revealing the middle and upper-classes' exploitation of working-class women – a fact which Thomson asserts “lay at the heart of modern French society” – and a subject to which I will shortly return within this chapter (Thomson 2000:179); finally, they are also forums from which the artists investigate themes of world-weariness and of loneliness. The slumped poses of the seated men in Caillebotte's *In a Café* (1880) and Jean-François Raffaëlli's (1850-1924) *The Absinthe Drinkers* (1881), evoke this sense of world-weariness and also impending desperation which Degas pushes even further in *Absinthe* (1875-76) by painting his subjects up close and by including a woman.⁷⁴ Degas's is a more focused double portrait within which despite being seated side by side at the same table, the pair's respective solitariness is suggested in the woman's position at the edge of the table and in the angle from which they have been painted which emphasises their physical separateness, which is then literally mirrored, thus again reinforced in their dark, silhouetted reflections.

While absinthe was enjoyed by the general public throughout the nineteenth-century, it was particularly popular within bohemian society and thus favoured by artists. It gained a reputation as an addictive psychoactive drug and in 1915 was banned in the United States and in much of Europe. By referring specifically to this drink in the titles of their works the Impressionists pointed to one of the prominent vices permeating modern society. In *The Absinthe Drinker* (1858-59) Manet depicts a well known local alcoholic Collardet, a rag-picker (a figure popular in caricatures within the press) “in the nonchalant pose of the impoverished dandy” (Lajer-Burcharth 18).⁷⁵ Ewa Lajer-Burcharth writes, “As an image of urban life it is neither laudatory nor in any way respectful testimony to the reality of economic conditions under Louis-Napoleon” (ibid.). Flaubert also deals with the subject of alcoholic indulgence and alcohol-induced idleness: “Although feeling in no need of a drink, Frédéric downed a glass of rum, then a glass of kirsch, then one of curaçao, then various types of punch, hot and cold” (*A Sentimental Education* 115). Although Mansfield

⁷⁴ Caillebotte, *In a Café* (1880), oil on canvas, Musée des beaux-arts, Rouen; Jean-François Raffaëlli, *The Absinthe Drinkers* (1881), oil on canvas, Private Collection, Philadelphia; Degas, *Absinthe* (1875-76), oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay; the work is sometimes referred to under the title as *In A Café*. In the notes for a story whose characters Mansfield based on a family living near her at Randogne, Mansfield describes a figure very much like the third man in Caillebotte's *In a Café* (1880) and constructs quite a narrative around this type of man: see *NB2*:333, June 1922.

⁷⁵ Manet, *The Absinthe Drinker* (1858-59), oil on canvas, Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen.

acknowledged alcoholism and was repulsed by its effects she was less interested in exploring its pitfalls within her short stories and instead more preoccupied with the inherent loneliness of the human condition – a characteristic Tomalin understands as definitively Mansfield: “The particular stamp of her fiction is ... the isolation in which character dwells” (Tomalin 6).⁷⁶ I absolutely concur with Tomalin’s summation – one only has to recall Vera’s epiphany in “A Dill Pickle”: “‘Yes,’ she breathed.... ‘I am as alone as ever’” – and while it became a trait of literary modernism, the Impressionists were the first artists to consistently and unapologetically make these sorts of representations (174).

Mansfield, in “Her First Ball”, produces the same sense of breathless anticipatory happiness captured by Renoir in *The Ball at the Moulin de la Galette*. Her protagonist Leila “clutched her fan, and, gaz[ed] at the gleaming, golden floor, the azaleas, the lanterns, the stage at one end with its red carpet and gilt chairs and the band in its corner” (338). In wonderment Leila breathes, “For it was thrilling. Her first ball! She was only at the beginning of everything” (341). Reality, however, threatens to dampen Leila’s vision when her partner, an old fat man who “wheezed faintly” forces his own world-weary views upon her:

‘I’ve been doing this kind of thing for the last thirty years.... Of course ... you can’t hope to last anything like as long as that. No-o ... long before that you’ll be sitting up there on the stage, looking on, in your nice black velvet. And those pretty arms will have turned into little short fat ones, and you’ll beat time with such a different kind of fan—a black ebony one.’ The fat man seemed to shudder. ‘And you’ll smile away like the poor old dears up there.... And your heart will ache, ache ... because no one wants to kiss you now’.... Leila gave a light little laugh, but she did not feel like laughing. Was it—could it all be true? It sounded terribly true (341-42).

Leila despairs at “how quickly things changed! Why didn’t happiness last for ever? For ever wasn’t a bit too long” (342). Leila’s impressions are altered when she is forced to see, momentarily, through the aging man’s eyes. Here, Mansfield effectively disproves Benamou’s belief that Impressionism was generally optimistic. In fact, in drawing attention to the transitory nature of happiness and blooming youth, many Impressionist paintings have a decidedly melancholic undertone; Degas’s numerous images of ballet dancers are a prime example.⁷⁷ Even Morisot’s ostensibly light-hearted *Butterfly Hunt* (1874), carries traces of melancholy – indicative not only in the nature of the activity which involves

⁷⁶ Mansfield recounts the effect of solitude and alcohol on Beatrice Hastings: “Strange and really beautiful though she is still ... she is ruined”; quoting Beatrice, Mansfield writes, “Last Sunday I had a fearful crise – I got drunk on rum by myself at the Rotonde & ran up & down this street crying and ringing the bells & saying ‘save me from this man’. There wasn’t anybody there at all”, KM to JMM, 21 March 1915, *CL1*:159-160; see also *CL1*:164-65.

⁷⁷ As illustrated previously through the example of *Orchestra Musicians* (1872) (see fig. 12).

trapping and then freeing butterflies whose lifespan is merely days, but which is also hinted at in the delicate spring blossoms, and in the absolute stillness of the image itself.⁷⁸

Self-Imposed Isolation: The Restless Spirit of the Modern Artist

Between 1906 and 1922 Mansfield undertook fifteen journeys to France, four of which were solo trips. There were also journeys to Bavaria, Bruges, Italy and Switzerland, and again some of these she undertook alone. While her writing did flourish in certain locations – in France she completed at least eighteen stories and a total of eighteen stories were either set in France or contained a French influence⁷⁹ – her perpetual travelling – particularly later when she was in search of warmer climes and miracle cures – entailed exhausting train journeys and subsequent periods of isolation. At times she claimed to revel in this solitariness: “I find the rapture at being alone hard to understand. Certainly when I am sitting out of sight under a tree I feel I would be content to *never return*.... Should I be as happy with anyone by my side? No.... My heart is not sad except when I am among people ...” (NB2:332).⁸⁰ Furthermore, these periods of isolation – “always remote, always cut off, seeing hardly anybody, for months ...” – proved productive: “Its only in those years that Ive really been able to work” (CL5: 80).⁸¹ However, merely four months later she recognised that this enforced exile was contributing to her spiritual undoing. To Koteliansky she explains her move to the Priory at Fontainebleau: “What is important is to try & learn to live ... in relation to everything – not isolated (this isolation is death to me) (CL4:304).⁸² However, after entering the Priory in October 1922 she wrote no more, determining not to until the Spring, and again referring to the cage motif: “I want much more material; I am tired of my little stories like birds bred in cages” (CL5:346).⁸³ Still caged herself, she died just nine days later. One can only conclude that as a modern writer Mansfield needed, thrived even, on the angst brought about by modern life; it inspired her creativity in the same way as it did the modern artists at the *fin-de-siècle*. A diary entry of early June 1907 expressed just this: “From the ... outlook my situation is devilishly fascinating, but it cannot be permanent – the charm consists mainly in its instability.... I must wander. I cannot – will not – build a house upon any damned rock” (NB1:101-02).

⁷⁸ Berthe Morisot, *Butterfly Hunt* (1874), oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

⁷⁹ For a list of all the stories Mansfield wrote in France, and those set in France or containing a French influence, see Kimber’s appendices B and C, 285-286.

⁸⁰ June 1922.

⁸¹ KM to Sarah Gertrude Millin [?early March 1922].

⁸² KM to S. S. Koteliansky, 19 October 1922.

⁸³ KM to Elizabeth, Countess Russell, 31 December 1922.

The Pictorial Possibilities and Allure of Modern Rail Travel

Like many contemporary naturalist writers and modern painters Mansfield was drawn to the subject of rail travel.⁸⁴ The bustling populace in the smoke-filled haze of Gare Saint-Lazare inspired Monet in particular who from 1876-77 painted a series of views. Arsène Alexandre writes,

Monet both exerted and amused himself in recording this eerie scene unfolding in broad daylight, these ghostly shapes of iridescent steam floating and swirling over the machines, between the high cliffs of surrounding houses, which overlook the perpetually shaking departure platforms (cited in Blunden 140).⁸⁵

Degas, in *At the Races, Amateur Jockeys* (1876-87), pits the horses against a speeding train on a parallel route indicative, suggests Bernd Growe, of the rivalry between the two modes of transport (41).⁸⁶ Pissarro's *Lordship Lane Station, Upper Norwood, London* (1871), while modern in paying homage to this recently opened rail line, in its atmosphere and colouring owes more to Corot's early site-specific landscapes. Guillaumin in an undeniably modern work, *The Arcueil Aqueduct at Sceaux Railroad Crossing* (c. 1874), depicts the point at which road, rail and waterway intersect and thus pays homage to modernity, commerce and progress.⁸⁷ However, the few figures in the work are dwarfed by the overhead bridge which divides the composition vertically and horizontally, allowing only glimpses of the landscape beyond, suggestive of the fragmentary or fractured nature of modern times which is also echoed in the receding rail tracks which slice through the landscape. In Manet's *The Railroad* (1872-73) there is nothing to be seen of the train behind the steam.⁸⁸ Instead the artist has portrayed a mother and her child outside the perimeter of the rail station, separated from the industry within by the bars of the fence. While the child takes in the hive of activity beyond her, the mother looks out at the viewer, her complacent expression, open book in hand and sleeping puppy in her lap indicative of the sedentary lifestyle that the females lead in contrast to the pace of that led by those who chose to travel or who were forced to commute.

Mansfield's penchant for rail travel was first ignited in London during her school years and further harboured by her travels into the Urewera: "There is something inexpressibly charming to me in railway travelling. I lean out of the window – the breeze blows ... and the child spirit, hidden away under a thousand and one grey City wrappings, bursts its bonds

⁸⁴ The Impressionists were not the first modern painters to address the subject; both Turner and Daumier had done so, though in quite different ways. See J. M. W. Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed* (1843), oil on canvas, The National Gallery, London.

⁸⁵ See Monet, *The Gare Saint-Lazare, Exterior* (1877), oil on canvas, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, Hanover.

⁸⁶ Degas, *At the Races, Amateur Jockeys* (1876-87), oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

⁸⁷ Guillaumin, *The Arcueil Aqueduct at Sceaux Railroad Crossing* (c. 1874), oil on canvas, The Art Institute of Chicago.

⁸⁸ Manet, *The Railroad* (1872-73), oil on canvas, National Gallery, Washington.

and exults within me" (*NB1:135*).⁸⁹ Mansfield was however less interested in the subject of the train, modern though it was, and like Dickens was instead more preoccupied with her fellow travellers' behavioural peculiarities which belied their public composure; ever watchful, she hoped they might reveal some aspect of their private and thus secret lives. From the *Urewera* she writes, "A great many Maoris on the train – in fact I lunched next to a great brown fellow at Woodville – That was a memorable meal – We were both starving – with that dreadful silent hunger.... You could cut the atmosphere with a knife" (*CL1:30*).⁹⁰ In a letter of 1908 Mansfield describes in detail the journey by rail and boat from London to Paris:

We go aft to the Ladies Cabin where a little French woman is in attendance, her white face peering curiously at us over billows and billows of apron. Such wide blue velvet couches, such hard bolsters for tired heads.... It was amusing, you know, all round these same huddled figures, in the same little brown rugs, like patients in a hospital ward.⁹¹ And the little French woman sits in the middle knitting a stocking. Beside her on a red table a lamp throws a fantastic wavering light. All through hours, half sleeping, half waking I would open my eyes and see this little bowed figure & the wavering light seemed to play fantastic tricks with her & the stocking in my fancy grew – gigantic – enormous. It seemed almost symbolical – the sleeping figures and in the light the little quiet woman knitting an eternal stocking. (*CL1:75*).⁹²

As demonstrated above, Mansfield incessantly records her observations of the other passengers, of the changing light, of the objects that colour her composition, and her evocative impressions of those seemingly insignificant details which Impressionists perceive as intrinsic to the overall effect of the scene.

Like the Impressionists Mansfield particularly revelled in the "conglomeration of sensations" evoked by rail travel and in the sheer vitality inherent to it (*CL1:78*).⁹³ Writing from Paris in 1908 she describes the scene at Victoria Station, London prior to her departure: "the huge station seemed alive with police and passengers. Already by the Continental train strange foreign types of people gathered – a Pole, tall, thin, smoking ... a Turk, scarlet fez topping his sombre face" (*CL1:74*).⁹⁴ In "Something Childish But Very Natural", written in Paris in 1914 and published posthumously, Mansfield's protagonist delights in observing a similar scene: "Sunlight darted through the glass roof of the station in long beams of blue and gold; a little boy ran up and down carrying a tray of primroses; there was something about the people—

⁸⁹ November 1907.

⁹⁰ KM to Charlotte Beauchamp, 18 November 1907.

⁹¹ Here again, the association of sickness with the city in the suggestion that the travellers looked like hospital patients.

⁹² KM to Garnett Trowell, 21 October 1908.

⁹³ KM to Garnett Trowell, 8 November 1908.

⁹⁴ KM to Garnett Trowell, 21 October 1908.

about the women especially—something idle and yet eager” (596). War-time travelling between London and Paris made an indelible impression upon her and later journeys made in poor health altered her perception but it did not quash her inclination to record, and nor did it dull her insight. After one particularly harrowing journey from Sierre to Paris Mansfield recorded in her notebook, “Travelling is terrible. All is so sordid and the train shatters one. Tunnels are *hell*. I am frightened of travelling” (NB2:322).⁹⁵ And yet to Murry she wrote: “Perfect journey.... Of course numbers and numbers of marvellous things happened on the journey. I am keeping a journal instead of putting them in letters” (CL5:32).⁹⁶

Travel continued to inspire her to write; it provided her with the all important ‘copy’. Significantly, in many stories Mansfield’s scene changes mimic the effect of a train journey in that she presents only glimpses of a setting which are brief and limited in perspective. In “Marriage à la Mode” William observes the people on the crowded platform looking “dazed as they scurried to and fro” (310); “A red-faced girl raced along by the carriages, there was something strained and almost desperate in the way she waved and called” (311). Here, the train journey to and from London frames the narrative and mirrors the fragmentation which has taken place within William’s life. The landscape rapidly changes from urban to rural; the effect is definitively impressionistic – cinematic even – as William catches cropped, fleeting glimpses of the world from the train window: “When he looked up again there were fields, and beasts ... shelter[ing] under the dark trees. A wide river ... glided into sight and was gone again. The sky shone pale, and one bird drifted high like a dark fleck in a jewel” (ibid.). Again Mansfield incorporates symbolism and figurative language into otherwise impressionistic prose; it is William’s marriage that now shines pale and he is unsure whether the fleck in the jewel – the flaw – is “the new Isabel” who admits to being “shallow, tinkling, vain” or him: “*God forbid, my darling, that I should be a drag on your happiness*” (309, 320, 319). Mansfield reveals how modernity has penetrated the home and fractured a once happy couple. Isabel has been to Paris and now keeps company with poets and modern artists: William eyes the painted image on his sitting-room wall: “a young man, over life-size, with very wobbly legs, offering a wide-eyed daisy to a young woman who had one very short arm and one very long, thin one” (315).⁹⁷ The new Isabel “spoke as though a visit to the Royal Academy was certain immediate death to anyone” (310).

⁹⁵ 31 January 1922.

⁹⁶ KM to JMM, 31 January 1922.

⁹⁷ Mansfield might very well have had a particular work in mind, possibly an Expressionist painting, though at this stage I have not come across a particularly convincing example. Importantly, her narrative here reveals that while she enjoyed some modern art she respected the classics.

Unlike William, Isabel has embraced modernity – she “go[es] about more, and ... [is] frightfully keen on—on everything” while he dwells on the past and is given to “sentimentality”, pining for their pre-modern existence: “a little white house with blue curtains and a window box of petunias” (312, 313, 313). Stifled in the city, Isabel has left London and “that ... poky little hole” for a bigger house with servants and gardens, forcing William to commute – a tiring journey during which he is plagued by a “dull, persistent gnawing” (312, 313, 318). Throughout the story small symbolic details reinforce the degree of damage and haste with which William’s home life has unravelled. In the sitting-room “Over the chairs and sofa there hung *strips* of black material, covered with big *splashes* like *broken eggs*, and everywhere one looked there seemed to be an ash-tray full of *cigarette ends*” (316, my italics). Selective verbs highlight the pace of modernity which has contributed to William’s fractured home; leaving London, “Doors banged open and shut... William made straight for a first-class smoker ... and ... flung himself down” (310); and leaving to return the following afternoon: “‘I hardly seem to have seen you this time,’ she [Isabel] said breathlessly. ‘It’s so short, isn’t it? I feel you’ve only just come. Next time—’ The taxi came into sight... She gave him a little hurried kiss; she was gone. Fields, trees, hedges streamed by...” (318). Mansfield’s letters continually express that haste and that constant need to hurry to get the stories written before they disappear, such as in the following excerpt within which she utilises terminology associated with modern travel:

Im always afraid my feeling won’t last long enough for me to have expressed all that I wanted to. There’s something in the atmosphere which *may* blow cold. And there’s always a sense of rush – a strain. If the Muse does deign to visit me Im conscious all the time that shes got her eye on the clock – she’s catching the funicular to Olympus at 5.30 ... (CL4:112).⁹⁸

Working-Class Women in Impressionism

As snippets in her journal, letters and stories continue to reveal, Mansfield was keenly aware of the effects of both natural and artificial light but also of reflections in mirrors and windows which facilitate the blurring of boundaries – spatial and psychological; ultimately, creating confusion by making it difficult to differentiate between reality and illusion. In Impressionism, the effect serves to highlight the ambiguous male/female relationships within certain environments, such as that epitomised in Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* which Mansfield may have seen when it was exhibited in London in 1905. Within this work Manet has manipulated reflections within reflections. Neither the waitress’s position nor other components of the picture accurately corresponds with the reflection, making it difficult to gauge reality. The male figure is probably ordering a drink; in the context of this

⁹⁸ KM to Richard Murry, 15 November 1920.

bar it is likely that he is also propositioning her. His dark moustache, delineated top hat (indicative of his class status) and his masculine gesture – drawing his lapel aside to withdraw his wallet – lends him both an authoritative and proprietorial air. His indistinct gaze – it does not appear as though he is meeting the waitress’s eye – further reinforces the dubiousness of his intentions and lends the work a menacing quality. Like many of Manet’s (and Mansfield’s) young women, she appears on the brink of epiphany. The oversized corsage indicates that she is not above romance, and no doubt longs for it. Possibly, she entertains ideas about meeting a gentleman who might facilitate her social ascent – this was certainly a reality within the Impressionist circle, and Mansfield’s Rosabel entertains such notions – but her downcast expression implies that she realises the unlikelihood of this.⁹⁹ Her almost melancholic countenance is at odds with the vitality of the bar and hints at the loneliness of her life outside work hours. Interestingly, Murry (in his autobiography) and Mansfield (who relayed it to an acquaintance) recall an evening at a bar early in their relationship during which they both, as Alpers describes it, “caught a glimpse in the mirror of a prostitute called Lil, who was gazing at herself in terrible self-knowledge” (1982:140-41). Murry’s account is tragic, Mansfield’s comic; either way the story uncannily calls to mind *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* but also Manet’s *The Waitress* (1878-79), within which the waitress’s knowing and somewhat weary gaze briefly meets the viewers’ as she goes about her business of serving drinks;¹⁰⁰ and it demonstrates that they were exposed to and attracted to the same imagery as the Impressionists. Mansfield writes, “I cant help seeing all the evil and pain in the world: it must be faced and recognised – and I cant bear your sentimentalist or silly optimist. I know it all: I feel it all” (CL3:231).¹⁰¹ However, within the same breath, she also acknowledges the beauty: “yes the beauty that lurks in ugliness that is even outside the pub in the gesture of the drinking woman” (ibid). Here, Mansfield’s commentary is reminiscent of not only Manet’s waitresses and Degas’s image of the absinthe drinkers but also of Degas’s *Women on a Café Terrace* (1877) (see fig. 31). In Impressionism, that which had previously been considered ugly and vulgar was deemed merit-worthy subject-matter. *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* is a glimpse into pleasure-seeking French society – the decadence of the patrons suggested in the bottles of champagne and liqueurs, the crystal bowl of fruit and glittering chandelier – and captures the energy and almost ethereal quality of that environment in its sketchy bustling crowd, shimmering lights and haze of smoke. More importantly, it is a portrait, at once individual and yet universally appreciable,

⁹⁹ Regarding the male Impressionists who married beneath them on the social scale, see Thomson 76. This is, of course, precisely what Mansfield did.

¹⁰⁰ Manet, *The Waitress* (1878-79), oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris; also known by the titles *Waitress serving Beer* and *L’Assommoir/The Pub* (a clear reference to Zola’s novel of that title).

¹⁰¹ KM to Richard Murry, 24 February 1920.

of a nineteenth-century working class woman – a ubiquitous subject in Impressionist figure paintings.

Mansfield's "The Tiredness of Rosabel" contains echoes of both the subject and theme of Manet's *Folies-Bergère* with her characterisation comparable to both Manet and Degas's images of working women such as laundresses, milliners and, in some cases even ballet dancers. Like them, it captures that sense of drudgery and reveals the monotony of their everyday existences.¹⁰² And also like Manet and Degas, she hints at the liberties bourgeois men took with women in service roles by way of Harry's attitude to Rosabel in his fiancée's absence: "The man leant over her as she made out the bill, then, as he counted the money into her hand—'Ever been painted?' he said" (516). The narrative is ambiguous however, because although Rosabel recoils from Harry's advance – at "the slight tinge of insolence, of familiarity" – thereafter she fantasises about the life they might have had together, had her social position been different (516): "Rosabel did not pay the slightest attention. How handsome he had been!... the luck of that girl! Suppose they changed places" (516). Rosabel's ambivalence effects how she behaves – instead of buying herself a proper dinner she spends her money on violets – and how she perceives her surroundings; she is unable to differentiate between illusion and reality: "Rosabel looked out of the windows; the street was blurred and misty, but light striking on the panes turned their dullness to opal and silver, and the jewellers' shops seen through this, were fairy palaces" (513).

