

'UNCOMMON GROUND':
DISLOCATION, DISPLACEMENT, AND DISJUNCTION IN THE WRITING
OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1992

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Abstract

There are numerous expressions of exile in Katherine Mansfield's writing, more copious, complex, and subtle than previous scholarship has admitted. They are not apparent at first glance because Mansfield did not represent actual instances of physical exile in her stories, though she repeatedly portrayed situations (such as women travelling and *femmes seules* in inhospitable cities) which share themes with exile. But reaching beyond theme are other features in her writing—expressions of *dislocation*, *displacement*, and *disjunction*—which replicate psychosocial conditions of exile, and which are the prime focus of my thesis.

I begin by examining Mansfield's own exile because the unique profile of her experience serves to account for and particularize the exilic features in her stories, and because her personal writing and fiction are so closely meshed. Her sense of exile was elicited by several conditions which exceeded transculturation, including her colonial origins and terminal illness, and her emotional responses to these conditions, preserved in her journals and correspondence—her complex negotiations with identity; her feelings of alienation, lost community, difference, and not belonging; her desire for renewal and freedom from constraints; her rootlessness and longing to be rooted—are reflected in her fiction.

Mansfield's 'exilic aesthetics' and cultural ambivalence are detectable in many ways in her stories, particularly in her relentless interrogation of cohesive identity, her predominant 'extraterritorial' and 'ex-centric' viewpoints, her methods of narration, and her treatment of language. Moreover, in many of her

stories *dislocation*, *displacement*, and *disjunction* are systemic: besides typifying conditions that her characters experience, these terms also describe processes that Mansfield enacts.

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Chronology of Short Stories Cited

Note: Date of first publication is given when date of completed manuscript is unknown.

- "A Birthday"—1911
- "A Cup of Tea"—1922
- "A Dill Pickle"—1917
- "All Serene!" (unfinished)—1921
- "A Married Man's Story" (unfinished)—1921
- "An Ideal Family"—1921
- "An Indiscreet Journey"—1924
- "A Truthful Adventure"—1911
- "At the Bay"—1921
- "Bliss"—1918
- "Honesty" (unfinished)—1921
- "Honeymoon"—1922
- "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped"—1912
- "Je ne parle pas français"—1919
- "Marriage à la Mode"—1921
- "Millie"—1913
- "Miss Brill" —1920
- "Mr Reginald Peacock's Day"—1917
- "Life of Ma Parker"—1921
- "Pictures"—1919

"Poison"—1920
"Prelude"—1918
"Second Violin" (unfinished)—1921
"Six Years After" (unfinished)—1921
"Such a Sweet Old Lady" (unfinished)—1921
"Sun and Moon" —1918
"Taking the Veil"—1922
"The Daughters of the Late Colonel"—1920
"The Doll's House"—1921
"The Dove's Nest" (unfinished)—1922
"The Escape"—1920
"The Garden-Party"—1921
"The Little Girl"—1912
"The Little Governess"—1915
"The Man Without a Temperament"—1920
"The Singing Lesson"—1921
"The Stranger"—1920
"The Swing of the Pendulum"—1911
"The Woman at the Store"—1912
"The Wrong House"—1924
"This Flower"—1920
"Violet"—1924

Introduction

At the very beginning of *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*, Michael Seidel cites Gudrun's remark at the very beginning of *Women in Love*: "If one jumps over the edge, one is bound to land somewhere" (1). Although Katherine Mansfield, who served as D. H. Lawrence's model for Gudrun, might never have spoken these words, their tenor is unmistakably hers and the spatial metaphor of the "exilic leap" (Seidel) aptly applies to her.¹

The experience of exile affected Mansfield profoundly. To my knowledge, only two studies deal specifically with Mansfield's exile. Both deserve mention, not only to credit their insights, but to note how their approaches differ from mine. In *Writers in Exile*, Andrew Gurr focuses largely on the two-way strain exacted on Mansfield as a writer who by turns rejected and embraced two places—her native New Zealand and adopted England. Gurr also considers her motives for writing the later stories with New Zealand settings. Russell King's scope of enquiry in "Katherine Mansfield as an Expatriate Writer" is narrower yet deeper, drawing more exclusively and extensively from Mansfield's short stories to link her experience of exile to her fictional representations of death, moments of epiphany, and the isolation that her characters suffer.

I add my voice to these others', arguing not against them but for different, unaccredited, connections between Mansfield's exile and her work.

¹ Compare, for example, the fearlessness and daring in Gudrun's statement with Mansfield's willful suppression of fear in her self-exhortations: "Risk! Risk anything!" (*Journal* [1922], 333); "Liberty, no matter what the cost, no matter what the trial" ([1907], 15); and in two of Oscar Wilde's quotations that she copied into in her journal: "Push everything as far as it will go" ([1906], 3); "Be always searching for new sensations . . . Be afraid of nothing" ([1907], 10).

Although we all begin with the common view that acculturation effected responses in Mansfield that are detectable in her fiction, my work diverges from Gurr's and King's in two respects. First, it proceeds from the premise that geographical dislocation represented merely one of several conditions responsible for Mansfield's feelings of rootlessness. Appreciating the primacy of Mansfield's 'exilic aesthetics' demands an understanding of some of the subtler and more insidious ways that exile personally affected (and afflicted) Mansfield. Second, my study centres less on the thematic content of Mansfield's stories than do Gurr's and King's. In Chapters Two and Three in particular, my analysis of Mansfield's handling of language shows how an exilic perspective permeates her stories beyond thematics.

A word about the term 'exile'. Its former etymological narrowness has expanded since its original Greek usage as 'banishment' or 'expulsion', particularly in the last two centuries, to include definitions such as any force that compels one away from one's native soil, voluntary or otherwise.² Recent historical developments (within the last two centuries), as a result, have spawned new terms such as 'expatriate', 'émigré', and 'refugee' to reintroduce specificity where the term 'exile' proved too general to differentiate between the various forces that compelled, propelled, or impelled people from what they defined as home.³ A number of critics have also extended the term 'exile'

² In Chapter One of *The Anatomy of Exile*, Paul Tabori provides extensive semantic and legal definitions of 'exile'. He stresses that exile is a 'dynamic' state since the conditions of exiles change over time, and adds that even linguistic or legal definitions do not always encompass the extent of the psychological effects of exile (33-4). Angela Ingram, in "On the Contrary, Outside of It," refers metaphorically to the 'dynamic' nature of exile when she says that, with exile, "the center is always shifting, or, rather, being redefined, re-placed" (2).

³ There is little critical consensus regarding the semantics of these terms. Andrew Gurr cites an important distinction between 'expatriate' and 'exile' in *Writers in Exile*, noting that the expatriate's choice to leave is more "wholly voluntary" than that of the exile, who cannot return home so easily. He compares the exile to "a bird forced by chill weather at

beyond physical or geographical definitions by considering its semantic implications.⁴ Because my objective is to trace the psychological effects of exile and its textual hues in narrative, rather than to categorize groups of people, I use the term 'exile' broadly yet circumspectly, invoking its sense vis-à-vis Mansfield as an identity that comes from the perception of not belonging to a community. Although I believe that forms of social displacement other than physical exile can in many respects replicate exile's emotional effects, I do not see exile as synonymous with all forms of marginalization.

A necessary caveat follows from this. The effects of exile vary immensely from person to person.⁵ Needless to say, the propositions I make regarding Mansfield's exile and its influence on her writing are intended to serve as neither a pathology nor a diagnostic of all writers in exile.

My thesis, then, shows how a constellation of factors conspired to create feelings of exile in Mansfield and how social displacement and the rhetoric of 'not belonging' operate in her writing on many levels. In the

home to migrate but always poised to fly back" (18). Furthering Gurr's view is Hallvard Dahlie's, in *Varieties of Exile*, that expatriation is a more impermanent situation than exile because it anticipates (even linguistically) repatriation (4).

⁴ For example, in the introduction to *Women Writers in Exile*, a collection of essays examining various types of exile experienced by twentieth-century women writers, Angela Ingram defines exile as being "in some cases as much a metaphor as it is material circumstance" (4).