In her portraits of the working classes Mansfield shows how the women in particular were at the mercy of middle-upper-class men, and how they were objectified and exploited. As revealed above, Rosabel is likened to a decorative, purchasable object much like the hat that Harry pays her for. His question, 'Ever been painted?' confirms that he sees her in this way. In "At Lehmann's" Sabrina is viewed in the same manner. Sabrina unwittingly serves as a model to a patron in the cafe at which she works; he is boastful of the finished sketch for which she provided the inspiration. His sense of propriety is signalled in the way he addresses her – calling, commanding, demanding and ordering her: "'Fräulein ...' called the Young Man.... 'Come here, and I'll show you a picture,' he commanded" (724-25). Sabrina observes the "curious ring he wore on the hand that covered the girl's body" (725). His ring is probably his family crest and thus indicative of his social class; alternatively, it may be his school ring and therefore implies that he is educated, and most likely in a professional position and moneyed. Mansfield's description of the sketch is interesting – it seems to be a conflation of popular images, and partly reminiscent of Manet's *Olympia* to name just one: "a coloured sketch of a naked girl sitting on the edge of a great, crumpled bed, a man's opera

¹⁰² Such as in Degas's *Laundress Seen Against the Light* (1882), Durand-Ruel Collection, Paris and *Woman Ironing*, oil on canvas, Munich, Neue Pinakothek.

hat on the back of her head" (725).¹⁰³ Manet's courtesan is not wearing a hat, but in the addition of this detail Mansfield again reinforces which social class was most inclined to exploit working-class women. Sabrina concedes that such images are ubiquitous "in the illustrated papers" and certainly *Olympia* generated numerous caricatures and was mocked in the papers following its scandalous debut in Paris in 1865. Its reputation in England was revived in the early twentieth century following its move to the Louvre in 1907 (725). Significantly, neither Rosabel nor Sabrina consciously invite the attentions of their male patrons; both are victim to the voyeuristic appreciation of men who both alarm and flatter them, leaving the inexperienced young women feeling conflicted and disillusioned.

Both Manet and Degas especially expose the disparity between the classes and genders, their paintings often pointing directly at the patriarchal control bourgeois men exercised over young women in service; of course, they did so obliquely – their observations veiled in subtle ambiguity. Degas's works reflect his privileged social position which granted him access to otherwise closed realms. In his images of ballet dancers on stage Degas explored the concept of the *abonné* – a seasonal subscriber whose fee allowed him backstage access, and thus a more personal and private viewing – as seen in *Ballet Rehearsal on Stage* (1874).¹⁰⁴ The work is a marked contrast of dark shadows and artificial light which lends it an eerie quality that corresponds with the incongruous image of the darkly clothed man in his top hat seated at the far end of the stage observing the garishly-lit, almost brittle figures of the rehearsing dancers. Degas's right-of-entry resulted in a number of disturbingly voyeuristic images of dancers on stage being observed either indirectly, from unseen but privileged vantage points, or overtly, by a man in the shadows; *Ballet Rehearsal* (1875) is yet another disturbing example.¹⁰⁵ Durand-Ruel stated that early collectors of Impressionism "were forever only wanting dancing girls" and Degas referred to his ballet pictures as "my merchandise" owing to their popularity which ensured sales and thus much needed revenue following his family's bankruptcy (Grove 47). Again in *The Star* (1876-77) Degas represents the *abonné* observing the prima ballerina from a privileged and private position amongst the *corps* just off stage (see fig. 29). Here, the stage set partially obscures the male figure so that his head and thus his identity is hidden from the viewer; this lends him anonymity and privacy which is denied the dancers who, by virtue of their class and occupation, were perceived as public property or, more accurately, private property – that of the *abonnés*

¹⁰³ Both Degas and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec created numerous images of women in various states of undress within their boudoirs, some of which included a male companion; see, for example, Toulouse-Lautrec, *Conquest of Passage* 1896 (oil and pastel on paper, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, France) an image of a woman at her dresser, doing up her bustier, her skirts still open at the back, her top-hatted male friend at her side.

¹⁰⁴ Degas, *Ballet Rehearsal on Stage* (1874), oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

¹⁰⁵ Degas, *Ballet Rehearsal* (1875), pastel, G. Frelinghuysen Collection, New York.

whose subscriptions went part way towards their wages. The French critic and historian Hippolyte Taine's (1828-1893) description of dancing classes as a "market of female flesh" is further illustrative of how bourgeois men then saw these working-class women (Grove 51).

The City: a Masculine Realm

While in her domestic interiors Mansfield challenged what was perceived as the natural role and place of women and demonstrated how restricted their prescribed sphere was, by addressing the plight of working-class women in her urban landscapes Mansfield exposes the dangers present in the realm outside of the domestic sphere and thus reveals how little scope women had in what was ostensibly progressive modern society. In Mansfield's stories anonymity functions differently than it does in either Manet or Degas's images of bourgeois men enjoying the services and entertainment provided by working-class women at the ballet, cafés and bars. Manet and Degas tend to privilege the privacy of the male; Baudelaire also celebrates the anonymity found in the crowded city streets.¹⁰⁶ In the "The Little Governess" the predatory elder gentleman's identity and status is revealed by his calling card. The female protagonist's identity is not revealed to the reader and this undermines her significance as an individual – though other Impressionist artists made similar suggestions. In Jean-Louis Forain's (1852-1931) *Encounter in the Foyer* (1877), the woman is faceless – making her comparable to Mansfield's nameless governess.¹⁰⁷ Left anonymous Mansfield's protagonist is instead representative of a growing legion of middle class and relatively well-educated young women in Britain whose families had not prospered from the industrial revolution. Instead, these young women were required to be independent of their families and seek work in appropriate fields, often as governesses. Despite their educations, they were ill-prepared for such responsibilities and for the experiences with which they met in the urban centres they travelled through on route to their posts. Such is the case for Mansfield's governess.

To reinforce the idea that the Governess is alone and unprepared the reader learns nothing of her family or background. Her only guardian figure is the woman at the Governess Bureau who offers advice which no doubt stems from own bitter experience: "I always tell my girls that it's better to mistrust people at first ... and it's safer to suspect them of evil intentions.... It sounds rather hard but we've got to be women of the world, haven't we?" (175). However, Mansfield's protagonist is not a woman, and nor is she a child:

¹⁰⁶ Particularly in *Le Spleen de Paris* and *The Painter of Modern Life*.

¹⁰⁷ Jean-Louis Forain, *Encounter in the Foyer*, sometimes referred to as *The Interval* (1877), gouache on paper, Private Collection, London. Furthermore, the foyer is a transitional space – neither inside nor out, and public rather than domestic. Forain participated in four Impressionist exhibitions between 1879 and 1884.

How kindly the old man in the corner watched her bare little hand turning over the ... pages, watched her lips moving as she pronounced the long words ... rested upon her hair that fairly blazed under the light... not even the dark ugly clothes could disguise her soft beauty. Perhaps the flush that licked his cheeks and lips was a flush of rage that anyone so young and tender should have to travel alone and unprotected through the night (180).

The Governess's inexperience manifests in her poor judgement which is based solely on the outward appearance of things, such as a porter's clothing: "he must be a guard or a stationmaster with a cap like that"; and the gentleman's calling card – "He had a title! Well it was *bound* to be alright!" (176, 179). The story is also structurally impressionistic – Van Gunsteren demonstrates how "reality is made up of confused, fragmented, changing sense impressions" (184). The Governess is alternately afraid and excited, terrified and disillusioned. The narrative employs English, French and German which is further confusing, moves back and forth between night and day, and alternates between the Governess's internal monologue and the author's external vantage point. The theme of man as predator, woman as prey, present here and elsewhere in Mansfield's stories and such a significant feature of Manet and Degas's work, paints a rather sordid picture of modernity and is indicative of the contradictory feelings with which the artists were plagued.

Mansfield's ambivalence towards modernity is played out through her descriptions of working-class girls particularly, such as Rosabel and the Governess for whom the city is the site in which disillusion – which has already been anticipated – replaces "the tragic optimism ... of youth" ("Rosabel" 519). Mansfield often facilitates this through an epiphanic moment – a characteristic trait of literary Impressionism – which usually occurs when a character leaves one sphere and enters another.¹⁰⁸ In this she relies on Symbolism too, with spatial barriers such as broad roads, gates, stairwells, even waiting rooms – having to be passed over or through. The Governess passes through a series of transitional spaces with each move heralding a change in perception – from the ladies cabin on the evening boat to the deck, "down the long dark platform, and across a railway line", then to the rail carriage itself which she believes is "her safe corner" but is in fact a trap from where she will be plucked by the gentleman she soon calls "her grandfather" (176, 177, 185). Though the Governess remains ignorant of Herr Regierungsrat's intentions, the hotel staff see it as inevitable: "The waiter had a curious way of staring as if there was something funny about her" and offers to "show the gentleman upstairs when he comes" (185). Later she is led "out of the garden down a long alley" and into the bachelor's flat – "The passage was quite dark": "he held her against the wall, pressed against her his hard old body and twitching knee, and ... kissed her

¹⁰⁸ This obviously happened for Daphne when she left the urban environment of Port Willin for a weekend at the seaside with the protagonist in the story "Daphne".

on the mouth.... Where not a soul who wasn't a near relation had ever kissed her before" (187). In *The Rape* Degas reveals what happens to naive young women without chaperones, and indeed what might have happened to Mansfield's governess had her predator been more physically forceful, or should the author have chosen to push the story to a conventional, if distasteful denouement. Throughout her stories Mansfield uses Symbolism to convey the consciousness of characters but also shifts within consciousness and between characters – the vision of the aloe in "Prelude" is a case in point; as is the moon in "Bliss". These symbols often reveal to the reader what the characters do not know themselves but may soon learn – the Governess is first fed big ripe strawberries – "the juice ran all down her fingers"; and later ice-cream "which melted in little sips a long way down"; and finally rose wine which, like the other consumable treats, also spills, the sight of which finally alerts the naive young woman to her precarious situation though it is now too late for her to escape the old man's physical advances (183, 187). Mansfield's symbolism might also be considered alongside images such as Manet's *The Street Singer* (1862) which depicts a woman enjoying a mouthful of cherries from the parcel she carries.¹⁰⁹ In nineteenth-century art women pictured eating fruit or selling it for that matter – particularly orange sellers – may be understood as being available themselves. Mansfield clearly understood this: in the crowded waiting room of a London film company, surrounded by out of work actors Miss Moss finds "herself next to a fair little baby thing about thirty in a white lace hat with cherries round it" ("Pictures" 125). By the end of that day Miss Moss herself will have embarked upon a future in prostitution.

For the aging contralto Ada Moss, the gnawing realisation that her stage days are in the past and that she has few options plagues her more deeply with every transition she makes: from her bed to the dresser-mirror, from her flat to the A. B. C. cafe, to the agencies which are increasingly less accommodating: "There was only a little round window at the Bitter Orange Company. No waiting room—nobody at all except a girl, who came to the window when Miss Moss knocked" (126). Her downfall – incipient from the moment she first "began to cross the road" that morning transpires as she passes out of the Square Gardens and through the doors of the Café de Madrid and into the world of prostitution: "It was almost dark in the café. Men, palms, red plush seats, white marble tables, waiters in aprons, Miss Moss walked through them all" (123, 128). Essentially, then, space in Mansfield's urban landscapes is treated in a manner similar to that within her domestic interiors, with verticals and horizontals creating divisions which predetermine the movements and route of her female protagonists.

¹⁰⁹ Manet, *The Street Singer* (1862), oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Degas addresses the theme of prostitution both subtly and obliquely. *Women on a Café Terrace* (1877) is a glimpse into the world of prostitution with four idle women waiting for the customers that the approaching evening will inevitably bring (see fig. 31). The top-hatted gentleman who has just passed by serves as a reminder of the clientele who frequent the café-terraces at which women of Morisot and Cassatt's social class would never be seen. And again, strong verticals – here, the terrace's pillars – serve as gaol bars locking the women into this environment. In *Three Prostitutes Seated*, (c. 1879) Degas takes the viewer inside a brothel.¹¹⁰ Barely more than a sketch and certainly not destined for public exhibition, the work is disturbing nonetheless as it hints at the dual exploitation taking place with the women forced to serve as both prostitutes and artists' models. Thomson reports that like so many of his haute-bourgeois acquaintances, Degas enjoyed the services of prostitutes (2000:84). This picture is then an honest snapshot of one aspect of modern society and acknowledges the not insignificant role of such women within it. Manet addresses the theme too in *A Café on the Place du Théâtre-Français* (1881).¹¹¹ A sketchy work, to the right of the composition three top-hatted men and a waiter can be seen viewing the entertainment which is presumably taking place on stage within the café but out of the bounds of the canvas. In the foreground is a single seated woman facing her male companion who having been severely cropped within the picture is only partially visible – the wisp of smoke from his cigarette the only real signifier of his presence and identity. As she contemplates entering the Café de Madrid, Miss Moss asks herself "Why should I feel nervous?... I'm a respectable woman—I'm a contralto singer" (127). However, there can be no doubt as to the nature of her intentions; Mansfield seems to be suggesting that Miss Moss has no viable alternative.¹¹² Walter Benjamin understands the figure of the prostitute in nineteenth-century modern art as representative of both society's displacement and capitalism's triumph. Citing Benjamin, Thomas Crow describes the dual role of the prostitute: "she is 'the commodity ... who is seller and commodity in one'" (66).¹¹³ Mansfield's is not a critical attitude – at least her criticism is not directed at Miss Moss – but nor is she entirely sympathetic; Impressionists simply present things as they are or as they appear to be, without recourse to biasing the narrative one way or the other.

¹¹⁰ Degas, *Three Prostitutes Seated*, (c. 1879), pastel over monotype, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

¹¹¹ Manet, *A Café on the Place du Théâtre-Français* (1881), pastel on canvas, Glasgow City Art Museum and Galleries, Scotland.

¹¹² See also Manet, *At the Café* (1878-78), oil on canvas, O. Reinhard Collection, Winterthur, within which a woman of the lower-working classes is seen drinking at the bar with a gentleman.

¹¹³ Crow cites from Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990) 7-9.

Though not necessarily destined for prostitution, Rosabel is still exploited – even Harry’s fiancée takes pleasure in Rosabel’s pretty appearance but also in the knowledge that she is the other’s social superior. Rosabel’s reality, which threatens to shatter the illusions she constructs around herself, strikes her in stages and, in Impressionist fashion, is facilitated through the interplay of light and shadow and scene cropping. Her youthful determination however, prevents the true epiphany from manifesting. She views the street from the bus, but registers only the “fairy palaces”; inside her building she is faced with the “glimmering ghost-like ... light of the little gas jet”, inside her own room she chooses to sit in the dark, fearing that the unforgiving gas light will only serve to illuminate the truth of her lonely and pitiful existence (513, 514, 515). Not wanting to cut herself off from “the great wet world outside” she chooses to sit on the floor at the window (515); her observation point means she is still a participant in that realm and it delays the isolation. Mansfield’s sketches are insightful portraits and yet perhaps, as Sargeson implied, her characters are generic – certainly the vast number of similar images of working-class women in Impressionism suggests as much. While this lends her protagonists universality, it also undermines their significance or importance as an individual which, as Louis Dumont (1986) has shown, is essentially the concern underpinning modernist theory.¹¹⁴ The Governess remains nameless and Rosabel might as well be invisible – not even the girl she bumps into upon leaving the bus notices her; Rosabel is as familiar – as generic – as the advertisements for “Sapolio” soap and “Heinz’s Tomato Sauce” (513). In Degas’s *At the Milliner’s* (1882) the artist denies his assistant an identity by obscuring her face and figure behind the full length mirror in which her client admires herself; she is instead identifiable only by her service role signified by the hats she holds in each extended hand.¹¹⁵ Miss Moss is similarly invisible; entering her local café she awaits the waitress or the cashier’s attention: “She stood in the middle of the floor but neither of them saw her” (122).

Mansfield was not the first writer to attend to the plight of working class women; maids, governesses and housekeepers were popular subjects in, for example, Dickens’ novels, and Richardson’s *Pamela* is an obvious antecedent to all of these. Her treatment of the subject is however, entirely different, indicative of a more bitter experience of modernity but also of

¹¹⁴ See Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism: Modern ideology in Anthropological Perspective* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986). Alan Macfarlane in *The Origins of English Individualism: the family, the property and social transition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978) discusses individualism before the modern period and traces it back to the late Middle Ages. Claire Gittings makes some interesting observations about individuality in the Victorian and modern era: “So deeply rooted is the cult of the individual in our society that it becomes easy to forget that our viewpoint is merely a result of our social and cultural inheritance rather than being, in any sense, an objective attitude”, *Death, burial and the individual in early modern England* (London: Croom Helm, c. 1984) 10.

¹¹⁵ Degas, *At the Milliner’s* (1882), pastel on pale grey wove paper, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

the pictorial sources from which she was partly drawing.¹¹⁶ Unlike *Pamela*, or even Dickens' Agnes Wickfield (*David Copperfield*), Mansfield's protagonists do not have their 'virtue rewarded'. Mansfield's working-class women are exploited by their employers and offered little comfort in return for their labours. In "The Lady's Maid" the unnamed servant is denied a full childhood and is instead put into service at age thirteen. She enjoys the attentions of a young man to whom she becomes engaged but her life of servitude has crippled her sense of self-worth to such a degree that plagued by guilt at the prospect of leaving her employer to fend for herself she is unable to go through with the marriage and so destines herself to a life of lonely solitude. In "Life of Ma Parker" the char woman's literary gentleman makes no effort to ease her burden despite knowing she has just buried her grandson; she was merely a cog in the wheel of his housekeeping "system": "You simply dirty everything you've got, get a hag in once a week to clean up, and the thing's done" (303). In Degas's *Woman Ironing* (c. 1869) a young laundress's attention is caught momentarily, her half-anticipatory, half-wistful stare meets the viewer's.¹¹⁷ However, in later images of laundresses, such as *Women Ironing* (c. 1884-86), there is no day-dreaming; instead Degas hints at the limited and laboriousness nature of their existences.¹¹⁸

Images of Bourgeois Women in Urban Environments

In keeping with Baudelaire's injunction to represent modern urban life, the Impressionists painted the bourgeoisie enjoying the opera, the ballet and café-concerts where often a greater emphasis was paid to the spectacle of the fashionably dressed patrons than to the stage action itself – the performers were, after all, available at other times for the paying man's personal pleasure. Collectively, these works are characterised by a lightened colour palate, distinguishable brush marks or sketchy strokes in pastel, and often unconventional arrangements of components within the composition. Individually, however, they reflect the artists' temperaments and personal experiences. Primarily, the focus is the women rather than the men within these realms. Renoir's images of women emphasise their ornamental quality and are often modern takes on conventional old master works, for example, *The Loge*. The decorative quality of Renoir's canvases might be partly attributed to his early apprenticeship in painting porcelain, though as a portraitist he was also obliged to flatter his patrons. Manet's portraits of women vary greatly depending on whether the sitter was a personal friend or a hired model and, furthermore allude to the kind of relationship they shared; for example, the sitter in *Woman in Evening Dress* (1878) is rendered in a sketchy

¹¹⁶ In this Mansfield's observations are not dissimilar to Edith Wharton's (1862-1937) as demonstrated in her novels including *The Age of Innocence* (1920) within which she scrutinises upper-class values, mores and hypocrisy.

¹¹⁷ Degas, *Woman Ironing* (c. 1869), oil on canvas, Neue Pinakothek, Munich.

¹¹⁸ Degas, *Women Ironing* (c. 1884-86), oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

and decorative manner, her costume fights for eminence over the hatched backdrop and she appears to be posing for the artist.¹¹⁹ By contrast, his images of fellow artist Morisot are more poignant and attempt to capture the essence of the woman herself. They convey a respectful intimacy, or at least familiarity, in that she appears less posed – almost off-guard – and is often depicted in private reverie indicative of the clever mind at work behind the beautiful façade.¹²⁰ In *Berthe Morisot, reclining* (1873), Manet acknowledges the ornamental properties of women but also the sitter’s personality by painting Morisot visually engaging with the viewer, and thus subverting the idea that she is a passive participant in the spectacle.¹²¹ While Renoir’s images of women celebrate female grace, Degas endeavours to subvert it; he achieves this particularly in his images of non-bourgeois women, such as dancers, off-stage in between choreographed movements or at ease; these portraits reflect the dancers’ athleticism, awkwardness or the true labour of their movements.¹²² Such images provide a strong contrast to the elegance and poise of the prima ballerina in *The Star* and viewed side by side reinforce the idea that the public image – even the working-class woman’s – is a carefully contrived illusion.

Cassatt’s and Morisot’s urban landscapes are far fewer – for reasons that have been explained in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, though more restricted they were still participants within this realm; the Paris Opera became a favourite pastime for Cassatt in particular. Though they were influenced by the images being produced by their male colleagues, their own images of women preparing for and at the Opera are telling of their own experience within this forum. Cassatt’s images of the Opera are less generic than Renoir’s and more personal. Renoir posed his brother and a Montmartre model Nina in his studio for the *The Loge*. Cassatt, however, in *Two Young Ladies in a Loge* (1882), (see fig. 33) painted her companions, Mlle. Ellison and Mlle. Mallarmé from the sketches she made in that actual environment and evokes that sense of quiet restrained poise which public appearance demanded. Pollock notes “Cassatt’s profound capacity to comprehend and portray the character, nuance and feeling of different stages of women’s lives” and points specifically to “The stiff and formal poses of the two girls on the brink of womanhood and society ... both tensely aware of the desire to appear adult and lady-like despite any excitement inherent in the activity of theatre-going” (10). In this respect her characterisation bears a close similarity to Mansfield’s Leila in “Her First Ball” who struggles “to be indifferent like the

¹¹⁹ Manet, *Woman in Evening Dress* (1878), [possibly the actress Suzanne Reichenberg], Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Tannhauser Collection.