⁵ In their studies on the psychology of exile, psychoanalysts Leon and Rebeca Grinberg support Pollock's thesis (1976) that, because individuals respond differently to traumatic situations, their traumas need to be evaluated according to "the three P's": predisposition, precipitation and perpetuation (12). They maintain that, while exile is a crisis situation, it is not always experienced as traumatic; it is potentially so (134-5). They cite throughout their book examples of those who are at higher risk than others of incurring trauma from migration, and say that many factors combine to produce trauma. Mansfield, it is interesting to note, fits squarely in the group profile having the greatest risk of emotional problems due to acculturation: "the greatest illness rate occurs in persons who emigrate between the ages of twenty and thirty . . . at that stage of life the central problem is the search for and consolidation of one's sense of identity" (126).

following chapters, I draw alternately from Mansfield's short stories and 'life writing' (journals and correspondence) to illustrate what I see as mirror pathologies of fragmentation, uprootedness, social displacement, and lost community.

Chapter One establishes the biographical determinants of Mansfield's exile and, in so doing, draws heavily from her journals and, to a lesser extent, from her short stories and letters. To account for the uniqueness of Mansfield's experience of exile in relation to her stories, I outline some of the different factors that consolidated her feelings of rootlessness and her subsequent interrogations of coherent identity. Of chief interest here are the links between Mansfield's conceptions of subjectivity and identity, and her perception of exile.

Chapter Two extends the parameters of Chapter One to examine the predominantly 'extraterritorial' and 'ex-centric' viewpoints in Mansfield's fiction and how these spatial conceptions of place and social placement coincide with and lend clarity to the features of ruptured and mutable identity that characterize her exile. Mansfield's and her characters' choice of expression, their heightening of the artificial and symbolic qualities of language, and the ways they maneuver between competing perspectives frequently enact or reflect displacement.

Together, Chapters One and Two serve as points of departure for Chapter Three which looks closely at some of the more disturbing conflicts of discontinuity played out in Mansfield's fiction. A study of two of her most incisively drawn characters, the 'married man', in "A Married Man's Story," and Raoul Duquette, in "Je ne parle pas français," focused on their manner of narrating their disjunctive personal histories and social relations, uncovers

numerous psychological imprints of exile, many of which bear a remarkable resemblance to Mansfield's own experience.

Chapter One

Shifting Ground, Selves

It wouldn't take long for someone reading Katherine Mansfield's journals, her correspondence, or even a biography of her for the first time to become aware of her preoccupation with identity. Her frequent name changing, indicative of her perennial desire to shed old skin and remake herself, and her often quoted musing, "'To thine own self be true' . . . True to oneself! which self? Which of my many—well really, that's what it looks like coming to—hundreds of selves?" (*Journal* [1920], 205) are perhaps two of the best known examples among Mansfield's many deliberations on identity. Not so commonly acknowledged, however, is the extent to which she brings to bear upon her short stories her lifelong struggle to understand and shape her own identity, most notably in the way she depicts her characters negotiating their own identities and, further, in how she repeatedly de-stabilizes their identities. The resemblances between Mansfield's relentless interrogation of identity in her personal writing and fiction are striking; moreover, they establish an aesthetic linked inextricably to her experience of exile.

Mansfield's distinctive portraits of characters who experience social dislocation to the extent that they image themselves as having dissociated, or divided, selves, though not autobiographical, are nonetheless grounded in her own experiences. Beryl Fairfield in "Prelude," whose isolation from the society she craves intensifies her awareness of the roles she plays with different people, self-contemptuously decries the division between what she sees as her "real" self and her "false" one: "It was her other self who had written the letter. It not

only bored, it rather disgusted her real self" (*Collected Stories*, 57).⁶ Even more fractured than Beryl's identity is that of Raoul Duquette in "Je ne parle pas français" who invokes a range of metaphorical identities to describe himself to his imagined audience, including that of a fox terrier: "All the while I wrote that last page my other self has been chasing up and down out in the dark there" (65). Mansfield's stories form a gallery of characters with similarly divided selves.

Mansfield's personal experiences of exile had taught her the fragile and changeable nature of identity. Like many colonials, she grew up with a split sense of national loyalty fostered by an inherited belief in England's currency as 'home' and cultural centre. Even though her father, Harold Beauchamp, was born a second-generation colonial in Australia, he nonetheless actively cultivated his and his offspring's unsevered roots in the 'mother country', priding himself on his several ocean voyages to England and in sending his three eldest daughters, Kathleen included, to Queen's College in London to complete their education. If his attitudes hadn't already engendered in Mansfield a view of New Zealand's colonial inferiority, her three-year stay in London did, to the extent that her return to Wellington in 1906 at the age of eighteen resulted, shortly thereafter, in her feeling unbearably constrained, implanting a sense of exile that would later flourish.

Her rejection of family and country, by all accounts, was emphatic. Referring to an acquaintance struck up on her 1907 camping expedition in New Zealand, she wrote,

⁶ This and all subsequent quotations from Mansfield's short stories, unless otherwise noted, refer to *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (Penguin).

It is splendid to see once again real English people. I am so sick and tired of the third-rate article. Give me the Maori *and* the tourist, but nothing between. (*Journal*, 29)

To her, New Zealanders were narrow-minded and crudely inartistic:

I am ashamed of young New Zealand . . . All the firm fat framework of their brains must be demolished before they can begin to learn. They want a purifying influence—a mad wave of pre-Raphaelitism, of super-aestheticism, should intoxicate the country. They must go to excess in the direction of culture, become almost decadent in their tendencies for a year or two and then find balance and proportion. (*CL I* [1908]: 44)⁷

In part, this was the impatient and rebellious voice of adolescence, expressing a need to be different. But, if Mansfield at times cultivated her differences for dramatic effect, her insecurity about not belonging was not fabricated, but real. So estranged was she in New Zealand in 1907 from her own family that she referred to the Trowells, the New Zealand family with whom she felt an artistic kinship and who had recently emigrated to London, as her real family: "They have all left N. Z. all of them—my people—*my* Father" (*Journal*, 19).

Her alienation from her natural origins—from family and country—exacted a noticeable split within her. "It is so extraordinary to live so far from one's other self," she wrote in her journal, infatuated with Arnold Trowell, whose removal to England intensified her sense of having stronger ties

⁷ *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield* (Ed. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott) will henceforth be abbreviated as *CL*.

elsewhere ([1907],16). Within her native country, ironically, she felt most exiled, viewing London as her spiritual home:

Here in my room I feel as though I was in London. In London! To write the word makes me feel that I could burst into tears. Isn't it terrible to love anything so much. I do not care at all for men, but *London*—it is life. (*Journal* [1907], 21)

In a characteristically emphatic tone, she described to her cousin Sylvia Payne the unreality of her existence at the time:

I feel absolutely *ill* with grief and sadness—here—it is a nightmare—I feel sooner or later that I must wake up—& find myself in the heart of it all again—and look back upon the past months as— — —cobwebs—a hideous dream. (*CL I* [1907]: 20)

Narrative echoes of this deprived, dreamlike state, too, reverberate in her fiction. Many of her characters suddenly wake to the unreality of their lives, feeling as if they have been living under 'false identities'. Because Constantia, in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," like her sister Josephine, has conformed to her father's expectations for so long she feels she is afforded only glimpses of her "real self"—a self all but extinguished by others' demands:

There had been this other life, running out, bringing things home in bags, getting things on approval, discussing them with Jug, and taking them back to get more things on approval, and arranging father's trays and trying not to annoy father. But it all seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn't real. It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself. (284)

Indeed, the profound nature of the sisters' alienation is what elicits pathos and what imparts a serious and tragic undertone to this otherwise comic story. Sadly, Constantia views the greater part of her life in alien terms, as being "in a tunnel" and as "other," so seldom is it ruptured by transcendental lucidity.

The striking similarity between the above passage and one of Mansfield's journal entries, again, is noteworthy:

Let me take the case of K.M. She has led, ever since she can remember, a very typically false life. Yet through it all there have been moments, instants, gleams, when she has felt the possibility of something quite other. (*Journal* [1922], 330)

Both in her profile of Constantia and in her objectified rendition of herself, she presents the perception of an anesthetized present and a more desirable 'other' self who is located too infrequently.⁸

Though the material circumstances differ in Mansfield's self-portraits and those of her characters, in many instances the psychological states described are indistinguishable. The extent alone to which she based her fictionalized portraits of wasted potential, self-alienation, and death-in-life existence on her own experience suggests how thoroughly exile determined her artistic point of view.

⁸ Although Mansfield had fashioned Josephine's and Constantia's temperaments in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" after that of Ida Baker, her own journal entry mirroring Constantia's psychological state suggests that she also incorporated features of her own experience into Constantia's portrait.