¹²⁰ See for example, Manet, *Berthe Morisot with a Fan* (1874).

¹²¹ Manet, *Berthe Morisot, reclining* (1873), oil on canvas, Musée Marmottan, Paris. See also *Berthe Morisot with a Black Hat and Violets* (1872), oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

¹²² See Degas’s *The Dance Class* (1874-75), oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay and *Ballet Rehearsal on Stage* (1874).

others! She tried not to smile too much; she tried not to care. But every single thing was so new and exciting” (336). In a letter of 1908 in which she describes the scene at the launching of the HMS *Collingwood* at Devonport, Mansfield reveals her ability to succinctly and insightfully capture that tentative yet irrepressible excitement inherent in the young:

In front of me an old woman and a young girl – the little old woman ... trembled & shook and cried – but the girl – her flushed face lifted – was laughing, and I seemed to read in her tense, young body, anticipation, realisation.... why is it we so love the strong emotions? I think because they give us such a keen sense of *Life* (CL1:88).¹²³

Her characterisation in future stories – “The Tiredness of Rosabel”, “Her First Ball”, “The Young Girl” (1920) – whose “dark coat fell open, and her white throat ... her soft young body in the blue dress—was like a flower that is just emerging from its dark bud” – all owe something to observations she made of young women in urban spaces (301).

Cassatt’s characterisation in *Two Young Ladies in a Loge* is also very similar to Renoir’s evocation of youth, innocence and coming of age in *The First Outing* (1875-76), and it is generally accepted that Renoir’s composition provided some of the inspiration for both Cassatt’s *Two Young Ladies in a Loge* and *Woman in Black at the Opera*, (see fig. 34), (Pollock 1980:11).¹²⁴ However, while Renoir’s subject’s rigid, slightly forward leaning pose and her fresh expectant face seen in side profile are indicative of both her tentative excitement and awkward restraint, the emphasis, Pollock explains, is again on “lightness and feminine prettiness” (ibid.). By contrast, Cassatt’s *Woman in Black at the Opera*, while it directly acknowledges the notion of woman as spectacle through the gentleman in the far loge whose binoculars are trained upon her, the artist subverts conventional representations of femininity – she is neither coy nor self-conscious – by depicting the woman as unaffected by, if not oblivious to the gentleman’s attentions and instead, fully absorbed in the action taking place on stage. Cassatt’s characterisation here corresponds with that in *Reading: Le Figaro* (1883) which, as discussed in Chapter 4, privileges the woman’s intellectual tendencies rather than her ornamental properties. Cassatt further denies the theatre-going woman’s decorativeness by revealing very little skin – even the flesh of the woman’s wrist is hidden beneath transparent gloves, almost undetectable as such save for the seam detail at the wrist. In *Two Young Ladies in a Loge* the bared shoulders of Mlle. Mallarmé is offset with a simple unadorned black velvet choker and her pale pink dress further detracts from her skin so that instead the spectator’s attention is drawn back to the girls’ faces – and thus to their identities. Pollock also suggests that the very uprightness of the girls denies the work the sexual undercurrent implicit in Renoir’s images of the same subject (ibid. 68). The undertone in Mansfield’s work is undeniably often sexual, but her gender determines that

¹²³ KM to Garnett Trowell, 8 November 1908.

¹²⁴ Renoir, *The First Outing* (1875-76), oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.

her purpose is different from Renoir's; Mansfield aimed to expose male predation whereas Renoir ignored it. Both Renoir and Cassatt's images of young women and Mansfield's description in the epistolary excerpt above provide a strong model of contrast with images of young women by contemporary non-Impressionist artists – for example, the Pre-Raphaelite John Everett Millais's *Hearts Are Trumps* (1872), which depicts three haute-bourgeois young women occupied in an appropriately quiet and sedentary pastime.¹²⁵ All three appear bored and listless; their activity and interaction seems perfunctory. Millais's image is meticulously detailed and unchallenging and accurately reflects the social mores of his time. Impressionist artists generally were aiming for something more spontaneous and ostensibly less contrived.

Cassatt's two images of her sister at the Opera – *Lydia Leaning on her Arms, Seated in a Loge* (c. 1879), and *Lydia in a Loge Wearing a Pearl Necklace* (1879), (see fig. 15) reveal a young lady unexpectedly and only momentarily at ease, entranced by the spectacle on stage.¹²⁶ In the latter there is a greater emphasis on the sensual quality and painterly potential of the textures and surfaces, with the effects of the light upon skin, pearls and velvet privileged. Pollock allows that both works are closer to Renoir's, specifically in the resonant colours and the lightly hatched brushstrokes characteristic of Impressionism. Her images of Lydia are more overt in their celebration of traditional femininity and perhaps this is due to both her familial devotion and to the knowledge that her sister's youth and beauty were as impermanent as her health – it was executed just three years before Lydia's death from Bright's disease. There is none of the apprehension implicit in *Two Young Ladies in a Loge*; instead it is full of anticipation and confidence indicated in Lydia's forward leaning pose which also makes her a willing participant in the inherent spectacle of the dress circle. Morisot's *The Black Bodice* (1876), portrays a young woman dressed to attend the Opera or the likes. The sitter's attention has been caught by someone or something in the foreground to her right, outside of the painting's composition which subtly prevents the viewer the opportunity of engaging with the woman and it denies the model's full participation in the event. By aligning themselves professionally with the Impressionists and participating within that exhibition realm, Cassatt and Morisot were more able to experiment with surface textures and patterns, and light effects producing works which would have been unacceptable by Salon standards. There is a very decorative quality to much of their work, particularly their images of women in evening dress, but both were desirous to capture the essence of what bourgeois, or upper-middle class society entailed from a highly personal

¹²⁵ John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Hearts Are Trumps* (1872), oil on canvas, Tate Gallery, London.

¹²⁶ Cassatt, *Lydia Leaning on her Arms, Seated in a Loge* (c. 1879), pastel, The Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri.

and individual perspective all of which invites comparison with Mansfield's depiction of the same subject.

Mansfield's "Her First Ball" is an Impressionist text on a number of levels, including the subject matter, themes and technique. Around the time of writing it Mansfield reveals that "I have been looking at a good deal of modern 'work' lately" (CL4:262).¹²⁷ Like Rosabel, Leila is particularly affected by light, movement and sound – by the "moving fan-like lights" of the car headlights, the "burst of tuning from the drill hall" and by the "great quivering jet of gas [which] lighted the ladies' room" (337). Leila senses "that even the little quivering coloured flags strung across the ceiling were talking" (338). This directly corresponds with the Impressionists' general tendency to represent transitory phenomena, like the varying effects of light at different times of the day on Monet's *Haystacks* or the Rouen Cathedral and emphasised in Degas's urban imagery. The motifs and her emphasis on the surface appearance of things – the gas lights, the fluttering flags – in Mansfield's animated, highly pictorial descriptions call to mind specific works, such as Degas's *The Café-Concert*, *The Ambassadors* (1876-7), (see fig. 32) within which Degas's treatment of light and reflection accurately corresponds with the evocative atmosphere of the dance hall for Leila. Furthermore, Degas's unconventional and presumably solitary viewpoint corresponds with Leila's individual perspective. Just as Degas's Impression reveals a partial and limited viewpoint, with only the dancers' legs visible, Leila's impressions are both determined and limited by the point from which she observes – literally and temporally (she is at her first ball), and psychologically, because her impressions are influenced and further biased by her previous limited experiences and the anticipation of romance: "The bolster on which her hand rested felt like the sleeve of an unknown young man's dress suit" (336).

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the senses play an important role in Impressionist aesthetics. Leila's impressions are based solely upon her sensory perception and inform the narrative which is both imaginative and pictorial: "little satin shoes [which] chased each other like birds" (337). Mansfield's dependence on sensory detail to evoke subjective mood and atmosphere in this story and in many others directly aligns her with the Impressionists. Leila's mind is a whirl; the images that move in and out of her vision do so in almost staccato-like fashion. Amidst the bustle Leila's perception of her surroundings is constantly changing; initially apprehensive, she is subsequently dazzled, only to become momentarily disillusioned. She reflects on life's "dark[ness], silen[ce], beaut[y]...its mournful[ness and] solemn[ity]." She chooses, however, to focus on that which is "dazzling bright" (340). Of utmost importance here is that Mansfield successfully evokes all five senses.

¹²⁷ KM to Richard Murry, 9 August 1921.

Sadleir in an article pertaining to Kandinsky in *Rhythm*, raises several interesting points: that “the art of the future, once it has thrown off the chains of naturalism, can develop fresh methods of its own, unhampered by tradition” (1:4, 1912: 25); and, as argued by Kandinsky:

... just as the painting of all ages has a common element, so equally have the various arts between themselves. Music, poetry, painting, architecture are all able in their different way to reach the essential soul, and the coming era will see them brought together, mutually striving to the great attainment (ibid).¹²⁸

Sadleir’s assertion again reinforces how preoccupied artists were with interconnectedness of the arts at this time. He also indicates that Naturalism was then a dominant force in England, which reinforces my argument that Mansfield’s literary Impressionism owed something to the example of Naturalists Bashkirtseff and Zola whose work simultaneously adhered to the aesthetics of Impressionism. Of particular note is Sadleir’s discussion of how and why modern artists particularly sought to call upon the senses. Citing the example provided by Kandinsky – a Skrjabin symphony¹²⁹ – Sadleir explains, “sight, smell and hearing are all enlisted to intensify the impression received” (ibid. 26). Of course Mansfield employs the senses in “Her First Ball” for precisely this reason.

Sight is privileged in impressionistic literary works and is often linked with touch – “Hold onto me, Leila; you’ll get lost’... Leila put two fingers on Laura’s pink velvet coat ...” (337). As demonstrated in Chapter 2, “sweet”, for example might apply to the flavour of the ices, or to their actual appearance: “How sweet the ices looked on little glass plates, and how cold the frosted spoon was, iced too!” (341). Or indeed, to something less tangible – the ‘sweetness’ of femininity. Sound also functions significantly in “Her First Ball”, again, it contributes to the momentum of the story: “the noise was deafening... And everybody was pressing forward... When the door opened ... there came a burst of tuning from the drill hall, it leaped almost to the ceiling” (337);¹³⁰ “presently a soft, melting, ravishing tune began.... In one minute, in one turn, her feet glided, glided... all became one beautiful flying wheel” (343). Smell, which Weisstein considers lowest within the hierarchical order of sense perceptions, he claims is entirely ignored in Mansfield’s story. However, Mansfield both implicitly and explicitly references smell – primarily through flowers: “Meg’s tuberose” – a white fragrant, spiky lily-like flower of Mexican origin – are recalled later in the same sentence by “Laura’s little dark head, pushing above her white fur like a flower through snow” (336); and again in the cloakroom where, “Two old women in white aprons ran up and down tossing fresh armfuls” – ostensibly of coats and “wraps” but Mansfield’s phrasing

¹²⁸ Sadleir quoting from Kandinsky’s *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1910).

¹²⁹ Alexander Skrjabin, (1872-1915), Russian composer and pianist.

¹³⁰ “it leaped” refers both to the “great quivering jet of gas” and to the music; again this demonstrates how Impressionists like to conflate and confuse the sentences, “Her First Ball” 337.

implies that like their owners who are likened to budding blooms, the wraps are also like armfuls of fresh flowers (337). Leila's memory of dance lessons at boarding school brings scent to the fore too; these were conducted in a "dusty-smelling hall—with calico texts on the walls" (339). Later, Leila dances with an old fat man whose coat was "dusty with French chalk" (341). The dusty chalky scent is recalled a third time within the story with one young girl's cry in the cloakroom: "Powder my back, there's a darling" (337). Thus, Mansfield succeeded in evoking all five senses in this short story. Nevertheless, Mansfield believed that this story was "Too simple. It is always the next story which is going to contain everything ..." (CL4: 252).¹³¹

One might argue "Her First Ball" does contain everything. Patrick Evans notes its succinctness and the simultaneous treatment of the glorious and the malign which as I have shown corresponds so well with Impressionism.¹³² The story was probably written in February 1921 at the Villa Isola Bella, Menton,¹³³ a place she had once loved but now wished to leave as she found herself increasingly unhappy and subsequently "withdrawn from 'the world' because of my hatred for insincerity" (CL4:170).¹³⁴ In a letter to Morrell at this time Mansfield expresses her unhappiness, her new hatred of the French and France, her disgust in the knowledge that the world revolves around money, but also her perpetual hope: "However, one goes on believing. Life *might be* marvellous. One keeps faith with that belief in ones work. Ive been writing of a dance this afternoon & remembering how one polished ... floor was so thrilling that everything was forgotten ..." (CL4:171; KM's italics).¹³⁵ And that "beautifully slippery" floor does allow Leila to forget: "... when her next partner bumped her into the fat man.... She didn't even recognise him again" (340, 343).

¹³¹ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 24 July 1921.

¹³² Patrick Evans, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, in conversation, 11 November 2008.

¹³³ Though Norburn believes it written 25 July 1921, from Switzerland, 76. Ostensibly, it was one of the stories written for and subsequently published in the *Sphere*, 28 November 1921; see CL4:252 and CL253, n. 4.

¹³⁴ KM to an unspecified recipient, early 1921.

¹³⁵ KM to Ottoline Morrell, 2 February 1921.

CHAPTER 6

RURAL LANDSCAPES

Mansfield's pictorial stories are memorable for their rich evocation of the New Zealand landscape, both cultural and physical. Although her adult years were spent in England, France, Italy and Switzerland, it was the landscapes she had first known to which she would pay the greatest homage within her writing. Mansfield painted acutely insightful portraits of colonial life in the burgeoning suburbs of Wellington; of leisurely summers at the seaside at Days Bay; and of the only partially tamed gardens of her childhood homes at Karori and Thorndon. Much of her prose radiates the same luminosity as Impressionist landscapes. Though there are innumerable examples throughout her letters and stories, passages from "Prelude" and "At the Bay" spring foremost to mind:

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 bungalows began.... 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.... Ah-Aah! Sounded the sleepy sea ("At the Bay" 205).

The excerpt above is reminiscent of Monet's *Morning on the Seine, Near Giverny (Mist)* (1896-97) and both reveal the respective artists' subjective and sense-oriented response to the landscape (see fig. 1).¹ Within her natural landscapes Mansfield utilises plants and flowers, and the motifs of sea, the light and weather particularly, to explore themes of isolation, identity and belonging, the passage of time, and the transience of life – themes which had also preoccupied the Impressionists whose own investigations were similarly mediated through these motifs. While the leading colonial painters – primarily landscapists – exhibiting in Wellington during Mansfield's childhood and adolescence were practising in an Impressionist vein, as discussed earlier, Mansfield's first significant exposure to French Impressionism probably occurred in London in 1905 at the Grafton. And while London was playing host to various modern art styles, including Cubism and Fauvism, Impressionism remained the dominant style and the newspapers and modernist journals – particularly *The Athenaeum*, *The New Age* and *Rhythm* – were alive with associated reviews and informed

¹ The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston has an almost identical work. There are a number of works from this series which correspond with Mansfield's description and which were exhibited under alternative or similar titles; see for example, *Morning on the Seine, near Giverny* (1896), oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Juliana Cheney Edwards collection, bequest of Grace M. Edwards. Monet, *Branch of the Seine Near Giverny, Fog* (1897), oil on canvas, The Collection of Mr and Mrs David Lloyd Kreeger, USA. The catalogue of the 1905 Impressionist exhibition at the Grafton in London lists several Seine views, one of which was probably an above-named work.

commentary, ensuring its perpetuation.² It is my central thesis however, that the unique light and landscape of Mansfield's own country, and the critical observations surrounding the subject of the natural landscape as a worthy fine arts subject, made her more susceptible to the aesthetics of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, even before she reached the more art-oriented cities of London and Paris.

The New Zealand Landscape in the Fine Arts

Brown and Keith explain that while artists had been painting the New Zealand landscape since Cook's first voyage (1768-1771), these first New Zealand landscapes were topographical in style and purpose and not associated with the Fine Art tradition (13). True colonial painting has its roots in the mid-nineteenth century with the organised establishment of European settlements (ibid. 9). Brown, Keith and McCormick all cite English-born Charles Heaphy (1820-81), (appointed as artist and draughtsman by the New Zealand Company in 1839), as one of New Zealand's first landscape painters proper (Brown and Keith 13, McCormick 34). In McCormick's opinion however, Heaphy's work evidences a struggle to capture and convey "the strange contours of a new environment" and "the peculiar quality of each part of New Zealand" (ibid). Though he produced many pleasing maps, paintings and drawings of New Zealand, McCormick finds that Heaphy's work sometimes fails and attributes this to the ingrained lessons of Europe which are at odds with the unique landscape of New Zealand.

For McCormick, Heaphy's

vision is blurred by the softer greens and blues of the English landscape or because he cannot forget the subdued palette of his student days. When he does get away from the conventions of his time ... and treat[s] a New Zealand subject freely in his own way, the result is a small masterpiece (34).³

By contrast, McCormick finds in the work of John Alexander Gilfillan (1791-1863), a drawing teacher from Glasgow who immigrated to New Zealand in 1842, interesting developments in response to specific landscapes.

² See Modernist Journals Project for searchable editions of the leading nineteenth and early-twentieth-century modern journals (within the date range indicated in parentheses) including *The Owl*, London (1915-23), *Poetry*, Chicago (1912-22), *Scribner's Magazine*, New York (1910-22), *The English Review*, London (1908-10), *Coterie*, London (1919-21), *Le Petit Journal des Réfusées*, San Francisco (1896), *Cosmopolitan*, London (1910-12), *Rhythm*, London (1911-12), *The Blue Review*, London (1913), *Dana*, Dublin (1904-05), *The New Age*, London (1907-22), *Blast*, London (1914-15), *The Tyro*, London (1921-22), *Wheels*, Oxford and London (1916-1921): <http://dl.lib.brown.edu/mjp/>.

³ McCormick points to *Kakariki, from Ship Cove and Teawaiti* (1839), watercolour, The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand – an image of two green parrots on foliage; and *Mt. Egmont from the Southward* (c.1840), watercolour, The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

In Gillfillan's early work, as evidenced in his sketch-books which were already half-filled before his arrival in Wellington, McCormick notes the proficient sketches of pagodas and scenes on a Chinese river that sprang from his time as a naval officer in the East. In Scotland, Gillfillan drew castles and agreeable rural scenes. These, McCormick explains, evidence his skilled and deliberate draughtsmanship, and an appreciation for "the picturesque", but little else (38).

After his arrival in New Zealand, however, the work takes on a new character, gains fresh vitality. Here is an artist for whom new vistas have opened. *Impressions are many, time is short* ... in sketch after sketch he strives to give form to this fascinating new life and these fascinating new people (ibid., my italics).

For Mansfield, whose affinity with the New Zealand landscape was deeply imbedded in her psyche as evidenced in the earliest extant notebook entries, it took geographical distance and foreign techniques to do it justice; this, then, raises questions about the authenticity of her production. If we accept that Mansfield used French Impressionist techniques to realise her vision of her native country, are her stories New Zealand stories? Or are they little more than a montage as McCormick essentially argues is the case in the majority of Heaphy's work? Can we ascribe Mansfield the title: New Zealand Impressionist and/or define her work within the bounds of New Zealand Impressionism? McCormick's argument will be brought into discussion again within the course of this chapter; for the meantime, I shall return to the rise of the tradition of New Zealand painting and consider how that might have informed or at least impinged upon Mansfield's practice.

Brown and Keith explain that early in New Zealand painting

At least two main patterns emerge: a general orientation towards landscape, not only as a readily accessible subject but also as a source of imagery capable of profound implications, and a positive response on the part of a number of more important New Zealand painters to the distinctive qualities of New Zealand light (9).

These are distinguishing features within Mansfield's writing – first evidenced in the notebooks, letters and the Urewera notebook and then informing the stories, including "The Woman at the Store", "Prelude", and "At the Bay". Brown and Keith also point out that New Zealand's first painters were often visitors who responded to the landscape, "in a superficial manner", by which they mean, through established and indoctrinated academic methods of representation which did not allow for the peculiarities and specificities of the New Zealand landscape, its native flora and fauna and unique Pacific light (9). The results were at times little more than a pastiche, which seems to support McCormick's claims.⁴ There were similar

⁴ The earliest example of this is by Isaac Gilseman (d. c. 1645), an artist aboard Abel Tasman's Pacific expedition of 1642. Gilseman drew what is held to be the first European impression of Maori people in *A view of the Murderers' Bay, as you are at anchor here in 15 fathom* (1642). While Gilseman was confident of accurately drafting the mountainous backdrop, the Maori

issues in literature. Williams explains that colonial writers “were acutely aware of the inadequacies of inherited conceptual paradigms” and thus struggled “to represent and narrate the experience of the new world” (1998:697). Although Mansfield was a native New Zealander, there was no established literary tradition from which she could borrow which meant she had to look elsewhere. And, as O’Sullivan explains, she had “been drilled to think of England as the natural repository for traditions and values” (CL1:ix). Her early experimental writing corresponds with her search for a model across various art forms and demonstrates that like the early painters she too relied on imported styles to realise her vision of the New Zealand landscape – to repay her “debt of love” to the “undiscovered country” in which she was born (NB2:32).⁵ In addition to the various writers whose work provided stylistic models (as previously discussed, particularly in Chapter 3), Mansfield looked to the example set by painters practising in New Zealand at the turn of the century, and also to the painting style most visible in Europe right up until the First World War which in both cases was Impressionism.

The Rise of Colonial Impressionism

As discussed in Chapter 3, painters in New Zealand practised an attenuated version of Impressionism from around 1890 following the arrival of Nairn. Nairn taught and exhibited initially in Dunedin before moving to Wellington in 1891, whereupon he founded the Wellington Art Club in September 1892.⁶ Nairn was a proponent of the *plein-air* style and asserted that “If we want art, we must begin at the point where all great artists have begun: the study of nature, from life or outside” (cited in Brown and Keith 58). He also encouraged his students to return to the same subject at different times of the day to paint it in a different light – a technique demonstrated by Monet within his series works of, for example, haystacks (ibid. 86). Nairn’s more spontaneous and subjective approach – he urged his pupils “To paint the thing as one sees it” – was considered utterly modern by turn-of-the-century Wellingtonians (cited in Brown and Keith 86). However, like the majority of non-native artists before him, Nairn did not strive to capture the uniquely New Zealand landscape but rather imposed upon it the Glasgow School’s principles pertaining to colour and light which, while derivative of French Impressionism, tended to be lower key in colour.⁷ Brown and Keith do concede however, that “the characteristic light peculiar to the New Zealand landscape could not fail to effect [sic] his work” (86). In an acknowledgement

people’s physiognomy proved a challenge, resulting in bulbous-headed figures with modified European features.