This journal entry was written in 1922, approximately two years after "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" was completed in 1920. It is possible that, in "The Daughters," Mansfield found a trope for expressing self-alienation that influenced the later journal entry. Her representations of self-alienation in several other stories and journal entries prior to 1920, even if differently rendered, indicate its enduring significance for her.

That is not to say that Mansfield's blurring of boundaries between fiction and personal writing meant that she lacked artistic control over her material; her written comments about her art suggest otherwise. Just as she represented her own experiences dramatically in her personal writing, she exploited her own sense of exile for her fiction as well. That she represented such wholesale alienation in her stories, and did so repeatedly, however, owed to a predisposition forged by similar experiences.

What must be stressed here is the sense of overwhelming loss implied in Mansfield's various depictions of 'false' and alienated selves, a loss that bespeaks her intimate knowledge of exile. In his essay "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said describes exile as "a condition of terminal loss" (159). His insight is not without empirical support from other sectors. Psychoanalytic studies implicate exile (or any other event which produces drastic change or discontinuity in a person's life) in posing threats to a person's sense of identity, threats which, in Leon and Rebeca Grinberg's summation, can result in "false identities and a false self." A person's coherent identity, they contend, derives from the continuous stability of his or her "object-relations," be they in the form of familiar objects, music, dreams, memories, or individuals associated with different aspects of the exiled person's native land (129).

Various evidence suggests that Mansfield's sense of discontinuity—her estrangement from herself and from her surroundings—owed to a fundamental predisposition to perceive herself as an outsider, to a chronic perception of exile. Her feelings of estrangement and restlessness in New Zealand were, not long thereafter, transported elsewhere, transferred onto a new "object":

To escape England is my great desire—I loathe England—It is a dark night full of rain. . . Shall I never be a happy woman again. Oh to be in

New York . . . Sick at heart till I am physically sick—with no home—no place in which I can hang up my hat—& say here I belong—for there is no such place in the wide world for me. (*CL I* [1909]: 90-1)

The same feeling followed her to other places as well. Antony Alpers' observation that Mansfield "is constantly inhabiting one space while observing another, and has her characters doing the same" (53: fn) meshes tightly with Michael Seidel's definition of an exile as "someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another" (ix).

Whether it was from inability or unwillingness—evidence suggests both—Mansfield rarely identified with the communities in which she existed.⁹ Her failure to derive identity from those surrounding her elicited within her a perpetual desire to escape situations and form new identities, thus forming a pattern of instability and rootlessness in her life. But unlike many other expatriates who appeared to thrive on rootlessness (most of them men who had wives to cook and clean for them), Mansfield craved stability, a home, and family—a need often expressed in her letters and journals, usually in a tone of despair:

⁹ Mansfield's inflated sense of difference was responsible for her social restlessness in general. Though she enjoyed many close friendships, she often terminated them bluntly, leaving her victims bewildered, as Alpers has noted (83). Despite her frequently expressing a need for community and hope—a desire to be socially 'placed'—she invariably rejected social groups, resisted acculturation, and sought, instead, the refuge and autonomy offered by the margin, once writing, "Often I long to be more *in life*—to know people . . . But immediately the opportunity comes, I think of nothing but how to escape" (*CL III* [1919]: 161). Vincent O'Sullivan has remarked that Mansfield's "friendships, places of residence, fidelities of one sort or another, are more in the nature of campsites than enduring edifices" (*CL I*: xiii). The most salient exception to this, it would appear, was her three-month stay at the Gurdieff Institute in Fontainebleau, where she died. There she wrote of experiencing a sense of community with the other inhabitants, mainly Russian exiles. Many who have commented on this period suggest that her latent sense of social belonging was inspired by her awareness of her impending death which caused her to concertedly alter her outlook.