⁵ 22 January 1916.

⁶ The Wellington Art Club was revived in 1906 as the Wellington Sketch Club.

⁷ The Glasgow School which flourished from the late 1880s set about reinterpreting and expanding the canon of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. As advocates of *plein air* painting, they devoted themselves to depicting aspects of their native Scotland.

of Nairn's modern approach one critic concluded that "His landscapes are not microscopic studies of trees, hills or plants – they are bits snatched out of the wide, open day, with light and air palpitating through the picture"; however, another complained that they were "a little rougher and uglier than is necessary" (cited by Keith 1963:5).

A Summer Idylle (1903) is typical of Nairn's Impressionist style in terms of its everyday subject matter (a humble farm scene), but also in its colouring and loose brush stroke.⁸ It is unlikely that Mansfield saw this work – it was exhibited in Christchurch in 1898 and subsequently purchased by the Canterbury Society of Arts – though it is interesting that she used the title for her own distinctly New Zealand sketch "A Summer Idylle" (1906), an unfinished story in a notebook which was probably written in England.⁹ "Summer Idylle" is decorated with the Maori names of native flora and draws on Maori legend.¹⁰ For the most part the story exhibits Mansfield's affinity with Symbolism¹¹ but also, has a romantic, 'other world' quality that, superficially, is in keeping with the style of much Maoriland writing which treated the New Zealand landscape in terms of the sublime. The work contains what Williams and Stafford define as the local markers, "tui, rata, and manuka" found in the colonial and Maoriland literature of the time and thus, locates her firmly within the colonial society whose boundaries she strained against (154). However, there is an undeniably voyeuristic quality to the work which is also present in Impressionism – Degas's Impressionism rather than Nairn's: while swimming, the main protagonist Hinemoa "fell back a little to see Marina. She loved to watch ... it increased her enjoyment" (NB1:75). If we accept that this immature sketch was written in England and we acknowledge that it has Symbolist and Impressionist overtones, but that it belongs within the realm of Maoriland

⁸ J. M. Nairn *A Summer Idylle* (1903), oil on canvas, Christchurch Art Gallery, New Zealand.

⁹ The story is dated 1906, and Mansfield spent the majority of that year in England. She left England in October to return to Wellington, arriving by ship 6 December 1906. Within the *Notebooks* the story falls before an entry which Scott explains was written while waiting for admission to a concert by the violinist Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962), 78. Kreisler's London debut was in 1901 and he played again at London 16 February 1906 (see advertisement in *The Times* (06 Feb. 1907): 1, and it is most likely this performance that Mansfield attended. The next two *Notebook* entries appear to have been written onboard (they are dated October 1906), meaning that there is a gap of almost eight months which leads me to believe that the ordering of the material in the *Notebooks* is not entirely correct. Incidentally, the *Observer* reveals that Kreisler's New Zealand debut occurred in 1903 by which stage Mansfield was already on her way to England, see: *Observer* 23. 22 (14 February 1903): 14.

¹⁰ Mansfield refers to the popular legend of Hinemoa, the tale of a young Maori woman of noble-birth whose people disapprove of her love for Tutanekei, a young Maori man without status. Her family's endeavours to keep the young couple apart fail as Hinemoa, following the sounds of her lover's music, swam between islands to be with him. The tale was reworked in much Pakeha writing at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/1966/H/HinemoaLegendOf>

¹¹ The work is fantastical, imaginative, evocative, and erotic in keeping with the Symbolist paradigm; see Julius Kaplan, "Symbolism" in Jane S. Turner (ed.). *Dictionary of Art*. 34 vols. (Grove: New York, 1996) 30:168-171.

literature, then this may suggest that colonial literary production represents something of a pastiche which McCormick, Brown and Keith argue is the case in colonial painting.

In terms of 'New Zealand Impressionism', Mansfield is more likely to have been familiar with Nairn's seascapes, particularly those of Wellington, such as *Winter Morning, Wellington Harbour* (1894) within which the artist has paid great attention to the effects of weather and light upon water, achieving a result somewhat commensurate with Monet's style.¹² Nairn enjoyed some fame in the city of Wellington during Mansfield's childhood and adolescence, as a teacher who practised *en plein air*, a public lecturer and as a regular exhibitor at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts as well as at the other main Art Societies, all of which the newspapers unfailingly reported on, albeit not always enthusiastically, with accusations of "chromatic lunacy" in response to an exhibition Nairn had organised at the Art Gallery on Whitmore Street (*Evening Post* critic cited in Brown and Keith 85). Though without a National Gallery at this time, Mansfield's Wellington was not artistically-bereft or provincial as she and her sisters claimed.¹³ Vial lists at least eleven prominent Sydney-based artists (all members of the Art Society of New South Wales) who from 1885 were also sending their *plein-air* landscapes to Wellington for exhibition (23). She also explains however, that the New Zealand-based artists following in Nairn's wake demonstrated a greater allegiance to the Barbizon School than to the more avant-garde Impressionists which artists in Sydney and Melbourne more readily embraced, suggesting that upon Nairn's death in 1904, New Zealand art stagnated somewhat. Mansfield may have been familiar with the Silverstream School, established by Frederick Sedgwick – one time pupil of Nairn – who following in Nairn's footsteps, painted *en plein air* at Silverstream. The Silverstream School's works however, demonstrated an allegiance "to Corot's idyllic tonal landscapes", and technically their work was closer to the realism of Bastien-Lapage, rather than to the French Impressionists (Brown and Keith 67).

Nature as Tamed and Inhabited versus the Sublime

According to Brown and Keith New Zealand painters considered Bastien-Lapage, Whistler and Corot the "great modern masters" (69-70); nevertheless, the influence of French Impressionism represented the most significant one on New Zealand art right up until at least the 1930s. Sitzia points to one of the ways in which the Impressionists transformed the landscape genre: while Corot's landscapes were "timeless forests with ... occasional nymphs", the Impressionists incorporated contemporary elements within their rural scenes

¹² J. M. Nairn, *Winter Morning, Wellington Harbour* (1894), watercolour on paper, Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongawera.

¹³ See Alpers 1980:42, Charlotte Beauchamp in an undated letter to Sylvia Payne (written near the end of January 1907).

(2007:276).¹⁴ For example, in Renoir's *Oarsmen at Chatou* (1879), the focus is on the sail boating – an activity enjoyed by the leisure classes – and the composition represents nature as “tamed and inhabited” (ibid., 277).¹⁵ There is an element of this in Alfred Wilson Walsh's (1859-1916) *Camping at Cave* (1894) which depicts two men in modern-day dress, one with fishing-rod in hand, on the riverbank in front of their tents, suggesting that can they survive and fend for themselves within the still largely uncultivated New Zealand landscape.¹⁶ The two women in the painting (almost peripheral figures) are occupied with the laundry, signifying that a degree of comfortably domesticity could be attained in this rougher environment. While it does support archaic notions of male as hunter-gatherer and the female as homemaker, it is modern in that the scale has been drastically reduced and the forest is seen as inhabitable as opposed to sublime. It is a scene not unlike that described by Mansfield in her 'Urewera Notebook', and both are indicative of the enduring popularity within the bourgeoisie of camping forays into the bush: “Tuesday morning start very early.... We ... get right into the bush.... & camp at Tarawera ... the old man, the candle in the tin, the scenery.... Next day walking and bush ... the flax & manuka ... camp by the river.... the purple, the ferns ...” (NB1:135-150, 137). Walsh – who had taught McIntyre at Christchurch – employed a relatively high key palette and his spontaneously executed watercolours contained a clarity and freshness which anticipates the approach Nairn later brought to New Zealand art.

While she may already have been familiar with Walsh's work, Mansfield would probably have seen his watercolours when they were exhibited alongside her friend Bendall's at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts in 1907. Walsh's *Camping at Cave* represents a significant move forward from the images produced by the earlier colonial painters, such as William Fox's (1812-93), *Teraumei or the Mangles Valley* (1846) within which human figures are depicted as dwarfed and insignificant within the awe-inspiring natural landscape.¹⁷ And his approach is also different from that demonstrated by some of his near contemporaries, such as Liverpool-born artist, William Mathew Hodgkins (1839-98), who arrived in New Zealand in 1860 and whose un-peopled atmospheric landscapes under large luminous skies evidence the influence of the landscapes of Turner, Constable and proto-Impressionist Boudin and are thus technically less modern than Walsh's.¹⁸ That is not to say that

¹⁴ See for example Corot, *A Nymph Playing with Cupid* (c.1857), Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

¹⁵ Renoir, *Oarsmen at Chatou* (1879), oil on canvas, The National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., USA.

¹⁶ Alfred Wilson Walsh, *Camping at Cave* (1894), watercolour, Auckland Art Gallery.

¹⁷ William Fox, *Teraumei or the Mangles Valley* (1846), watercolour, The Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin.

¹⁸ See W. M. Hodgkins (1839-98), *After Rain, Lake Wakatipu* (1896), watercolour, Auckland Art Gallery.

Hodgkins's romanticised landscapes were unappreciated or any less influential on the public psyche, as indicated in Mansfield's prose in the Urewera notes, particularly in the following "Vignette":

I stand in the manuka scrub, the fairy blossom.... On my right the lake is cold, grey, steel-like, the quiet land sleeps beside it. Away ahead in the silver sea the lies the island, then the wild sky. Everywhere the golden broom.... And, before me, the lake is drowned in the sunset. The distant mountains are silver blue, and the sky, first vivid rose, thins & spreads into a pale amber.... I am alone. I am hidden. Life seems to have passed away, drifted, drifted, miles & worlds on beyond this fairy sight.... The sky changes, softens, the lake is all grey mist, the land in heavy shadow, silence broods among the trees (NB1:148).¹⁹

And again, in the early letters which evidence her participation within the dialogue of the cult of the sublime: "Hills, especially are such dear friends of mine – they are so strong, so noble, and such an example to our wretched selves" (CL1:13).²⁰

Mansfield explores the theme of nature as "tamed and inhabited" in "Prelude" within which she drew heavily on her recollections of the family home at Karori. Nobly and romantically entitled Chesney Wold,²¹ the property was something of a lifestyle block with cows, horses, pigs and poultry. Describing it in the early story "About Pat", she writes, "In the days of our childhood we lived in a great old rambling house planted lonesomely in the midst of huge gardens, orchards and paddocks" (Alpers 1984:5). In "Prelude" Mansfield elaborates, describing the garden in minute detail, naming flower after flower, of which there are classics and exotics, indicative of the family's cultivated tastes and moneyed status:

The camellias were in bloom.... The roses were in flower – gentlemen's button-hole roses ... but far too full of insects to hold under anyone's nose ... cabbage roses on thick stalks ... and a certain exquisite cream kind with a slender red stem and bright scarlet leaves. There were clumps of fairy bells, and all kinds of geraniums.... The red-hot poker were taller than she. The Japanese sunflowers grew in a tiny jungle ... (32-33).

The flower gardens are cultivated and civilised, as the Burnells/Beauchamps believe themselves to be.²² Within this rural garden, nature has, for the most part, been contained and tamed: on one "side of the drive there was a high box border and the paths had box edges and all of them led into a deeper and deeper tangle of flowers" (32). On the other side,

¹⁹ December 1907.

²⁰ KM to Sylvia Payne, 10 July 1904.

²¹ Chesney Wold is of course the Dedlock family home in Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-53) which Mansfield read, see KM to Sylvia Payne, 24 January 1904, CL1:11.

²² Mansfield's description of the garden is reminiscent of Flaubert's who certainly renders the landscape in more painterly terms than his predecessors were inclined to do: "all sorts of vegetation were flourishing together, haphazardly: lanky green plants and dropping yellow clusters, golden bachelors' buttons, cats' tails, and purplish love-lies-bleeding...", *A Sentimental Education* 271.

however, “The little paths” were being reclaimed by “tree roots [which] spanned across them” (ibid.). Furthermore, “Kezia had seen a bull through a hole in ... [the fence] that separated the tennis lawn from the paddock” (ibid.). The landscape is therefore not entirely tamed, and Kezia instinctively avoids “a tangle of tall dark trees and strange bushes”, instead making her way “up the drive that led to the house” (ibid.).

While the Impressionists embraced nature, it was often modified nature. On Monet’s garden at Giverny where the artist spent the latter half of his life, now a site of international and historical significance, Heinrich writes,

Quite clearly a power governed and shaped the garden.... He assigned every plant its place, planning and ordering, laying out parallel borders according to varieties and colour. He was establishing his sovereignty over Nature. With subjects for paintings already in mind, he chose his plants, composing works not only by choosing a position but also ... determining the appearance of the natural world (72).

Monet went so far as to have removed the green tips of a budding oak tree when its changing appearance jeopardised the representation he was creating on a canvas he had already commenced:

I’m overjoyed, having unexpectedly been granted permission to remove the leaves from my fine oak tree! It was quite a business bringing sufficiently long ladders into the ravine. Anyway, it’s done now, two men having worked on it since yesterday. Isn’t it the final straw to be finishing a winter landscape at this time of the year ... (Kendall 96).²³

Monet’s desire to control aspects of nature recalls a letter of Mansfield’s in which she acknowledges her own ‘unnatural’ instincts: “I must get up & take the earwigs out of the roses. Why should they choose roses? But they do & I go against Nature in casting them forth” (*CL4*:112).²⁴ An early notebook entry written while still under the primary influence of Wilde, reveals her dislike for the Renaissance’s tendency towards idealism – “striving after a heightening of natural beauty which is not nature” – she offers the modern day propensity to “cultivate orchids” by way of an analogy to Renaissance practice and concludes that this represents a “perversity which may be poisonous” – perhaps this is why, in “Prelude” she allows for the bugs in the button-hole roses, leaving them be (*NB1*:165).

Despite his fame as a painter of flower gardens and of ponds abundant with water lilies, Heinrich asserts that Monet was never a painter of flowers. In addition to the more domestic dahlias and nasturtiums, Monet planted wisteria and irises and he imported many exotics, including tuberose from Mexico – such as those worn by Meg in “Her First Ball” – gleaming pearl-like water lilies and “tufty clumps of bamboo” (Heinrich 72). However, while certain flowers are readily identifiable within Monet’s compositions, as an Impressionist, he did not

²³ Monet to Alice Hoschedé, 9 May 1889.

²⁴ KM to Richard Murry, 15 November 1920.

attempt to recreate botanically correct images of that which he had so carefully chosen and cultivated. Rather, as Heinrich explains, Monet was concerned with “the harmony of the whole, the overall impression. For Monet, flowers were bearers of light, and a feast for the eyes” (ibid. 73). Sadleir makes similar claims for van Gogh’s appreciation of the natural landscape: van Gogh “saw a new whirl in nature, a new meaning in colour.... it was colour that meant more to him than anything. Colour ran through his life like a devouring flame, brilliant but consuming.... throughout his letters, in his descriptions of nature, it is the colour which strikes him most” (*Rhythm* 1.2, 1911: 16). Sadleir cites van Gogh’s description of Arles (which reads not unlike Mansfield’s description of Port Willin in “Daphne”, with the emphasis on the overall effect of colour and light within the composition): “... a few red roofs ... some green fig-trees ... over the whole is a thin strip of blue.... meadows covered with dandelions, like a yellow sea.... fields, full of purple iris.... What about that for a motif!” (ibid.).

Certainly Mansfield understood flowers in terms of light and colour, as countless letters demonstrate: “... petunias.... are wonderful flowers – almost pure light – and yet an exquisite starry shape” (CL4:261).²⁵ And like van Gogh, who describes his intention to “paint the portrait of an artist friend, a man who dreams great dreams, who works, as the nightingale sings.... the fair head shining out against this rich blue background will have the mysterious effect of a star in a deep blue sky”, Mansfield was keenly attuned to the effect of light and colour within the landscape; from Menton she writes, “The colour and the movement everywhere make you continually happy. Its all ruled by the sun” (van Gogh cited in *Rhythm*, ibid. 18; Mansfield: CL3:231).²⁶ She also connects nature with spirituality, and in language suggesting the she experienced nature as a synesthete: “Flowers like Tom’s music seem to create in me a divine unrest – They revive strangely – dream memories ... They show me strange mystic paths ... To lean over a flower – as to hear any of his music is to suddenly [have] every veil torn aside – to commune with soul ...” (CL1:43).²⁷ Monet uses precisely the same expression, though his meaning is more literal, in reference to his first experience of open air painting: “... all of a sudden, it was as if a veil had been torn from my eyes” (cited in Blunden 38). A letter of 1920 reveals that Mansfield was still making these connections, that she understood nature in terms of music: “... flower pictures affect me so much that I feel an instant tremendous excitement and delight. I mean as strong as if a great band played suddenly. I read a description of a certain pink magnolia which ... has the appearance of a great flock of flamingos” (CL3:263).²⁸

²⁵ KM to Richard Murry, 9 August 1921.

²⁶ KM to Richard Murry, 24 February 1920

²⁷ KM to Vera Beauchamp, late March 1908.

²⁸ KM to JMM, 28 March 1920.

For Mansfield nature, music, painting and poetry were inextricably linked. Her commentary in the letter of 1908 cited above, though gushy and immature, functions on two levels; primarily, it corresponds with the fashion in late nineteenth and early twentieth century for a greater interconnectivity within the arts; far from a new idea, it had grown out of the theory of *ut pictura poesis* popularly upheld in the eighteenth century, including by J. M. W. Turner who assigned poetic epigraphs, some of which he himself composed, to approximately a quarter of the paintings he exhibited in his lifetime.²⁹ Debussy, in awarding his musical compositions painterly names and by describing them as pictures, sketches and studies (see Chapter 1), and Whistler who called his painterly compositions ‘nocturnes’, demonstrated their adherence to the principle.³⁰ Secondly, Mansfield’s tendency to align music and nature – to see the lyrical quality in flowers – is linked with the even older idea, that nature was restorative. Mansfield lived in an era which bore witness to industrialisation on an unprecedented scale. Like the Impressionists whose city was rendered unrecognisable during the Franco-Prussian war, Mansfield lived through World War I. In both cases the artists determined not to represent the devastating effects, at least not explicitly, the respective wars had on their environments. It was during World War I that she very deliberately channelled her memories of New Zealand. As one of Britain’s allies, New Zealand participation in the war resulted in significant losses – Mansfield’s own brother died in service – and New Zealand as a nation grieved for the loss of a generation; but Mansfield did not witness the effects of the War on New Zealanders firsthand. New Zealand, then, or specifically its physical landscape, became a safe haven – a storehouse of memories far removed from the urban catastrophes which, “like a black cloud”, darkened her letters of 1917 and 1918 (CL2:72).³¹ New Zealand was a place of “mystery” and “radiance” – it had “an after glow”; furthermore, it was an “undiscovered country” in which she could “hear his voice [her brother’s] in trees and flowers, in scents and light and shadow” – which were precisely the motifs sought by Monet (NB2:32; 2:16).³²

Van Gunsteren understands that nature in Mansfield’s prose “is a complex topic” which partly facilitates the evocation of impressionistic atmosphere, but primarily serves as a vehicle for exploring the human condition:

²⁹ See George P. Landow, “*Ruskin and the tradition of ut pictura poesis*”, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin*: <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/1.1.html>, 11.03.10

³⁰ See KM to Garnet Trowell, 6 October 1908, in which she describes the effect of walking amongst fallen leaves “... almost like a Debussy theme ...” CL1:66.

³¹ KM to JMM, 14 February 1918.

³² 22 January 1916; 29 October 1915. That said, Mansfield probably borrowed the phrase ‘undiscovered country’ from *Hamlet* (III: i), in which Hamlet was speaking about death.

In general, the perception of nature as hostile or benevolent or indifferent is an indicator of important philosophical issues. Nature may be the innocent victim of human actions ... but frequently in Mansfield's fiction Nature is seen as a beautiful and serene phenomenon amid the calamities of human strife.... a poignant motif when contrasted with the corruption of human action and behaviour (138).

Van Gunsteren is mostly right; the following simple yet descriptive passage acknowledging the benevolence of nature, the uprightness of the trees, an implicit acknowledgement of her own human failings and subsequent vow to mend her ways, supports Van Gunsteren's claim:

I have just returned from a Midnight Service. It was very very beautiful & solemn. The air outside was cold and bracing.... Over all the woods & the meadows, Nature had tenderly flung a veil to protect from the frost ... the trees stood out, dark and beautiful against, the clear, starry sky.... I mean this year to try and be a different person.... One may mean so much good, and do so little ... (CL1:16).³³

So too does Mansfield's claim for the nobility of the hills versus the wretchedness of people. Monet's *Autumn Effect, Argenteuil* (1873) is a glowing example of Nature's resilience and beauty in the face of human interference.³⁴ Jonathan Mane Wheoki explains that Monet's ostensibly picturesque landscapes sometimes hinted at the rapid industrialisation that characterised the modern age.³⁵ Argenteuil, just over twelve kilometres from Paris and Monet's home town in the 1870s, underwent significant development during this era. In the distance the town's pollution mingles with the clouds in otherwise blue skies. In this image at least, nature is privileged and thus triumphing over industry.

Mansfield's definition of nature, however, is probably broader than Van Gunsteren's. Mansfield believed that "nature is immoral", unforgiving, inevitable, "eternal", sometimes threatening and certainly not always serene (NB1:165).³⁶ In "Summer Idylle", for example, the trees are personified, threatening, inciting maliciousness in one of the female protagonists and, subsequently, fear in the other:

'All ... trees have arms – saving the rata with his tongues of flame – but the fern trees have beautiful green hair.... should a warrior venture through the bush ... they seize him & wrap him round ... & in the morning he is dead. They are cruel even as I might wish to be to thee'.... She looked at Hinemoa with half shut eyes, her upper lip drawn back showing her teeth ... (NB1:76).

In "The Garden Party" the canna lilies are "almost frightening [sic] alive" yet they herald death (249). Later, following the death of a neighbour they are referred to as "arum lilies" – flowers carrying funereal associations. Van Gunsteren acknowledges that in Mansfield's

³³ KM to ?Thomas Trowell, 31 December 1904.

³⁴ Monet, *Autumn Effect, Argenteuil* (1873), oil on canvas, Courtauld Institute Galleries, London.

³⁵ See Jonathan Mane Wheoki, "Monet's Impressions of the Industrial Environment", *Monet and the Impressionists*, ed. G. T. M. Shackelford (Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW, 2008).

³⁶ Though undated this entry is probably from around the time of the 1907 Urewera camping trip.

stories, “Dying nature, flowers and the blown leaf appear to be closely related to man” but that ultimately “plants express blissful harmony” and indeed, following her first experience of death, the near-serene Laura acknowledges that “it was simply marvellous” (ibid. 258, Van Gunsteren 163, “The Garden Party” 261). Similarly, in “The Voyage” following the death of her mother, Fenella ponders the forms in the landscape, observing the “strange silvery withered trees that are like skeletons” (328).

Mansfield’s notes from the Urewera experience provided valuable material for her late fiction; they were drastically modified, however, as she increasingly adopted Impressionism’s aesthetics. The “heliotrope” skies found inland and the harsh clear light of Wellington, were reconciled (NB1:148); the heavy description – now considered superfluous – was removed from her narratives leaving only that which, at a glance, made the greatest impression:

Over by the breakwater the sea is very high. They pull off their hats and her hair blows across her mouth, tasting of salt. The sea is so high that the waves do not break at all; they thump against the rough stone wall and suck up the weedy, dripping steps. A fine spray skims from the water right across the esplanade. They are covered with drops; the inside of her mouth tastes wet and cold (“The Wind Blows” 110).

As in “Her First Ball” and other impressionistic texts, sight, sound, taste and touch are privileged; emotional feelings, though not suppressed, are at least quietened. The spectator has become more passive and thus better able to appreciate their surroundings. The parameters have been reduced; gone are the sweeping all encompassing symbolically-laden representations of an awe-inspiring landscape. This is a snapshot – or rather, three: of Matilda’s home, then of her piano teacher Mr Bullen’s home, and finally of the sea – meaning that the natural landscape is privileged above the domestic. Nevertheless, there is still an element of tamed versus wild nature in that the sea overcomes the manmade structures meant to retain it.

Taming Nature II: The Impressionists at the Seaside

The significant improvements made to the French railway network between 1840 and 1870 which brought about increased urbanisation in Paris, also facilitated travel to the northern coastal regions of France. In particular, the Channel Coast became accessible and Parisians with leisure time and the financial means to enjoy it flocked to seaside towns such as Trouville and Deauville where seaside resorts catering to the whims of the bourgeoisie had sprung up seemingly overnight. Mid-nineteenth century artists Boudin, Jongkind, Corot and Courbet all treated the subject in very different ways; while Boudin’s canvases registered the elegant crowd who strolled the beaches, neither Corot nor Courbet focused on the bourgeoisie. Instead Corot devoted himself to capturing the effects of light and Courbet to

the ever-changing appearance of the sea. The Impressionists in their wake – the majority of who were of the class which frequented such regions – took to the beaches to register their own impressions. While these were mediated through very different temperaments, the results reveal that primarily, free from the distractions of the city where, according to Monet, “One is too much preoccupied with what one sees and hears”, the Impressionists focused on the effect of natural light (Monet cited in Blunden 83). G. and M. Blunden write, “The study of the sea light revealed to the impressionist painters the importance of the atmosphere, of that evanescent spray of humidity without which light would be invisible” (ibid.). The landscape of the seaside resort was also a subject which lent itself to the juxtaposition of nature and the modern world, and in as much, were again landscapes Mansfield could relate to. The Wellington Bays were popular bourgeois retreats during her childhood, as celebrated in “At the Bay”.

While painted in the high key colour palette and radically modern loose brush work of Impressionism, Morisot’s images of the seaside hint at the limiting social parameters within which she was still functioning, even while on holiday. In the loosely sketched *Beach at Nice* (1881-82) Morisot’s two female figures are pictured just within the confines of the balcony with the louvers to their right and the pier in the distance serving to define their zone; thus, the horizontal and verticals function here in exactly the same manner as in her domestic interiors.³⁷ Similarly, in *Eugène Manet on the Isle of Wight* (1875), the focus is on the domestic aspect of the composition and is not primarily an exercise in rendering light.³⁸ In “At the Bay” Mansfield also reveals that closely observed rituals of social behaviour governed the way females conducted themselves on holiday: “It was understood that at eleven o’clock the women and the children of the summer colony had the sea to themselves. First the women undressed.... then the children were unbuttoned” (216). Frustrated and bored, Beryl attempts to rebel against these conventions, leaving her mother and nieces she instead bathes with the androgynous Mrs. Harry Kember: “She was the only woman at the Bay who smoked.... and ... didn’t care twopence about her house.... The woman at the Bay thought she was very, very fast” ” (218).

Images such as *The Harbour at Lorient* (1869), in which Morisot has placed her sister seated on the stone parapet at the end of the water, bring together the domestic and industrial.³⁹ Lorient, a busy fishing port and one out of which business pertaining to France’s colonies operated from the mid-Seventeenth century, in Morisot’s lifetime gained in popularity with tourists. The figure of her sister in the foreground, albeit on the periphery,

³⁷ Morisot, *Beach at Nice* (1881-82), watercolour on paper, National Museum, Stockholm.

³⁸ Morisot, *Eugène Manet on the Isle of Wight* (1875), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

³⁹ Morisot, *The Harbour at Lorient* (1869), oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C.

the boats scattered across the inlet and the township hugging the water on either side of the canvas, suggests that nature has been contained and thus tamed. The serene water and Edma's obvious reverie lend this otherwise busy port a quiet quality. Mansfield achieves this balance in "The Wind Blows" in which she describes the raging winds, the coal hulks in the surging harbour and "A big black steamer with a long loop of smoke streaming ... with lights everywhere ... putting out to sea" and concludes that "It's the light that makes her look so awfully beautiful and mysterious" (110). Morisot did paint a number of oils depicting the busy harbour at Nice and the bustling quays at Cherbourg and Bougival. These are however, largely unpeopled landscapes, or at least, if they do contain figures, they are generic and not intended as portraits; instead Morisot focused on capturing the dappled effects of light upon water, varying degrees of sunlight and dissolving matter and vibrating shades of colour. The effects she achieves do not differ from those realised by Mansfield in her stories and even in her letters: "the sea is my favourite sea – bright bright blue but showing a glint of white as far as one can see ... as far as the horizon [it] moves me terribly. In fact it is *the very thing* I should like to express in writing – it has *the very quality ...*" (CL3:19).⁴⁰

Colonial Light

Ostensibly, following the Impressionists' lead, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century painters in New Zealand applied themselves to capturing the quality of the Pacific light, achieving variable degrees of success. Brown and Keith assert that while the subject of the New Zealand light and its influence on landscape artists became a hot subject for debate within twentieth-century art discourse, it was relevant much earlier, for example in William Hodges's work (10). Hodges (1744-1797), an artist who accompanied Cook's second expedition to the Pacific in 1773, demonstrates a response to the peculiar New Zealand light within paintings which one English critic then disparaged, finding "the colouring is too monotonous, and sometimes heavy, with an abruptness in the light and shade approaching hardness" (cited in Brown and Keith 10). Art Historian, P. A. Tomory's impressions are that "the Pacific light burns and bleaches, so that in high summer black and white predominate" and believes this might explain why the work of some New Zealand artists is characterised by hard edges and a tendency towards chiaroscuro" (cited in Brown and Keith 10). Cézanne's letters reveal that the light in the landscape at L'Estaque struck him similarly: "The sun is so tremendous that objects seem to me to be silhouetted not only in white or black, but in blue, red, brown, violet. I may be wrong, but this seems to me to be the exact opposite of modelling" (cited in Blunden 185). Certainly, Tomory's summation rings true in the case of Mansfield's "The Woman at the Store".

⁴⁰ KM to JMM, 12 October 1919.

Despite the proliferation of highly-coloured details, “The Woman at the Store” is notable for its chiaroscuro and harshly delineated depiction of the New Zealand landscape and its inhabitants:

All that day the heat was terrible.... white pumice dust swirled in our faces.... Jim rode beside me, white as a clown; his black eyes glittered.... below us there was a whare roofed with corrugated iron.... A thin line of blue smoke stood straight up from the chimney ... a woman came out ... carrying what appeared to me a black stick ... (550-553).

According to one early New Zealand art critic, whom W. M. Hodgkins quoted from in his notebooks, “The born painter sees colour, form and chiaroscuro all together”, and Mansfield certainly seems to demonstrate this ability here (cited in Pound 65). Black, white and grey define inanimate objects and forms within the landscape rendering it monotonous but also contributing to the jarring and discordant pattern which nevertheless lends the narrative coherency: the black stick carried by the woman – a rifle – echoes the woman’s own form: “Looking at her, you felt there was nothing but sticks and wires under that pinafore” (553). The sky, full of larks, is described as “slate colour” and the larks’ shrills remind the narrator of “slate pencils scraping over its surface” (550). The harshness of the landscape is further suggested through the changing light and it is entirely appropriate that Brown and Keith chose to quote from this story in their preface to *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting*: “There is no twilight in our New Zealand days, but a curious half-hour when everything appears grotesque” – again proof of the cruelty or brutality Mansfield understands as inherent in nature (“The Woman at the Store” 554, cited in Brown and Keith 1). Here, Mansfield is undoubtedly looking to and incorporating the savagery inherent within Fauvism, and the story was written at a time when Fauvism was enjoying popularity in London art circles and being emulated by artists who would become her friends – namely Fergusson and Rice. It is significant however that Mansfield did not continue in this vein; as I have shown in Chapter 2, Mansfield’s Fauvist leanings, like her experiments in Maoriland writing, were short-lived. Instead, she strove to reconcile the qualities she perceived in the New Zealand landscape as belonging to the aesthetics of Impressionism and Fauvism respectively, and to address in particular the peculiarities of its light – the quality of which, as widely asserted, is singular and merits further survey here.

Upon his arrival in New Zealand in 1929, Christopher Perkins noted its worth as a country for painters owing to “its marvellous light” (cited in Brown and Keith 10). Poet, A. R. D. Fairburn addressed the theme in 1934: “There is no golden mist in our air, no Merlin in our woods, no soft warm colours to breed a school of painters from the stock of Turner.... Hard, clear light reveals the bones, the sheer form, of hills, trees, stones and scrub” (cited in Brown and Keith 10). His commentary recalls Mansfield’s treatment of light in “The Woman

at the Store". However, in her rural landscapes Mansfield evokes not only the harsh light but also the presence of golden mists and the intrinsically elusive quality which Fairburn failed to recognise: "The buggy twinkled away in the sunlight and fine golden dust up the hill and over" ("Prelude" 12); and in "At the Bay":

And now big spots of light gleamed in the mist. The shepherd ... glanced in the direction of the sea. The sun was rising. It was marvellous how quickly the mist thinned, sped away.... The far-away sky—a bright, pure blue—was reflected in the puddles and the drops, swimming along the telegraph poles, flashed into points of light. Now the leaping, glittering sea was so bright it made one's eyes ache to look at it (206).

Wilkins is right in describing Mansfield's New Zealand stories as "luminous re-imaginings ... lit with the affection and nostalgia of an expatriate" (4; previously cited in Chapter 3). Unquestionably, nostalgia informed Mansfield's recollections of the landscape of her childhood; more specifically, however, Impressionism provided her with the tools with which to depict that landscape unlike any other artist – writer, painter, or otherwise – had previously done.

Leaving New Zealand at age nineteen never to return, Mansfield went on to encounter other inspiring landscapes – the hills and valleys of Switzerland and the Mediterranean coast in particular made an indelible impression upon her, with the corresponding letters rich with vivid descriptions of flowers, trees and the climate.⁴¹ Mansfield had always considered the physical landscape as integral to her writing – when composing her urban landscapes sordid and unwelcoming environments inspired her (see *CL1*:157) – the natural landscape, however, remained Mansfield's primary "aesthetic resource" throughout her writing career, and it is the New Zealand landscape represented in "Prelude" and "At the Bay" that readers of Mansfield hold in the highest regard (Orr 1994:166). The effects achieved in these landscapes came about through Mansfield's modifying the example set by the French Impressionists. In a letter to Brett regarding "Prelude" Mansfield describes her vision and her purpose in an Impressionist's terms:

... I have a perfect passion for the island where I was born.... in the early morning there I always remember feeling that this little island has dipped back into the dark blue sea during the night only to rise again at beam of day, all hung with bright spangles and glittering drops – (When you ran over the dewy grass you positively felt that your feet tasted salt.) I tried to catch that moment – with something of its sparkle and its flavour (*CL1*:331).⁴²

Robyn Hyde, whose work Jones has identified as impressionistic, describes her aim in strikingly similar terms: " ... to write from the inner centre of what people think, hope and

⁴¹ See Mansfield's description of the sea and mountains surrounding Menton, France in *CL3*:189; and the trees and the light in Sierre, Switzerland: *CL4*:249.

⁴² KM to Brett, 11 October 1917.

feel... [to convey] what I have seen ... what I have touched and tasted" (cited by Jones in Sturm 175). For the pictorial equivalent to Mansfield's description, one need look no further than Monet's images of the Seine at various times of the day and in various weathers, six of which were exhibited in London 1905 – and at Monet images of the French town of *Vétheuil*, several versions of which were also exhibited in London in the early 1900s and which Mansfield might first have seen during her school years at Queen's College.

Following the reign of Nairn and van der Velden, New Zealand painting is for the most part considered second-rate. Those artists not fortunate enough to have been to the Continent and witness firsthand the vibrant colours and luminosity in the majority of the Impressionists' landscapes were forced to rely upon reproductions, often mediocre in their quality and distorted in both colour and scale (Brown and Keith 11).⁴³ Brown and Keith explain that there was a void left by the expatriates; and for those who stayed: "The singularity of the New Zealand landscape and the well remarked harshness of the New Zealand light totally escaped them. For the most part they preferred to render what lay around them with an academic, watered-down, mock impressionism" (119). At times, this resulted in little more than "slushy landscapes" (ibid. 123). Fairburn felt that ultimately "the impressionist technique ... failed to express the character and singularity of our natural landscape" and on this point Brown and Keith partly concur (cited in Brown and Keith 10). Although New Zealand artists at the end of the nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth century were looking to foreign artists and international trends for inspiration, the influence of Nairn's "near-Impressionistic style" though significant while he was himself practising in this manner, in the long run was not as great as it might have been on subsequent New Zealand painting (Brown and Keith 10). Nevertheless, Brown and Keith conclude that although it was not always a conscious one, New Zealand painters were, on the whole, preoccupied "with light and forms associated with landscape" (10).

Geographical Determinism

Regarding the tradition of landscape painting in New Zealand Francis Pound concurs with Brown, Keith and McCormick that rendering the distinctive light and atmosphere of the landscape remained a primary issue for both native and immigrant artists. However, while acknowledging his debt to Brown, Keith and McCormick, Pound vehemently argues that all adhered to the following "fallacy": "that there is a 'real' New Zealand, a 'real' New Zealand landscape, with its 'real' qualities of light and atmosphere, to which some artists are true and others untrue, the true artists being then 'good' and the untrue 'bad'" (11). McCormick's

⁴³ Brown and Keith explain that it was not until after the Second World War that art books and magazines became more readily available in New Zealand and lead to a growing interest in and appreciation of European and American art. Real developments towards a distinctly New Zealand brand of art occurred from the mid nineteen-fifties, 11.

opinion of Heaphy's achievement substantiates Pound's claim. Further, Pound articulates "a corollary fallacy: that the 'real' New Zealand *causes* style in paintings" – a concept he dubs "geographical determinism" (ibid). Pound argues against this widely accepted idea and instead claims that "there is no innocent eye", that it is not possible to respond spontaneously to the landscape, that Nature is always seen through the frames of culture and that one responds to the world of art as much as to Nature (ibid.). Pound's assertions echo Degas's who claimed, "One sees what one wants to see. It is false, and that falsity is the foundation of art" (cited in Grove 70). More specifically, Pound sees the tradition of landscape painting in New Zealand as something which was imported from Europe and imposed upon New Zealand, something taught and learned and therefore intellectual as much as artistic. If Pound is right, his findings support my claim that Impressionism taught Mansfield how to appreciate New Zealand's natural beauties, and more importantly showed her ways in which to render them.

In his analysis of the tradition of landscape painting in New Zealand, Pound considers the critical consciousnesses of various New Zealand painters in an attempt to identify the nature of their intellectual milieu and how that might have influenced "Their thinking about art" and subsequent production (ibid). Mansfield's notebooks clearly demonstrate that while she absorbed the lessons of a variety of English and European writers and artists from Shakespeare to the modernists, a handful specifically influenced her nascent aesthetic theories – Pater for one, but particularly the French writers Balzac, Flaubert, Mallarmé, Mérimée, Maupassant and Zola all of whom were intrinsically linked to the visual arts and whose own respective outputs reflect this.⁴⁴ Later, Mansfield finds her aesthetic sympathetically in accordance with Cézanne's portraiture,⁴⁵ and the pictorial story "Daphne" (discussed in Chapter 3), arguably recalls Cézanne's painted L'Estaque landscapes. "A Truthful Adventure", "Spring Pictures", "Feuille d'Album" (1917), "A Married Man's Story" and "Daphne", all contain direct references to artists, art or still lifes. Mansfield's heightened sensibility to the visual arts is evidenced throughout her letters, particularly those to artists, such as Brett, Rice and Richard Murry, and they are littered with painterly references and her specific theories pertaining to style, composition, scale, design, modelling and finish.⁴⁶ Furthermore, on several occasions she refers to her own rooms in terms of a still life – albeit a traditional genre but one which was being radically modernised by the Impressionists and

⁴⁴ See NB1:165-66.

⁴⁵ See CL4:278, KM to Brett, 12 September 1921. Brett lent Mansfield the Cézanne book; the reference to which I am referring is cited in Chapter 1.

⁴⁶ See, for example, KM to Brett, 12 September 1921, CL4:277; and KM to Brett, 15 October 1921, CL4:296.

Post-Impressionists who appreciated the genre's privileging of everyday subjects:⁴⁷ "The kitchen is a progression of still lifes [sic] from a poor dead bird leaning its tired head on a tuft of watercress ... onwards" (CL4:151).⁴⁸ No doubt the still lifes by Cézanne, Gauguin and others exhibited in the 1910 show: "Manet and the Post-Impressionists", at the Grafton made an indelible impression on Mansfield.⁴⁹ Citing her servant in another letter she relates how she too sees in such terms: "one or two bananas make the fruit bowl more intriguing" (CL4:152).⁵⁰ Mansfield's writing and her commentary here support Pound's claim that art – and, indeed, one's environment – is understood through mental frames.

Pound lists those characteristics of French Impressionism which he understands as wholly characteristic of the style. Due to the context in which he writes, his bias is towards landscape and thus does not account for the equally associative domestic interiors and urban landscapes of the French Impressionists; given that colonial impressionism was landscape-oriented and primarily concerned with the effect of light upon water – as demonstrated in Nairn's work – and not broken families or café-society, Pound's perspective is probably justifiable even were he not conducting "a sustained mediation on" nineteenth century landscape painting in New Zealand (11). Pound claims however that only four of approximately fourteen major traits of French Impressionism were emulated within so-called New Zealand Impressionism, and that these were demonstrated primarily in the work of three artists working in New Zealand: Swedish-born Edward Fristrom (1856-1942), Nairn and Italian-born Girolamo Pieri Nerli (1863-1926) who arrived sometime after Nairn, though the date is uncertain (26). In Fristrom, Nairn and Nerli's work, Pound identifies specifically, their *plein-air* practice, mildly heightened colour palette, somewhat of an affinity for everyday subjects and sketchy brushwork, all of which evidence an allegiance to French Impressionism (ibid.). However, Pound also believes that collectively their work "carried as many traces of styles before and after Impressionism as it did qualities of Impressionism itself" – a point that I must also concede is unarguably relevant in my case for Mansfield's status as a colonial Impressionist (ibid.). He concludes that impressionistic is a far more suitable definition but also allows that Impressionism – or rather "superannuated Impressionism", being a thinned, reduced, diluted or less virulent form of French Impressionism – continued to be the most visible style in New Zealand painting and,

⁴⁷ See Monet, *The Pheasant* (1869), oil on canvas, Private Collection; Manet, *Still Life with Salmon* (1866), oil on canvas, Mrs J. Watson Collection, New York. Mansfield sometimes punctuated her letters with sketched still-lives, see: CL3:192 and CL3:260-61.

⁴⁸ KM to Brett, 22 December 1920. See also KM to Richard Murry, c. 19 September 1920, CL4:42.

⁴⁹ As might have those by Monet and Cézanne exhibited at the Grafton in London in 1905.

⁵⁰ KM to Rice, 26 December 1920; Mansfield quoted her servant in slightly incorrect French: "un ou deux bananes font plus intrigantes le compotier"; the English translation is mine. See also KM to Richard Murry, c. 19 September 1920, CL4:42.

furthermore, at the time of his writing in 1983 remained “the official, popular style in New Zealand” (27).