Why haven't I got a real 'home', a real life. . . and two babies who rush at me and clasp my knees . . . Oh, I want life. I want friends and people and a house. (*CLI* [1915]: 177)

This contradiction—her need to break free of constraints and her desire for the security derived from belonging and rootedness—caused her to feel exiled wherever she was.¹⁰

London's attraction for Mansfield being shortlived, her ensuing disillusionment subsequently made her feel doubly exiled as an exile examining a culture (English) which had formerly made her feel exiled within her own culture. A 1919 journal entry attests to the deep-seated feelings of marginalization that never completely left her in England:

But why should they [the geraniums] make me feel a stranger? Why should they ask me every time I go near: 'And what are *you* doing in a London garden?' They burn with arrogance and pride. And I am the little Colonial walking in the London garden patch—allowed to look, perhaps, but not to linger. If I lie on the grass they positively shout at me: 'Look at her, lying on *our* grass; pretending she lives here, pretending this is her garden, and that tall back of the house . . . is her house. She is a stranger—an alien. She is nothing but a little girl sitting on the Tinakori hills and dreaming: "I went to London and married an Englishman, and we lived in a tall grave house with red geraniums and white daisies in the garden at the back." *Im-pudence!*' (*Journal*, 157)

¹⁰ Russell King quite rightly observes this fundamental contradiction in Mansfield, while others, such as Paul Fussell, who groups Mansfield with what he calls other "sub-Bloomsburians," describing them as "restless, often neurotic travelers" who were "in constant movement from cottage to cottage" (70), fail to appreciate her duplicitous nature. Frank O'Conner's description of Mansfield, for instance, as the "brassy little shopgirl of literature" and as a "clever, assertive masculine woman [who] was a mistake from beginning to end" (136) is overtly biased, reductive, and misogynist—clearly lacking insight into the complexities of her character.

In her 'imaging' here of the geraniums as arbiters of social and national boundaries and in ascribing to them "pride," "arrogance," and intentions to ostracize her, she captures how feelings of exclusion and displacement are sometimes irrational projections, and therefore, how malignant the perception of exile can be. She extends what is inherently social to the natural world (though the highly-cultivated geraniums can also be seen as an extension of the social world).¹¹ Interestingly enough, Edward Said observes that nationalism and exile are opposite conditions that feed each other, each requiring the other for self-definition and each founded on an original sense of estrangement ("Reflections," 162-3).¹² Painfully aware of this, Mansfield juxtaposes the geraniums' nationalistic fervor (and implied sense of rootedness) with her own unease about placement, their rhetoric of belonging intentionally clashed with her rhetoric of not belonging.

¹¹ The critically watchful Bloomsbury circle, by all accounts, provided a social basis for her feelings as an outsider.

It is interesting that, in a letter to her mother while on her 1907 New Zealand camping trip, Mansfield used the term "colonial" in a somewhat pejorative manner when alluding to the conservative values of her fellow campers: "I am quite fond of all the people—they are ultra-Colonial but they are kind and good hearted and generous" (*Urewera Notebook*, 45). She had obviously subscribed to a view of the colonial's inferiority, hence her own, from which she was trying to exempt herself.

Claude Rawson has suggested Mansfield's alternating feelings of superiority and inferiority owed to her conception of her colonial origins which at times produced in her an "inverse snobbery" (27).

¹² In his illustration of how exile and nationalism are extreme, yet disparate, positions, Said poses the possibility that they are two varieties of paranoia. He defines their relationship as inextricable :

Nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and customs; and, by so doing, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages. Indeed, the interplay between nationalism and exile is like Hegel's dialectic of servant and master, opposites informing and constituting each other. All nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement . . . Nationalisms are about groups, but in a very acute sense exile is a solitude experienced outside the group. ("Reflections," 162)

Mansfield's heightened sensitivity to rejection and not belonging are likely what led her to depict these emotions time and time again in her character studies. There is the unforgettable Miss Brill whose sense of belonging and identity acquired from imagining she plays a key role in an exciting drama proves fragile as gossamer when sheared by the cutting remarks of the young couple who plainly let her know she isn't wanted. Ida Moss, in the short story "Pictures," is administered a more gradual sting of rejection over a series of employment refusals, the fact slowly registering with her that the world considers her talents as a middle-aged and overweight contralto singer both unremarkable and unmarketable. Numbing herself from this realization, yet aware that she must satisfy her heckling landlady's demand for overdue rent, she in essence sleepwalks into prostitution, pretending it is not a demeaning and desperate act, and trying to salvage what scraps of dignity are not battle-trodden.