Mansfield’s Landscapes: Seen Through ‘Imported Mental Frames’

Mansfield never fully immersed herself into New Zealand culture. Even the people and landscape of the Urewera which left such a lasting impression are viewed, understood and conveyed through imported “frames”, just as Pound asserts (11): “The Hamurana Spring The still rain, the colourful tangle of willow & rose & thorn – like Millais’ Ophelia, the undergrowth & then the spring – like Maurice Maeterlinck” (*NB1*:144);⁵¹ “They climb on to a great black rock & sit huddled up there alone – fiercely almost brutally thinking – like Wagner” (*ibid.* 145). Mansfield’s letters and Ida Baker’s memoirs reveal that they were all seeing through then fashionable art modes, as Baker’s description of Gwen Rouse (a fellow Queen’s girl) demonstrates: “a tall, languid girl from the Isle of Man ... She had a mouth that might have belonged to one of Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s damsels” (26-7).⁵² Understandably, Mansfield’s characters behave in the same way; specifically, they relate new experiences and the environments they encounter to those which they are already familiar with, whether actual or through art and books. Mansfield’s *Governess* looks upon the view from the train: “... she could see bright patches of fields, a clump of white houses like mushrooms, a road ‘like a picture’ with poplar trees on either side, a thread of river” (182). Her description in general recalls both Pissarro and Monet’s imagery; Monet, in particular, had a penchant for such a scene and Mansfield might have had in mind specific examples, such as *Three Poplars in Summer* (1891) or *Poplars on the Banks of the Epte* (1891).⁵³ Similarly, the *Governess* decides that the grandfather-figure is “Just like one out of a book!” (183). The narrator in “A Truthful Adventure” reflects on her first impressions of Bruges, particularly the “dark and heavy trees” in the Place van Eyck: “... there was almost a touch of Verlaine in that” (532). Writing to Brett from Sierre Mansfield describes her home help in very specific pictorial terms:

We have a real peasant girl.... I wish you could see her. She is made to be painted and she wears, always, the peasant dress – a short jacket & full skirt – and her BEAMING smile is a joy. When she comes back after her afternoon out with a great bouquet of flowers and stands at the door holding them I wish Van Gogh was still alive! (*CL4*:254).⁵⁴

⁵¹ November 1907. Mansfield read and quoted from Maeterlinck’s “The Deeper Life” in *Treasures of the Humble* (1897), see KM to Sylvia Payne, 24 January 1904, *CL1*:11.

⁵² Cited also in *CL1*:11, n.3.

⁵³ Monet, *Three Poplars in Summer* (1891), oil on canvas, The Matsukata Collection, The National Museum of Art, Tokyo; Monet, *Poplars on the Banks of the Epte* (1891), oil on canvas, Private Collection.

⁵⁴ KM to Brett, 25 July 1921.

Mansfield had of course seen Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and a number of his rural scenes at the 1910 Post-Impressionist show at London, and his work and letters were discussed in glowing terms within the September 1911 issue of *Rhythm*. The excerpt above evidences Mansfield's powers of recall and seemingly natural tendency to make such associations; however, she was also regularly corresponding with her artist friends, in particular Rice and Brett, so that even when she was living "... absolutely remote ... miles and ages away from all civilisation", she was kept informed of recent developments in London and Paris (ibid. 255).⁵⁵ Seven months prior to Mansfield's writing the letter cited above, Richard Murry had written her a letter within which he quoted from Van Gogh's letters: "I know that Nature told me something, that she spoke to me, and that I took down her message in shorthand" (cited in *CL4*:148). In her reply, Mansfield concurs with the sentiment expressed by van Gogh and claims Chekhov expresses precisely the attitude in his own letters (ibid.).⁵⁶ Everything was mediated; everything had its corollary source.

As stated above, historians are somewhat critical of the 'near' impressionism of painters working in New Zealand at the turn of the century and beyond. However, unlike many of these artists who were forced to rely on mediocre reproductions, Mansfield experienced French Impressionism first-hand. Hers then is not "a watered-down, mock impressionism" and her landscapes are far from "slushy" (Brown and Keith 119, 123). But nor is it an unmediated literary reconstruction of French painterly Impressionism; she was not aiming for cross-media verisimilitude. Rather, Mansfield's Impressionism is Colonial Impressionism – an entirely authentic product, albeit one realised through the mental frames identified by Pound. In *Rhythm*, Meyers discusses the classification of art in terms of its national characteristics: "Of course it is true, not only theoretically, but historically, that nationality has an influence upon art; but it is also true that art which is least obviously "national" may be of the greatest permanent value" (1.2, 1911: 29). Meyers cites the example of a French composer whose innovative work owed to his "individual temperament" and was "independent of external influence" resulting in a work which was "'national' in so far as it was self-sufficing, but not 'national' in the sense that it merely reflected the conventional ideals and spirit of the nation as a whole. True nationality should be big enough to include all the forms of true individuality" (ibid.).

While Pound has shown that no work can be free from external influence and Van Gunsteren notes that Mansfield was not working in a vacuum, certainly Mansfield's aim was to remain true to her temperament and the style which she employed for the so-called New Zealand stories, such as "Millie" and "The Woman at the Store" versus that realised in "At the

⁵⁵ Brett had just been on an art-viewing trip to Paris.

⁵⁶ KM to Richard Murry, c. 10 December 1920, n.1.

Bay” and “Prelude” which capture another aspect of the New Zealand landscape, clearly demonstrates that she both acknowledged and was confidently able to recreate the various forms of individuality which existed within her nation. In a letter to Morrell Mansfield acknowledges the different facets of the New Zealand landscape, noting the “sham and vulgarity” of the nouveau riche in the urban centres but claims that, “There is another side... the most heavenly places that cannot be spoiled” (CL1:316).⁵⁷ Monica in “Revelations”, who does little more than lunch at smart restaurants and have her hair done, and Rosemary Fell in “A Cup of Tea” clearly meet the former criteria. Rosemary Fell is described as being

extremely modern, exquisitely well dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books, and [whose] ... parties were the most delicious mixture of the really important people and ... artists—quaint creatures, discoveries of hers.... [and who was] rich, really rich.... if Rosemary wanted to shop she would go to Paris.... [and once] inside the shop just gazed in her dazzled, rather exotic way, and said: ‘I want those and those and those’ (398).

The latter, for Mansfield at least, was to be found outside of the city, in the less cultivated natural landscape.

In her depiction of the New Zealand atmosphere and landscape in “Prelude” Mansfield explains, “I tried to lift that mist from my people and let them be seen and then to hide them again” (CL1:331).⁵⁸ W. M. Hodgkins’s feeling for the New Zealand coast is not dissimilar to that evoked by Mansfield in “At the Bay” and also by Monet in *Morning on the Seine* cited at the beginning of this chapter: he describes forms “slowly losing themselves in the mist” (cited in Pound 65). Given that Hodgkins and Monet were both significantly influenced by Boudin – he was Monet’s first teacher – it is unsurprising that the artists were similarly affected by water, atmosphere and landscape. What is striking is Mansfield’s ability to capture it without the aid of paint. While she acknowledged the difficulties, and feared her endeavour may appear “... overambitious and vain ...” her aim remained clear: “I don’t feel anything but intensely a longing to serve my subject as well as I can (CL1:331). For all his feeling for the atmosphere of New Zealand’s coast, Hodgkins was not aiming to establish a New Zealand tradition in painting and in fact seemed unable to appreciate the singularity of the New Zealand landscape; instead he treated it in terms of those landscapes paid homage to in European painting. Specifically, Hodgkins noted that New Zealand had “the special features of every country which is remarkable for its scenery: the English Lakes, the Scottish mountain and glen, the snow-covered peaks of Switzerland, the fiords of Norway, the tinted geysers of the Yellowstone ...” (cited in Pound 64). Hodgkins implored artists to look to these natural wonders and to exploit them for artistic purposes, and Mansfield did just that – it

⁵⁷ 13 July 1917.

⁵⁸ KM to Brett, 11 October 1917.

was her heritage; she writes: “I feel so immensely conscious of my roots. You could pull and pull & pull at me – Ill not come out – You could cut off my flowers – others will grow ...” (CL3:103).⁵⁹ The New Zealand landscape continually informed her prose – the colour yellow, for example, is often called “gorse yellow” – here, she is describing the morning sunlight (CL4:111).⁶⁰ While neither gorse nor broom are native to New Zealand but were brought by European settlers in the 1800s, it quickly came to dominate the landscape – as Mansfield’s Urewera notes partly reveal – and while gorse soon reached the status of noxious weed, they are both also a distinguishing feature of the New Zealand landscape.

Mansfield and Hodgkins: Colonial Impressionists?

Frances Hodgkins (1869-1947) is another New Zealand artist whose life and work bears consideration alongside Mansfield’s and in respect to Pound’s argument against the idea of geographical determinism. Primarily a figure painter rather than a landscapist, Frances, daughter of W. M. Hodgkins,⁶¹ chose a path which partly parallels Mansfield’s in that she chose not to remain in New Zealand and follow in her father’s footsteps – even though it promised “considerable social success” – and instead abandoned her native country for what Brown and Keith admit was only “moderate success aboard rewarded by public disregard at home” (25). Hodgkins’s oeuvre is now held in much higher regard in New Zealand than it was at the time of Brown and Keith’s writing in 1969 and furthermore, more of the reviews have come to light. Harris’s research reveals that Hodgkins was an active exhibitor and received much favourable criticism in the press. Around April 1919, one British critic placed Hodgkins third in a group of four eminent Continental painters; this list, writes Harris, included Cassatt (69). Hodgkins’s *Summer* (c. 1912) with its three figures – mother, daughter and baby – in an outdoor setting bears a striking similarity to Cassatt’s *The Family* (c. 1886).⁶² Hodgkins left New Zealand in 1901 for Europe where she had mixed responses to the modern art she was now seeing first-hand. While disappointed by the New English Art Club, she was surprised by the modern French art she encountered there, finding it “far less degrading” than contemporary New Zealand criticism and opinion had “led [her] to believe” (Hodgkins cited in Brown and Keith 67). Hodgkins made the requisite trips to Normandy but also further afield to Morocco. She returned to New Zealand in December 1903 but left again in January 1906 arriving in England in due course and made only one further trip home in 1913. Her watercolours of the early-mid 1890s were to some degree influenced by Nerli who supported her affinity for figure painting over landscape, and may be understood

⁵⁹ KM to JMM, 3 March 1918.

⁶⁰ KM to Richard Murry, 15 November 1920.

⁶¹ Hodgkins’ sister Isabel Field (1867-1950) also enjoyed a career as painter in New Zealand though it was Frances who gained lasting fame.

⁶² Hodgkins, *Summer* (c. 1912), watercolour, Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

within the bounds of Naturalism. Her later work demonstrates a very clear response to modern art developments in Paris and London, specifically it reveals the influence of Impressionism and later again, Cubism – though the end product represents a modification of French cubist practice (Harris 59-60).

My interest in Frances Hodgkins stems primarily from Harris's insightful review of Woolf's debt to Hodgkins in "Virginia Woolf and Frances Hodgkins: The Case of the Woman Artist". It is unknown whether either Mansfield or Woolf crossed paths with Hodgkins – I have found nothing corroborative within Mansfield's extant letters, although as Harris points out, "Mansfield and Hodgkins had friends in common and sometimes lived near each other", and furthermore, Frances' sister Isabel and her brother Willie at home in New Zealand were both discussing Mansfield's work (63). Harris also notes that Hodgkins's work received "numerous glowing reviews ... in the London and Sussex papers read by Woolf, who was an habitual frequenter of art galleries and a connoisseur of modern art, [therefore,] Hodgkins was a painter that she could hardly miss" (58). I would venture to make the same argument for Mansfield's knowledge of Hodgkins, for although Mansfield never claimed to be a connoisseur, she was certainly an avid gallery-goer as evidenced in her letters. Harris even suggests that Woolf may have learned of Hodgkins through the Grafton Gallery, Mansfield or Murry's journal *The Athenaeum*. In Lily Briscoe's (of *To the Lighthouse*) canvases Harris detects a very clear influence of at least five of Hodgkins's paintings and she traces the development of the novel alongside exhibitions of Hodgkins's work.⁶³ Two of Woolf's characters in this novel (Prue and Mrs Ramsay), owe something to Mansfield's appearance (Harris 63, Lee 393-399). Harris suggests that "Woolf created Lily's character at least in parts from elements of ... Frances Hodgkins", and concedes that while "I can only deal in tantalising coincidences, similarities and possibilities ... at the very least, Woolf's perception of what it meant to be a pioneering woman artist [at this time in history] ... is remarkably true to the life and the art of France Hodgkins" (59). A fuller analysis of Harris's revealing and convincing argument for Hodgkins's influence on Woolf is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, it is directly relevant alongside my case for the influence of Impressionism on Mansfield and though like Harris, I am sometimes forced to make tenuous connections, fortunately, I do still have more than "coincidences, similarities and possibilities". As has been shown, in her letters Mansfield implicitly and explicitly

⁶³ See Harris 1998:58-59 and n. 4. Harris cites Hodgkins' *Summer* (c. 1912); *The Hill Top* (c. 1908), watercolour, Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongawera; *April*, *The Window Seat* and the *Lindner Family Portrait* as works which specifically informed Woolf's descriptions of Briscoe's canvases, 58.

acknowledges the influence of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, going so far as to admit that Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* taught her about writing (see *CL4*:333).⁶⁴

Though Hodgkins did not meet any members of the Bloomsbury set until after January 1929, when Duncan Grant visited her studio, she was certainly aware of Woolf's circle and the aesthetic theories they advocated much earlier.⁶⁵ She recommended the book *Art* (1914), written by Woolf's brother-in-law Clive Bell, to another New Zealand artist Edith Collier (1885-1964) who had studied in England sometime after 1910 at the St. John's Wood Art School and later under Hodgkins's tutelage (see Harris 60; see Brown and Keith 74). Anne Estelle Rice's husband O. Raymond Drey was a fan of Hodgkins's work, later critiquing it in the Catalogue for an Exhibition of her paintings at Manchester in 1926 (Harris 59).⁶⁶ Hodgkins knew of the Post-Impressionist shows of 1910-11 and 1912-13 at the Grafton, both of which Woolf and Mansfield attended. Hodgkins had been active on the exhibition scene in London since 1902 and also in Paris, receiving due criticism in numerous newspapers abroad and at home.⁶⁷ Harris has been able to establish a number of associations and connections in support of her case for the influence of Hodgkins's work on Woolf which impinge on Mansfield's connections to Impressionism and to modern art and artists at this time, including that in March 1911, Grafton Gallery hosted the Women's International Art Club Show in which Hodgkins had three paintings and which Harris believes it highly likely that Woolf, as a feminist and regular gallery-goer, viewed.⁶⁸

Mansfield might have seen Hodgkins's work at up to three exhibitions at the Grafton or at either the Grosvenor or the Goupil Galleries, or at any of the numerous other exhibitions that Hodgkins participated in during the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁶⁹ Indeed, given Harris's comprehensive account of the Hodgkins's exhibition history and growing reputation as a woman artist, as an Impressionist and as a Post-Impressionist with sometimes Cubist tendencies, it seems inconceivable that Mansfield might not have been familiar with her fellow expatriate's work; assuming that she did see the latter's work, she cannot have failed to recognise the strains of Impressionism that she too was absorbing and

⁶⁴ KM to Brett, 5 December 1921 (quoted and discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3; see also *CL4*:257, re. Manet and Renoir; and *CL4*:278, re. Cézanne.

⁶⁵ Harris 1998:63 and n. 13.

⁶⁶ Catalogue for the Exhibition of Paintings by Frances Hodgkins, Manchester, November 4th to November 30th, Harris 59, n. 6.

⁶⁷ Harris provides the locations and dates for Hodgkins' London exhibitions from 1902, and for those in Paris and Cornwall, as well details of the associated reviews, 1998:66-69.

⁶⁸ Hodgkins exhibited at the Grafton a further three times, in March 1919 and March 1920 – again with the Women's International Art Club, and in July 1920 with the London Salon (Harris 63).

⁶⁹ Mansfield was at Menton during the third of Hodgkin's four exhibitions at the Grafton and she could not have attended Hodgkins' first solo show which was held in 1907 when Mansfield was back in Wellington.

modifying within her own work. Harris notes Hodgkins's presence and reputation at Cornwall, where Mansfield and Woolf also stayed in October 1916 (ibid. 64). And finally, Harris notes that the *Athenaeum*, of which Murry had been Editor in Chief from 1918, with Leonard Woolf as literary editor from 1921, and to which Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Clive Bell and Roger Fry all contributed – Mansfield and Woolf with reviews, Bell and Fry delivered art criticism – reviewed Hodgkins's favourably in February 1920 following her exhibition at Hampstead, the catalogue for which Rutter – now a staunch supporter of Hodgkins – provided the foreword (ibid. 64-65). Reviews abounded in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Evening Standard*, to name just four – the latter-named newspaper in a review of 14 February 1920 noted particularly Hodgkins's Impressionism and ability to render the transient (ibid. 70). Rutter noted her handling of light and movement, and “her vigorous brush drawing and bright sunny colour” (ibid. 69).

Given Woolf's gallery-attendance habits and her literary and artistic affinities and associations, it is frustrating that she left no clue of a possible allegiance to Hodgkins, though the situation partly parallels my investigations pertaining to Mansfield and Impressionism in general. In researching the relationship between Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747), Harris has revealed that “Woolf could be secretive about her sources of inspiration” (74). Elizabeth Eastmond draws a comparison between Hodgkins's characteristic “sense of capturing the sparkling, evanescent moment” with Mansfield's ability to do the same, and Harris argues the case for Lily Briscoe too (Eastmond cited by Harris 65).⁷⁰ Harris cites a critic in an unsourced review who describes Hodgkins's evocation of “the momentary aspects of life”, and writes, “Lily Briscoe's very similar sense of ‘making of the moment something permanent’ is the very essence of impressionism, whether painterly like Lily Briscoe's and Frances Hodgkins's, or literary like Virginia Woolf's and Katherine Mansfield's” (70). Interestingly, following a solo show in 1923 one critic in the press cited Hodgkins “as the disciple [sic] of Van Gogh”, a review which the artist felt was “discrediting & unfair” but which is interesting in that Mansfield, while she seems to have kept more telling allegiances to other artists concealed, willingly acknowledged her own debt to van Gogh (Hodgkins cited in Harris 71). Mansfield could not have seen this review however; she passed some eleven months earlier.

Anne Kirker writes,

Probably Frances Hodgkins' most impressive quality was ... [the] ability to recharge her artistic vocabulary, to search continually for a more meaningful way to express her vision. She approached most of her paintings, whether in oil, watercolour or gouache ... as though facing unexplored territory (51).

⁷⁰ See Iain Buchanan, Michael Dunn & Elizabeth Eastmond, *Frances Hodgkins: Paintings and Drawings* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994) 57.

Presumably Kirker means that Hodgkins faced each new subject or landscape with entirely fresh eyes. But as Pound has shown, this is an impossible thing to do. In fact, Kirker's terminology calls to mind the problem at the root of early New Zealand painting – specifically, the burgeoning but confused landscape tradition. Brown and Keith believe that by distancing herself from her native country and the landscape which artists, burdened as they then were with European modes of representation, struggled to realise in paint, and by seeking out the origin of these works or styles – whether that be the canvases of Constable, the French Impressionists or the Scottish Colourists – Hodgkins succeeded in becoming a modern artist; her style, they conclude, represented only “the most tenuous connection with New Zealand art” (161). Brown and Keith write that Hodgkins removed “herself physically from the distractions of an unidentifiable terrain ...” (161). However, though it may have been unfamiliar within the context of the New Zealand landscape tradition, it was nevertheless her native country and she was a first generation New Zealander. Once familiar with the actual European models on which her father remained reliant his entire career, Hodgkins continued on the path of European modernism, primarily achieving effects commensurate with French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism; she did not however return to the New Zealand subject. Mansfield, by contrast, once equipped with the means with which to represent her native landscape – its people and its terrain – did so convincingly. Like Hodgkins, Mansfield achieved this primarily through the lessons learned from the French Impressionists. Mansfield seems, to me at least, to epitomise the title Colonial Impressionist. The fact that two of New Zealand's most famous exports readily and primarily adopted an Impressionist aesthetic over the various other styles permeating European art during their careers cannot be brushed aside. And while Pound places no value in the concept of geographical determinism, the case of Hodgkins and Mansfield does seem to undermine his argument to some degree. Some might argue that their gender played a role in this, with Impressionism hailed as a style well suited to the sensitivity of women (as discussed in Chapter 4), but if one considers that another New Zealand artist of Hodgkins's generation, Raymond McIntyre, who was working and exhibiting in Europe at precisely the same time, also adopted an Impressionist then Post-Impressionist aesthetic, the argument for gender loses its value. Unarguably, though, as Gerrish-Nunn has shown, Impressionism was the most prevailing style in art right through until World War I and thus its influence was bound to be perceptible in the work of those who were part of what McCahon called the “exodus” – the fleeing of New Zealand and Australian artists at the turn-of-the-century for the more artistically-accommodating cities of London and Paris.⁷¹

⁷¹ See Chapter 2.

Location and Identity

Mansfield spent all of her adult life abroad rather than in her native country, and having established herself as a writer in England she earned greater recognition there and in France than she did in New Zealand initially, with her adopted countries providing the inspiration and settings for at least half of her stories.⁷² And yet, as J. C. Reid asserts, “Katherine Mansfield belongs to the literature of the world, but there is a sense in which she is a real New Zealander” (6). These ideas partly prompted Wevers’ investigations into Mansfield’s sense of nation and nationality; she writes, “Mansfield seldom spoke directly of her nationality”, but in response to a claim made by Samuel Coleridge in *Table Talk* (1836), that “... language, religion, laws, government, blood-identity ...” determine nationality, but “not ... the sod under my feet ...” she firmly asserted “The sod under my feet makes *mine*” (ibid. 31).⁷³ Given that Mansfield was living in France at this time and without “family, friends, a house, children”, or any other ‘homely’ markers by which one might identify oneself, Wevers asks, “what sod was she referring to?” (ibid.).

The tribute Mansfield paid her native country in her evocative descriptions of its physical environment and unique atmosphere seems to suggest that no matter where she was in the world, she identified herself first and foremost as a New Zealander. New Zealand was an anchor of sorts – the chains of which she had endeavoured to shake free from in her youth as she purposefully set about creating a cosmopolitan persona that denied her provincial origins, but which irrevocably linked her to home and to family, and which lent substance and a sense of permanence to her otherwise transient existence in a world in which she never really found her niche. Her representations of New Zealand, however, were mediated through the frames of culture and experience, and of other landscapes which also influenced and partly informed her writing. In her early experimental writing Mansfield alternated not altogether successfully between the landscapes of home and those of her adopted country. In her later work she succeeds in painting a more convincing portrait: McCormick writes, “... she interpreted accurately and beautifully a fragment of New Zealand life and a part of the New Zealand landscape” (cited in Wevers 1995:47). The luminous landscapes in her mature stories, therefore, represent something of a reconciliation between those of Europe and of her native country.

In “Juliet” Mansfield juxtaposes the most distinctive elements of the Wellington landscape with those of her current landscape in London. She opens the story in New Zealand prior to her being sent abroad to finish her schooling. She acknowledges that “I long for fresh experiences, new places, but I shall miss the things that I love here” (NB1:51). Mansfield’s

⁷² See Wevers 1998:206 and 317, n.30.

⁷³ October 1920.

primary affinity was for the physical landscape and the wildness of the elements, towards which she expressed ambivalent feelings, but which never failed to invigorate and inspire her:

... the trees outside were being tossed to and fro, and the sea lashed into a fury by a wild Southerly gale. Juliet shuddered. The wind always hurt her, unsettled her.... She ... went for a walk up the hills that spread like a great wall behind the little town. The wind blew fiercer than ever. She held on to bushes and strong tufts of grass ... rejoicing in the strength that it required. Down in a hollow ... the gorse spread like a thick green mantle.... The utter loneliness of it filled her with pleasure (ibid.).

Mansfield's description of what is unmistakably Wellington provides a strong contrast to her view of London with which she opens Chapter III: "London was shrouded in fog. The streets were wet and the long line of lampposts shone like dim ghosts of themselves" (ibid. 53). Location and identity however are inextricably linked to memory and thus rooted in the past as much as in the present. Brown and Keith suggest that, "When people have collected themselves enough to have some idea of where they are it is also, perhaps, instinctive for them to be curious about where they have been. In the development of a style an awareness of the past is an important factor" (163).

The sea and the wind specifically provided access to her memories of New Zealand which in time would form the basis of the stories that McCormick believes earned her the respect in New Zealand that she gained earlier in Europe.⁷⁴ Thus, Jacqueline Bardolph is right in stating that "the power of the elements connected her directly with her New Zealand self" (161). A poem amongst her loose papers, dated 2 March 1906, in which she describes "the wild mad storm of waves / the fierce rushing swirl of waters together / The cruel salt spray.... [and] The song of the wind" reveals just how important the sea was (*NB1:40*). As revealed in the excerpt above (and below) the sea inspired Mansfield and it promised renewal which corresponds with her habitual relocating: "... a moment later the beach was deserted & the sea crept up & washed away their footmarks from that place" ("Juliet", *NB1:53*). Mansfield was, herself, forever starting afresh while simultaneously remaining reliant on old memories for copy. In fact, for one who declared herself so modern she was equally retrospective: "One lives in the past—Or I do" (cited in O'Sullivan 1988:1) O'Sullivan writes, "Her hopes were located in the future that would seem very like the recovery of an idealized past" (ibid). A letter of 1922 supports O'Sullivan's claim; she writes "... always my thoughts and feelings go back to New Zealand – rediscovering it, finding beauty in it, re-living it" (*CL5:80*).⁷⁵ This, then, poses the question – to what degree did she manipulate her

⁷⁴ See Wevers 1995:47, n.3.

⁷⁵ KM to Sarah Gertrude Millin [?early March 1922].

memories? Was she purely striving towards the picturesque? In which case, is she really an Impressionist, or is her writing merely pictorial?

Citing the example of Proust in *In Search of Lost Time*, Matz distinguishes between pictorialism and Impressionism explaining that the former “lacks ‘connexion’”, it is “no more than a selection, made afresh every day” (4);⁷⁶ the latter occurs when an image, an experience, or event – no matter how insignificant – transports one back to a previous place in time and the Impressionist is able to recall “lost sensations ‘waiting in their place’” (ibid).⁷⁷ For Matz, the impression is, therefore, connected to a place and a time. Consider then the following passage from Mansfield’s 1908 notebook:

A rough sea journey is a strange conglomeration of sensations. I, in a moment seem caught by a thousand memories – am a child again, sitting on my Grandmother’s lap – and me in a red riding cloak – going over to Nelson, to Picton, to England for the first time & the second (NB1:213).

This notebook entry manifested in the story “The Voyage”:

... when I wrote that little story ... I felt that I was on that very boat, going down those stairs, smelling the smell of the saloon. And when the stewardess came in and said ‘... we may pitch a little’ I can’t believe that my sofa did not pitch. At one moment I had a little bun of silk-white hair ... and the next I was Fenella hugging the swan neck umbrella. It was so vivid – terribly vivid – especially as they drove away and heard the sea as slowly it turned on the beach.... It was a kind of *possession* (CL5:101).⁷⁸

Mansfield meets Matz’s criteria, and his theory substantiates my assertion that Impressionism does not rely solely on superficial appearances, but I am not entirely convinced that it works within the context of painterly Impressionism. I do not believe that Manet, Morisot and Caillebotte in their contemporary representations of urban living relied upon, were burdened with or were in search of memories to which they could anchor their current experiences or impressions. Their canvases appear very much a product of their time. Upon deeper consideration, however, Matz’s theory may very well fit with Monet’s development as landscapist as opposed to a figure painter, as he strove to realise or reconcile his memories of the landscapes of his childhood firstly within the physical environments he inhabited in adulthood, and subsequently in his canvases. Monet’s childhood summers were spent at an Aunt’s in Saint-Adresse – just inland from the Normandy Coast, an almost rural spot with gardens not dissimilar to those described by Mansfield in “Prelude”, with a mix of tended and wild areas.⁷⁹ In adulthood, Monet created

⁷⁶ Here, Matz is quoting from Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. Andreas Mayor and Terence Kilmartin, 6 vols. (New York: Modern Library, 1993), II:525,

⁷⁷ ibid. VI:257.

⁷⁸ KM to William Gerhardi, 11 March 1922.

⁷⁹ See Monet, *Garden at Sainte-Adresse* (c. 1886).

his own garden sanctuary not dissimilar to those both he and Mansfield had known in their youth.⁸⁰

Accessing New Zealand via the Landscapes of the French Impressionists

Despite Frances Hodgkins's disinterest in the New Zealand landscape within her own practice, the landscapes painted by the Impressionists were landscapes which Mansfield could and did relate to. In Monet's evocative and atmospheric canvases particularly, Mansfield may very well have recognised landscapes not dissimilar to those she knew growing up in the port city of Wellington. Though born in Paris, Monet's childhood and adolescence was spent in Le Havre, a harbour town on the coast of Northern France notable for its bright dazzling light, choppy seas and changeable wind and weather patterns – a description equally applicable to Mansfield's Wellington.⁸¹ Like Wellington in Mansfield's time, Le Havre was also a thriving commercial port providing a significant thoroughfare for cargo and passengers. Thomson believes Monet's childhood at Le Havre predisposed him to painting harbour scenes and barge traffic, and she claims it "was a natural development" (153). Of course, Pound would refute this claim. Certainly the wind and the sea featured constantly in Mansfield's recollections of home, informing her stories, journals and letters. In "The Wind Blows" she describes "the wind shaking the house, rattling the windows, banging a piece of iron on the roof.... she can hear the sea sob ..." (106-07). From England she writes:

I have such a longing for the sea as I write, at this moment. To stand on the shore long enough to feel the land behind one withdrawn into silence and the loud tumbling of the waves rise and break over one's whole being... But the English summer sea is not what I mean. I mean that wild untamed water that beats my own forlorn island (CL1:316).⁸²

Her description calls to mind Monet's paintings of Étretat, and again, reproductions reveal the similarities in the landscape.⁸³ I believe that the landscapes Monet and Mansfield knew in their respective childhoods were the most influential of all – instilling in them both a particular affinity for light upon water.

Coastal France, in particular, evoked Mansfield's memories of home; in fact, the landscape of Menton was probably the closest she came to that which she had known in New Zealand – at least physically, if not climatically. She writes, "... the Riviera isn't over rated. Its superb.... It does in bits remind me so much of home – of N.Z. the rocks and sea and the flowers"

⁸⁰ See Monet, *Monet's Garden at Argenteuil* (1873), oil on canvas, Private Collection (exhibited in London in 1905).

⁸¹ See Christoph Heinrich, *Monet* (Köln: Taschen, 2000) 8.

⁸² KM to Ottoline Morrell, 13 July 1917.

⁸³ See Monet, *Rough Weather at Étretat* (1883), oil on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia and Postcard: *Houghton Bay*, Wellington (c. 1900), reproduced in O'Sullivan, *Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand*; original artist unacknowledged.

(CL3:273).⁸⁴ Menton provided Mansfield with natural landmarks similar to those she enjoyed in Wellington; specifically it offered her “a west view of mountains covered with little pines & a south view of distant sea and olive groves” (CL3:189).⁸⁵ She completed eight of the eighteen stories written in France while residing at Menton.⁸⁶ Here she found the climate heavenly, and the “darling little town” jewel-like (CL3:287).⁸⁷ Her description parallels Monet’s who being particularly struck by Menton declared that to capture it accurately, “one would need diamonds and precious stones in one’s palette” (cited in Heinrich 64). Monet lived almost all his life either on or very near the Seine, and in towns on the Channel Coast.⁸⁸ He made painting trips to other coastal regions, such as Belle-Isle, a rocky island off the south-west coast of Brittany,⁸⁹ Antibes, on the Mediterranean Coast (1888), Menton on the French Riviera (1884), and in 1908, to Venice. Of course, in London in 1871, he was mesmerised by the Thames. While in adulthood Mansfield’s base was London, ill health constantly forced her to seek the more temperate climes of coastal Italy and then France and later the Swiss Alps. In some respects then, Mansfield’s and Monet’s trajectories were not dissimilar; and it seems entirely appropriate that her final resting place was Fontainebleau – the location made famous by the *plein-air* paintings of the Barbizon School and then by the Impressionists.

Monet and Mansfield: the Rendering of Atmosphere

Both Monet and Mansfield were particularly susceptible to the mood of a landscape; each was acutely attuned to those elements which create atmosphere, such as light, colour, steam and weather effects, and they strove to render them within compositions which attest to the subjectivity and spontaneity which characterises Impressionism. In Mansfield’s prose, as in Impressionist paintings, ‘atmosphere’ “has meanings beyond the meteorological” – as Pound puts it “it is not only a gaseous envelope surrounding a heavenly body.... it is also a mental or moral environment, especially artistic or emotional, a pervading tone or mood. (65). Primarily Monet endeavoured to render what he *felt* within a landscape:

For me a landscape does not exist in its own right, since its appearance changes at every moment. But its surroundings bring it to life – the air and the light, which vary continually.... For me, it is only the surrounding atmosphere which gives objects their real value (cited in Thomson 249).

⁸⁴ KM to JMM, 6 April 1920.

⁸⁵ KM to JMM, 22 January 1920.

⁸⁶ See Kimber, Appendix B, 285; these are not, however, ‘New Zealand’ stories. My point is, rather, that she found comfort in this environment which allowed her to produce the stories.

⁸⁷ KM to JMM, 20 April 1920.

⁸⁸ See J. House, *Monet, nature into art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) 5.

⁸⁹ See House, 231.

He wrote of trying to capture the ‘envelope’ – that all encompassing light that fills a landscape, such as he achieved in *Autumn Effect, Argenteuil* (1873) (ibid). In a letter to Morrell, briefly acknowledging her affinity for Whitman, Mansfield describes her delight in the “rich beauty” of the Autumn landscape – “... to walk under these bright trembling trees and high, tumbling clouds, to watch children, and to lean over bridges” (CL1:328-29).⁹⁰ And in a letter written just a month before, in response to the draft Woolf had sent her of “Kew Gardens” (1919), Mansfield writes, “Yes, your Flower Bed is *very* good. There’s a still, quivering, changing light over it all and a sense of those couples dissolving in the bright air which fascinates me” (CL1:327).⁹¹

Woolf had in fact taken inspiration from a letter she had received from Mansfield and also one that Mansfield had written to Ottoline Morrell which O’Sullivan believes Morrell must have shown to Woolf:

Your glimpse of the garden – all flying green and gold made me wonder again *who* is going to write about that flower garden. It might be so wonderful – do you see *how* I mean? There would be people walking in the garden ... their conversation their slowing pace – their glances as they pass one another – the pauses as the flowers ‘come in’ as it were – as the bright dazzle, an exquisite haunting scent... there must be a slight touch of enchantment ... (CL1:325).⁹²

Evidently Woolf understood Mansfield’s description as romantic as opposed to impressionistic; to Morrell she writes,

KM describes your garden, the rose leaves drying in the sun, the pool, the long conversations between people wandering up and down in the moonlight. It calls out her romantic side; which I think rather a relief after the actresses, A.B.C’s [teashops] and paint pots (cited in CL1:328).⁹³

Nevertheless, it is telling that she used Mansfield’s material in her own prose, and that she specifically acknowledges Mansfield’s heightened appreciation for colour and her pictorialism – in the reference to the “paint pots”.

In “Miss Brill” Mansfield again demonstrates her ability to render the landscape in a manner commensurate with Monet’s (as articulated in the excerpt cited above): “The air was motionless, but when you opened your mouth there was just a faint chill, like a chill from a glass of iced water before you sip, and now and again a leaf came drifting—from nowhere, from the sky” (330-31). Mansfield unarguably began developing her ideas pertaining to atmosphere as early as 1907 when she travelled through the Urewera. However, like the early colonial painters the results leant towards the sublime and mysterious as opposed to

⁹⁰ 23 September 1917.

⁹¹ KM to Woolf, c. 23 August 1917.

⁹² KM to Ottoline Morrell, 15 August 1917.

⁹³ See *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977) I and II, 1975-76, II:174.

the fleeting and ephemeral. W. M. Hodgkins conceded that while ‘atmosphere’ as a subject in itself, was a foreign import – he had in mind Turner’s rendering of atmosphere rather than the Impressionist aesthetic – it had very real applications within the context of New Zealand landscape painting and he was unwavering in the belief that its painterly representation would ensure the future fame of New Zealand landscape painters as it had done the British School before them. Brown and Keith concede that Hodgkins’s assertions were prophetic, although it took until the 1930s for New Zealand painters to come into their own and the effects produced differed greatly from that which Hodgkins had in mind. Given that Mansfield’s name arises in discussion pertaining to the rendering of the unique landscape and atmosphere of New Zealand – and as I stated above, Brown and Keith saw fit to open their *Introduction to New Zealand Painting* with quotes from two of Mansfield’s stories, W. M. Hodgkins’s assertion proved not only true, but also transcended the medium he had intended.

The Passage of Time and the Transience of Life

Sitzia explains that in their rural landscapes particularly, the Impressionists “insisted upon and focused on ... [the] visual aspect of time” represented by the rising and setting of the sun, which signified the course of a day, and of seasonal changes, which alluded to the passage of time (2007:277). Essentially, their canvases are modern representations of an age-old concept – the transience of life, previously epitomised in Seventeenth-century Dutch still lifes, or *Vanitas* (see Sitzia, *ibid.*, 280). Mansfield was demonstrably alert to these ideas and it is one of the most distinctive features of her writing. She had expressed as much in one of the earliest extant letters, written with a sense of youthful urgency and awareness of all that must be fitted in: “We have so little time in which it live at all!” (CL1:13).⁹⁴ A letter written twelve years later demonstrates that her sentiment had not changed: “... one only trembles at the shortness of Life and all that there is to be done” (CL1:286).⁹⁵ While the exigency to write never left her, away from the bustle of the city, she gained a better appreciation of time. From Menton she writes, “... here, one begins to tell the time by the skies again” (CL4:112).⁹⁶ As has been established, Mansfield’s description of the natural landscape within the Urewera notes reveals, for the most part, the degree to which she participated in and perpetuated the cult of the sublime. Nevertheless, these are interspersed with impressionistic comments indicative of the attitude and style she would soon more definitely adopt. Describing the Huka Falls she writes, “booming sound – it rises half a tone about each minute but that is all – it never ceases – – – & where the water catches the light

⁹⁴ KM to Sylvia Payne, 1 April 1904.

⁹⁵ KM to Bertrand Russell, 1 December 1916.

⁹⁶ KM to Richard Murry, 15 November 1920.

there is a rainbow pink, blue and white – But it is all too short –” (CL1:35).⁹⁷ In her mature stories, she relies on plants and flowers, and the motifs of sea, the light and weather to convey the inevitability of the passage of time, but also as a means of acceptance and as locators of identity.

Like Van Gunsteren, I believe that nature in Mansfield’s stories serves as a vehicle for exploring, what is essentially, the greatest philosophical debate: the meaning of life. In the “The Garden Party” the Sheridans reflect that “They could not have had a more perfect day ... if they had ordered it”, along with the lilies from the florist and the cream puffs from Godber’s (245). However, they cannot control the weather anymore than they can control what goes on in the “little mean dwellings” down the lane, and nor can they entirely ignore “a man dead just outside the front gate” (254). Their behaviour as a family gives rise to ambivalent feelings in the reader: on the one hand, one wants the party to go ahead; on the other, one is horrified at Mrs Sheridan and Jose’s disregard for the “wife and five little ones” left behind (253). Mansfield reconciles these feelings of ambivalence by relating the events to the course of nature and to the passage of time, creating a sense that all is as it is meant to be; she does this through very specific organic imagery: “... the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed” (257).

In “The Voyage”, the sea, natural and artificial light and the weather all serve to convey the passage of time, the unpredictable, sometimes cruel brevity of life and the inevitability of death. Following her mother’s premature passing, Fenella is taken across the Cook Strait – the body of water separating New Zealand’s North and South Islands – from Wellington to Picton, to the home of her grandparents. Aside from the obvious symbolic implications of such a journey in itself,⁹⁸ the passage also serves as a measurement of time. Fenella boards the ferry in the dark – “at half-past eleven.... [on] a beautiful night, mild, starry, only ... a faint wind blowing off the water ruffled under Fenella’s hat ...” (321); she disembarks when “... night was over, and it was cold” (328). Because the transition from land via the water to land is not yet complete, Fenella finds that “[t]he sun was not up yet, but the stars were dim, and the cold pale sky was the same colour as the cold pale sea” (ibid). In this story Mansfield seems to call upon all of the features she believed integral to the New Zealand landscape: “On the land a white mist rose and fell. Now they could see quite plainly the dark bush. Even the shapes of the umbrella ferns showed ...” (ibid). Arriving finally at her grandparents home Fenella finds her grandfather looking “like a very old, wide-awake bird.... he ruffled his white tuft” – an image which reminds the reader that Fenella’s mother, ostensibly a much younger

⁹⁷ KM to [?Thomas Trowell], 2 December 1907.

⁹⁸ Fenella has lost her mother; the sea and the moon which feature prominently in the story are symbols of femininity.

bird – Mansfield’s females are frequently likened to birds – has been taken before him, and thus before her time (330). The imagery is reinforced in the swan-headed umbrella belonging to Fenella’s grandmother, with which the youngest bird was entrusted on the journey, and whose own feathers were “ruffled” as she waited to board the Picton boat the night before.

Judging by the one brief mention warranted “The Voyage” versus the fourteen entries awarded “At the Bay”, twenty-three to “Prelude” and considerable attention paid to “The Garden Party” Van Gunsteren must not recognise the Impressionism of this particular story.⁹⁹ I feel, however, that it is categorically an Impressionist text, from the subject to the privileging of everyday occurrences, such as Fenella losing the button off her glove (though the implication is that she no longer has a mother to attend to her hand-sewing and such tasks will now fall upon her prematurely), to the price of ham sandwiches; and particularly, because the motifs Mansfield employed to realise the story are precisely those employed by the Impressionists. Though I hesitate to assign specific texts with specific paintings based solely on the shared subject matter – as Hatzfeld inclined to do – the exercise proves rewarding in Mansfield’s case. Images such as Manet’s *Departure of the Folkestone Boat* (1869) with its array of waiting passengers and Pissarro’s *The Seine at Port-Marly* (1872) with its dark huddle of figures on the embankment under a very early morning sky, are not exact pictorial equivalents for Mansfield’s text, but they are valid pictorial representations of the events described in this story and capture aspects of her narrative.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, this story confirms Matz’s claim that the impression is located in the present but also connected to another place and a time.

While “The Voyage” is heavily laden with symbolism, the inevitable passage of time remains the dominant theme and the casual but sure way in which it is evoked is entirely like that achieved in Impressionist works. Above her grandfather’s head Fenella reads “a big text in a deep black frame: Lost! One Golden Hour / Set with Sixty Diamond Minutes. / No Reward Is Offered / For It Is Gone For Ever! / ‘Yer grandma painted that,’ said grandpa” (330). Mansfield’s very deliberate decision to make this a painting rather than a tapestry removes the emphasis from the fact that it is a woman’s handiwork, so that the emphasis is on the theme of time. And her point is that while the heavy frame can contain the painted words, it cannot stop time from passing, and that time passed is, at the text states, lost forever. This corresponds with the idea that in painting the landscape, or any scene for that matter, Impressionists were capturing and containing instants of time; the effect was

⁹⁹ See Van Gunsteren’s index, 266. “The Voyage” is mentioned only in the context of it being one of stories which privilege “the world of the child”, *ibid.* 132.

¹⁰⁰ Manet, *Departure of the Folkestone Boat* (1869); Pissarro, *The Seine at Port-Marly* (1872), oil on canvas, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.

achieved most successfully in series paintings. Sitzia writes, “Monet’s series paintings, showing a similar motif at different times of the day and in different seasons, demonstrate the fleeting aspect of time” (2007:278).¹⁰¹ Monet tackled four subjects within his series paintings, two urban and two rural. First he painted the *Gare Saint-Lazare* series, followed by *the Poplars*, *Haystacks* and then the *Rouen Cathedral* series.¹⁰² In returning to the same motif at different times of the day and thus in different lights, but also in different seasons, Monet captured moments in time. Viewed as a series they mimic the passage of time. Sitzia explains that essentially, Monet reconciled the eternal and the evanescent, and thus realised Baudelaire’s ideals regarding the role and achievement of the modern artist: “Sometimes he is a poet; more often he comes closer to the novelist or the moralist; he is the painter of the passing moment and of all the suggestions of eternity that it contains” (*The Painter of Modern Life* 5). As has been demonstrated in early chapters, Mansfield too met Baudelaire’s criteria. Like Monet, Mansfield returned to the same motif at different times and in different seasons; specifically, Monet’s series paintings find a correlative in Mansfield’s stories which feature the Burnell and Sheridan families. The Burnells in “Prelude”, “At the Bay” and “The Doll’s House”, despite having been given new Christian names and the family name of Sheridan in “The Garden Party”, are readily identifiable as the same characters who were based on Mansfield’s own family.¹⁰³ In this way Mansfield charts their development and thus the passage of time. In “At the Bay” the narrative is divided into twelve episodes but takes place over just one day, opening just before sunrise and closing upon nightfall: “A cloud, small, serene, floated across the moon.... All was still” (245).¹⁰⁴ In dividing the story into twelve separate parts which function coherently both independently, as vignettes, and as a whole, Mansfield references clock hours; however, the episodes are of uneven length so in a sense she gains control over time in a way that Monet or indeed any of the Impressionists did in their depiction of sunrise and sunset, seasonal changes, and in their depiction of human activity.¹⁰⁵

Degas claimed,

It is all very well to copy what you see; it is much better to draw only what you see in memory. Then you get a transformation during which imagination collaborates with memory. You reproduce only what has struck you, in other words essentials. There your recollections and your fancy are set free from the tyranny exerted by nature (cited in Blunden 143).

¹⁰¹ Sitzia discusses the biblical connotations inherent in this discussion, 2007:281-82.

¹⁰² His late canvases were dominated by images of water-lilies, so in a sense, these represent a fifth series.

¹⁰³ Kimber has shown that Mansfield borrowed and modified the Sheridan girls’ names from Louisa May Alcott’s, *Little Women* (1868), “since that is what they are becoming”, 2007:157.

¹⁰⁴ “The Daughter’s of the Late Colonel” and “Prelude” are also divided into twelve parts.

¹⁰⁵ Degas, for example, arrests time in his images of ballet dancers *en pointe* in arabesque.

Degas's assertion would seem to undermine the widely held belief that Impressionism is the product of unmediated perception and unbridled spontaneity – such as Monet achieved in his rapidly executed images of haystacks, or Post-Impressionist Van Gogh, in his quivering sunflowers. However, Mansfield functioned in precisely the manner described by Degas above. While her immature landscapes – such as in the Urewera notebook – primarily evidence the influence of the nascent and vastly inconsistent tradition of landscape painting in New Zealand and to Maoriland literature, they also reveal a tentative but promising commitment to capturing the atmosphere and uniqueness of her native country. The catalogues of the 1905 Impressionist and 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibitions at the Grafton reveal a strong orientation towards landscape and no doubt provided Mansfield with the impetus and inspiration to bring her own radiant landscapes into existence within prose.

Upon greater exposure to modern art in the capital cities of England and France, Mansfield quickly seized upon the style and techniques characteristic to Impressionism, recognising in the landscapes of the Impressionists, and also the Post-Impressionists, motifs, themes and effects which recalled the landscapes of home – the pockets of red-roofed houses amongst hills, the brilliance of sunlight on sea, the transience of nature, the elusive quality of light. In her mature landscapes, such as those represented in “At the Bay” and “Prelude” Mansfield's descriptions of the sea, the weather and gardens, for example, are, as Degas suggests, part memory, part imagination, and are presented with the newly acquired tools of Impressionism. Essentially, in her depiction of the colonial landscape she was able to reconcile the lessons of Europe within a New Zealand literary context. Pound's check list of characteristics and techniques specific to French Impressionism against which he holds up the products of New Zealand artists practising at the turn-of-the-century include:

... among other things: the visible, the contemporary, the 'ordinary', the 'slice of life' as subject; certainly not the Sublime or Ideal; *plein air* ... the study of light, not objects, which tend, in Impressionism, to dissolve; the fleeting moment of light or action; painting on white grounds, not brown; a heightened colour and tone ... the use of coloured shadows ... an all-over mesh of small, visible, divided brushmarks; the sketch aesthetic – the 'unfinished' offered as finished (26).

While Pound fails to find more than three or four of these features at any time in any of the works being produced in late-nineteenth-and-early-twentieth-century New Zealand painting, Mansfield adhered to each and every one of these characteristics. In the opening paragraphs of “At the Bay”, for example, cited at the beginning of this chapter, Mansfield describes the “white sea-mist” which has smothered the forms in the landscape: “The sandy road was gone ... there were no white dunes covered with reddish grass beyond them; there was nothing to mark which was beach and where was the sea” (205); the atmosphere, the dew and the light are her subjects. Biblical connotations aside, what could be more ordinary

than a shepherd and his dog – or more every-day, than the beach bungalows and paddocks of coastal New Zealand? Colours are described as they appear: “The grass was blue” (ibid). As each new impression is rapidly recorded on the page, the reader is led over and through the landscape quickly, where “[t]he sheep ran forward in little pattering rushes” to the next, “And now big spots of light gleamed in the mist” (206). The reader does not encounter the shepherd again. Mansfield offers only glimpses, narrative is demoted, and slices of life are served in its place.

In her Will Mansfield records,

All manuscripts note books papers and letters I leave to John. M Murry likewise I should like him to publish as little as possible and to tear up and burn as much as possible. He will understand that I desire to leave as few traces of my camping ground as possible (cited in Alpers 1980:366).¹⁰⁶

In the context of this chapter, and in view of her colonial status, Mansfield’s terminology seems entirely appropriate. Every inch the itinerant - never permanently anywhere, Mansfield was the perpetual camper whose camp sites included the landscapes of the French Impressionists. Her encounters with French Impressionism impinged upon her development as a writer and influenced the stories she wrote – pictorially, thematically and stylistically, resulting in an individual brand of Impressionism which warrants the title, ‘Colonial Impressionism’.

¹⁰⁶ 14 August 1922.

CONCLUSION

The lamplighter is just doing his rounds ... I have just come in from a small walk. I returned to the garden of Notre Dame – It was dusky already and the smell of the flowering trees a wonder to enjoy. I sat again on a bench.... an old man on the other end of my bench kept up a buzzing in his beard and a few extremely wicked babies without any hope of bed played ball – just their heads and knees and flying hands to be seen. How black the tree stems were and how fine the leaves. They were like a tune given out in the bass with a wonderful running treble.... Little birds flew among the towers ... Looking at them I wanted to write ... (CL1:179-80).¹

In *Literature Through Art: A New Approach to French Literature* (1952), Hatzfeld sought to reveal literary and artistic parallels within French cultural production from the medieval to the modern period and thus to provide new methodology for accessing meaning in various paintings and texts in addition to elucidating the sources of various motifs and themes therein. While his research sustained critical opposition and incited arguments for and against the validity of comparisons between media, Hatzfeld's methodology nevertheless provided the foundation for further interdisciplinary investigations.² Like many before and after him Hatzfeld endeavoured to provide a summary of what Impressionists (in painting and in literature) sought to represent including, "... description over narration; the new spiritual climate of the great cities; intoxication with life, water, sun, rhythm ... movement... ornament rather than topic ..." (165). He concludes: "The interest is in the contemporary, everyday life, presented not in a plot or a story but in a fleeting moment, whatever it may be - an event, an impression ..." (166). The epistolary excerpt above clearly reveals how closely Mansfield's temperament parallels and design corresponds with the Impressionists.

The primary purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the pictorial influences which inspired and determined Mansfield's writing style. By examining her letters, diaries and stories alongside key examples of cultural production pre-*fin-de-siècle* and beyond, I have shown that her writing is categorically an Impressionist's. To this end, I have traced the development and dissemination of Impressionism alongside Mansfield's trajectory in adolescence and adulthood in an attempt to reveal when and where Mansfield encountered Impressionism and to ascertain the degree to which she could plausibly have been influenced by it. My research has revealed that amongst the various styles vying for eminence on the avant-garde stage, Impressionism remained the most visible and most pervasive thus dominant style in painting and in literature in Europe and in New Zealand up

¹ KM to JMM, 8-9 May 1915.

² See "Untitled Review" by Bruce A. Morrissette, Washington University, *The Art Bulletin* 34. 4 (Dec. 1952): 330-35.

until at least World War I if not even later. Furthermore, I have shown how the literary and artistic milieu within which Mansfield was immersed was largely preoccupied with theories pertaining to the interconnectivity of the arts. However, I have also acknowledged the inherent and seemingly inescapable vagaries associated not only with Impressionism but also within interdisciplinary research – something the following excerpt from a letter Mansfield wrote to Richard Murry highlights:

I understand exactly what you mean by ‘visionary consciousness’. It fits the writer equally well. Its mysterious and its difficult to get into words. There is *this* world and there is the world that the artist creates in this world which is nevertheless *his* world, and subject to *his* laws – *his* ‘vision’. Does that sound highflown? I don’t mean it to be (CL4:247).³

Despite these vagaries, I have nevertheless endeavoured to elucidate for my readers the ways in which two different art forms – in this case painting and prose – might be compared and contrasted within the context of Impressionism and how their shared aspects, whether that be stylistic, thematic or technical or all of these things, can be demonstrated.

As I stated in my first chapter, the term Impressionism in the arts has been used vaguely and variously since it was attached to Monet’s *Sunrise* and consequently to the work of his colleagues and subsequently to much modern art thereafter. However, despite the diversity of critical opinion surrounding Impressionism in the arts from the late nineteenth century and even now in the twenty-first century, Kronegger and Matz to name but two, have shown that as elusive as the movement was and is, succinct and intelligent definitions do exist which more than account for the variable characteristics which underpin and inform impressionistic works. I have built on these to show how precisely and extensively Mansfield applied Impressionist painterly techniques and stylistic effects to her own prose. Drawing on the criteria set out initially by Brunetière in 1879 and revised by Johnson in 1973 as well as that provided by Kronegger, Van Gunsteren and Matz whose specific focus has been literary Impressionism and who have provided key definitions for the movement as well as identified leading practitioners, I have shown that Mansfield’s writing met these criteria and adhered to these key definitions: pictorially, thematically, stylistically, grammatically and structurally; throughout this thesis I have provided textual and pictorial examples to substantiate this.

While previous Mansfield scholarship has noted the impressionistic impulse in Mansfield’s writing, critical investigations have been exclusively literary. I have privileged neither existing literary methodology nor art historical protocols but rather my approach has been cross-disciplinary. Thus I have demonstrated that Mansfield was influenced by and borrowed from not only modern writers – most notably, modern French writers including

³ KM to Richard Murry, 23 June 1921.

Baudelaire, Flaubert and Zola whose work is also understood and widely discussed within the context of French Impressionism, but also by and from modern paintings – as demonstrated in an aforementioned letter to Brett, herself a modern painter: “I am absolutely uneducated about painting. I can only look at it as a writer but it seems to me the real thing. It’s what one is aiming at” (CL4:278).⁴ Mansfield was at precisely this time thoroughly engrossed in a book on Cézanne and had just the day before completed “At the Bay” – for which she borrowed one of Cézanne’s figures for Jonathan Trout (see CL4: 278).⁵

Bruce A. Morrissette, whose review of Hatzfeld’s work is largely critical, points out that while Flaubert as a literary artist employed materials from the visual arts, his books “as literary entities” did not necessarily take their inspiration from the pictures from which they borrowed (331). This distinction must then be applied to Mansfield. In principle, I concur with Morrissette. Throughout this thesis I have revealed how Mansfield took the aesthetic principles of Impressionism and modified them to suit her literary purposes and I have also endeavoured to reveal possible painterly sources for Mansfield’s short stories. More specifically, however, my reading has revealed that while Mansfield borrowed in some cases small specific details from, for example, Flaubert, Zola and Cézanne and in many cases her stories call to mind Morisot and Degas’s imagery – and Mansfield’s brother-in-law confirmed Degas to have been a favourite – no one Mansfield story is a direct re-representation or an imitation of any one modern painting. Rather, they are often an amalgamation of several works, not necessarily of the one school (such as in “Daphne” as demonstrated in Chapter 3). However, as Bechhofer-Roberts revealed to Alpers, Mansfield did in some cases select pictures and then very deliberately compose stories directly and solely inspired by those pictures (1982:137). Not only does this fact support my argument for the influence of the modern visual art on Mansfield but goes some way in demonstrating how important Mansfield’s colonial upbringing was on her development as a writer.

As an artist in colonial New Zealand, Mansfield’s identity was less than stable. Like others of her generation she enjoyed a dual heritage – she was raised to think of both New Zealand and England as home. The former provided her with a physical landscape which inspired her but it was without a literary or arts tradition of its own, meaning that she was forced to borrow from elsewhere. She appropriated motifs from a variety of sources, but the aesthetic ideals she utilised to realise them in prose were those upheld in Impressionism. The writers to whom Mansfield looked for inspiration and who helped to mould her aesthetic ideals were also indebted to the French Impressionists; Beckson and Ganz point out that Wilde and Symons entitled their poems “‘Impression’ to indicate that they were painting word pictures

⁴ KM to Brett, 12 September 1921.

⁵ KM to Brett, 12 September 1921.

..." (88). Impressionism was quite simply the style to which artists pre-*fin-de-siècle* and beyond could most readily identify with – as Saur's summation demonstrates: "Impressionism posits that what the viewer views is always in flux, palpitating, evanescence, in partial focus, and moving" – an idea which corresponds with the nature of modernity which gave rise to Impressionism and allowed it to flourish. Because Impressionism privileged individual subjectivity it was easily modifiable and thus lent itself to the medium of prose. Beckson and Ganz write, "In the modern novel, impressionism frequently refers to the technique of centering on the mental life of the chief character rather than the reality around him" – precisely the technique adopted by Mansfield (89).

Impressionist Subjects

Because the painters and writers cited as Impressionists paid tribute to modernity, painting scenes from contemporary urban and rural life, I argued that the lowest common denominator of both literary and painterly Impressionism is the modern subject matter – cafés, balls, the theatre, train stations and the social and domestic lives of the bourgeoisie – as excerpts from Mansfield's letters continually make manifest: "Theres no escaping the glory of Life.... You cannot imagine how your letter was taken in – absorbed. I see you stepping into carriages driving to the play, dining among mirrors and branched candlesticks and faraway sweets sounds" (CL4:297).⁶ Though in some cases I have aligned specific texts with specific paintings based on the shared subject matter – marriage and motherhood by Mansfield and Morisot, gardens by Mansfield and Monet – this has merely been the starting point from which similarities in technique, style, vision and execution were then brought in for analysis. This method works as well for Mansfield's fiction as it does for any of the leading French writers of the late nineteenth century; importantly, it has allowed me to distinguish impressionistic literary works from other modern literary productions such as that produced by Realists and Naturalists who were also primarily representing modern subjects and from whom Mansfield also took inspiration. While the latter approached their motifs and subjects with critical objectivity the Impressionists instead privileged subjectivity, strove to depict perceptual totality and represented mood and atmosphere. And while the Realists were preoccupied with solidity and fidelity, the Impressionists who decreed that nothing was stable, instead conceded that everything was fleeting – as Morisot articulates: "My ambition is limited to the desire to capture something transient" (Rouart 84).

In addition to meeting the criteria which Johnson, Kronegger and others provide for literary Impressionism, my methodology has revealed interesting parallels in Mansfield's

⁶ KM to Elizabeth, Countess Russell, 16 October 1921.

short stories and the paintings of the leading Impressionists. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 have been devoted to examining these similarities and differences. In Chapter 4, *Domestic Interiors* which centred predominantly on female Impressionists Mansfield, Morisot and Cassatt, I considered whether there was any validity to the concept of feminine Impressionism. Certainly the respective oeuvres of the female Impressionists evidence a preference for domesticity, especially maternity themes; however, the male Impressionists also explored domestic subjects and bourgeois marriage with Degas in particular producing insightful portraits which point to the patriarchal constraints within which women operated. In this chapter, I revealed striking similarities in the ways in which Morisot, Cassatt and Mansfield chose to picture women within the private and public spheres. All three depict women's rites of passage: childhood, adolescence, maturity, pregnancy and motherhood; the ritual of the toilette; the cycles of life and death; the role of the bourgeois wife; bourgeois marriage and modern suburban living. I revealed how within their respective media each highlight the decorative role of the bourgeois woman, the ornamental nature of bourgeois marriage, the stifling atmosphere of and listless idleness inherent to their enforced sedentary lifestyles.

I demonstrated that despite their individual situations, Morisot and Cassatt's gender and contemporary social mores (and in Mansfield's case, her perpetual ill health) largely determined not only the subjects which they had access to but also influenced that which they were inclined to depict within those very limited zones. I argued that throughout their respective oeuvres there is a pervasive sense of domestic entrapment, with all components of the compositions stylistically contriving to convey this, particularly in relation to marriage about which Mansfield was far less subtle than either Morisot or Cassatt as made manifest in "Poison" (1921) within which the male narrator despairs of his very modern domestic situation:

privately ... I would have given my soul to have stood beside her in a large, yes a large, fashionable church, crammed with people ... if I could have slipped our wedding-ring in to her finger. Not because I cared for such horrible shows, but because I felt it might possibly perhaps lessen this ghastly feeling of absolute freedom, *her* absolute freedom, of course (675-76).

I also scrutinised the stylistically and thematically similar ways in which Morisot, Cassatt and Mansfield subvert traditional notions of femininity through images of uninterested mothers. In her images of domesticity, marriage and motherhood, Mansfield clearly demonstrated that women were still bound by the shackles which had tied her predecessors to hearth and home.

In Chapter 5, I scrutinised Mansfield's conflicting, contradictory and ambiguous response to not just the city but to modernity. I revealed how in her understanding of the importance

of “intellectual detachment” Mansfield met the criterion set forth by Baudelaire (CL4:239);⁷ and I argued that she epitomised ‘the painter of modern life’ declaring “ones passion for Life ... must all go into work.... there persists this longing not to take part in, but to see, to feel, to absorb, to find out” (CL4:6).⁸ I endeavoured to prove this through an examination of her city-based stories alongside Impressionist urban landscapes and demonstrated that Mansfield’s snapshots of café society and the street are comparable to those depicted by Manet and Degas. I suggested that while they were all roused by the same stimuli – mirrors, lamplight, flux – and that they sought out these motifs which inspired their creativity, Mansfield was directly inspired by the Impressionists’ portraits of working-class women and city scenes; indeed she openly acknowledged that “a thing” in itself does not generate “aesthetic emotion” but rather “its artistic representation” does: “An aesthetic emotion is what we feel in front of a *work of art*” (CL4:173);⁹ she cites specifically Manet’s portraits (ibid.).¹⁰ I revealed the close parallels which exist between Manet and Degas’s images of the opera and the ballet and Mansfield’s depiction of bourgeois leisure. All three artists point to the spectacle and materialism which constituted modern urban living but they also subtly reveal the exploitation of working-class women, with the latter two especially privileging voyeuristic perspectives. I also showed how Manet, Degas and Mansfield’s representations of working-class women emanate a sense of melancholy which the respective artists seemed to understand as inherent to modern life. And I demonstrated how Mansfield as a female Impressionist in the twentieth century observed, responded to and utilised the motifs and themes which dominate the urban landscapes of the male Impressionists but which Morisot and Cassatt were denied. Thus, I reveal the similarities and differences in the way anonymity and identity function in Impressionist portraits with Mansfield exposing the licentious voyeurism of the modern middle-upper-class man whereas Degas and Manet afforded them a degree of privacy, and how her ambiguous rendering of working-class women as sometimes faceless commodities wholly undermines their significance as individuals. Finally, I asserted that in spite of Mansfield’s writing at a more progressive time in history, the city was still perceived as a masculine realm and women operating within that sphere were subject to predation as Zola and Degas had already shown.

In Chapter 6, I investigated both the cultural climate and physical landscape of Mansfield’s native country during her childhood and adolescence, analysed how and why these factors contributed to her mature outlook and also considered the degree to which

⁷ KM to JMM, 25 May 1921.

⁸ KM to Sydney and Violet Schiff, 4 May 1920.

⁹ KM to Richard Murry, 3 February 1921.

¹⁰ O’Sullivan suggests that Mansfield saw Manet’s *Mme. Manet on a Blue Sofa* at the Jeu de Paumes, Louvre, (pastel on brown paper, stuck on canvas, now at Musée d’Orsay), CL4:174, n.2

they informed the short stories which then paid homage to this unique environment and landscape. I argued that the cultural climate and the unique light and landscape of her own country made her susceptible to the ideas of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, even before she reached the more art-oriented cities of London and Paris. Alongside, extending and complicating this I considered Pound's argument against geographical determinism to conclude that the attenuated Impressionism to which Mansfield was exposed through the nascent fine arts tradition in New Zealand in addition to her subsequent firsthand experience of French Impressionist landscapes in Europe partly inspired and enabled the development of Mansfield's specific brand of colonial Impressionism. I also contended that the landscapes of the French Impressionists allowed Mansfield to access those she had first known and thus allowed her to access memory which I also showed is inextricably linked to identity. I scrutinised Mansfield's situation and artistic output alongside Hodgkins's – another expatriate New Zealand artist whose aesthetic owed more to Impressionism than to any other modern art movement circulating in Europe during her career. I revealed the commonalities between Mansfield's highly coloured, lyrical and evocative non-urban landscapes and Impressionist nature imagery, especially Monet's and considered the ways in which both Monet and Mansfield particularly rendered atmosphere. And finally, I examined key themes in Impressionist paintings: the passage of time and the transience of life and considered how they function in Mansfield's prose.

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated how Mansfield's status as a foreigner in Europe allowed her greater freedom to experiment and greater licence to borrow from other cultural forms and traditions. I acknowledged the strains of Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and Expressionism all evident in Mansfield's modernist fiction and I demonstrated that Symbolism was merely an auxiliary style which she used for Impressionist purposes and also that the influence of Fauvism which unarguably had pictorial origins was nevertheless peripheral and short-lived. I maintained that the impressionistic quality of Mansfield's writing is its overriding feature. A pragmatic borrower, Mansfield apparently did not align herself with any specific movement. And within her extant papers, I have found nothing absolute to suggest that she saw herself as a literary Impressionist. However, I have contended that not only did Mansfield hide traces of her camping ground, but that the extant papers represent somewhere between one third and a half of Mansfield's literary output. Thus I believe that much has been lost or destroyed which might further serve my case. Arguably, her constant frame of reference is literary, predominantly the work of Shakespeare but also of Keats, Chekhov, Dostoevsky and Dickens – avenues which have been well trod and continue to preoccupy Mansfield scholars. However, as an artist, Mansfield was highly sensitive to the expressivity locked in the visual.

Consequently, my primary focus has been to look at literature through the visual image. In addition to her reading and her temperament, Mansfield's aesthetic ideals – as continually revised and espoused within her diaries and letters – her subjects, themes and technical methods made manifest in the resulting stories, convincingly locate her as a literary Impressionist. Though she may not have acknowledged this, as continually revealed throughout this thesis, the parallels are too close to deny. I have shown that her colonial heritage was not only a significant factor in this development, but to a large degree, the enabling condition – allowing her to reconcile the lessons of Europe within a New Zealand literary context resulting in a unique brand of Colonial Impressionism.

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