Sylvia Berkman has remarked that "[l]ike James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield rejected the society into which she was born; like Joyce, she never recovered from this act of violence" (11). In light of Mansfield's chronic sense of rootlessness, it is necessary to enlarge Berkman's insight to show how Mansfield's feelings of estrangement, dividedness, and instability were not enacted entirely along national lines. Mansfield's early familial relationships, her bisexuality, her gender, her brother's death, and her terminal illness, perhaps even more than deracination, attributed immeasurably to her psychic experience of exile. A number of journal entries, letters, and biographical data point to the fact that she felt dispossessed from an early age, critical of her father's preoccupation with finances and social status, and sensitive to her mother's

indifference and decided lack of affection toward her.¹³ Some critics have speculated that her early feelings of abandonment were incited by a six-month trip her parents took without their children, she the youngest at only a year old. And shortly thereafter, as Mary Burgan has carefully illustrated using Mansfield's writings in conjunction with psychiatric theory and clinical studies, the death of her baby sister and birth of her brother spawned a mixture of feelings of rejection, not belonging, guilt, and rivalry within her.¹⁴

Added to this, Mansfield's lesbian experiences and fantasies played an major role in eliciting her early feelings of isolation, difference, and multiple identity, as she confided in her journal. Although her notion of herself as a 'double self' with a 'double life' can be traced to Oscar Wilde's influence on her, her secret lesbian life nonetheless required a duplicitous existence, owing to the prevailing social attitudes toward behavior considered shameful and deviant.¹⁵ She bristled at her father's outbursts about not having her "fooling around in dark corners with fellows": "I cannot be alone or in the company of women for half a minute—he is there, eyes fearful" (*Journal* [1906], 6; 7), feeling simultaneously possessed by unconventional desires and dispossessed by those who suspected.¹⁶

¹³ Various evidence indicates how Annie Beauchamp singled out Kathleen as her least favorite child, criticizing her often and eventually disowning her by excluding her from her will.

¹⁴ In Chapter One of *Illness, Gender, and Writing: The Case of Katherine Mansfield*, Mary Burgan examines in considerable detail Mansfield's psychological developments as a child.

¹⁵ Two excellent analyses of Oscar Wilde's influence on Mansfield are Vincent O'Sullivan's paper "The Magnetic Chain" and Sydney Janet Kaplan's chapter "Strange Longing for the Artificial" in *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*.

¹⁶ Mansfield's mother, Annie Beauchamp, enacted such a "dispossession" by excluding Kathleen from her will because she disapproved of her relationship with Ida Baker, with whom she suspected her daughter was having a lesbian relationship (see Alpers, 94-5).

Moreover, Mansfield's perception of herself as an exile was intensified by mere virtue of her gender. Inroads made by suffragettes notwithstanding, true emancipation did not exist then for most women, and Mansfield's sensitivity to this fact is reflected in the number of stories she wrote depicting women whose lives are wasted from doing household chores and child-bearing.¹⁷ No doubt the importance Harold and Annie Beauchamp placed on having a son engendered in young Kathleen feelings of displacement within the family and reminded her that women in general were valued less by society.¹⁸ Shari Benstock's view that women have traditionally internalized a form of exile owing solely to their exclusion from the centre proves true in Mansfield's case (23). Mansfield resented her father's patriarchal views, his dominance of his family and his subjugation of his wife, viewing him for a time (until she wrested from him the independence she craved) as the single biggest impediment to her self-development as artist. Although the idealistic nineteen-year-old Kathleen believed that women were "firmly held by the self-fashioned chains of slavery" which could be easily "self-removed" (*Journal* [1908], 37), her determination to be recognized on the same terms as men—to be in many

Her suspicions were unfounded. A passage in a supplicating letter Mansfield wrote to her father after he increased her allowance might well allude to her lesbianism and the rift it created between herself and her parents: "Forgive me my childish faults, my generous darling Daddy, and keep me in your heart" (*CL I* [1916]: 251).

¹⁷ Gillian Boddy's paper "Frau Brechenmacher and Stanley Burnell" provides excellent coverage of Mansfield's denunciation of the rigidly conventional views toward women in turn-of-the-century Wellington. Boddy cites a number of Mansfield's stories that indirectly critique the lack of equality between the sexes.

¹⁸ Different biographers have insightfully commented on the importance of a son to the Beauchamps. This might explain why Mansfield depicted instances in her stories in which sons are privileged over daughters. For example, Andreas Binzers in "A Birthday" is overjoyed that his newborn child turns out to be a son; Stanley Burnell, in "Prelude," while watching his daughters eat, mentally reserves a space at the head of the dining table for the son that he longs for; the lack of affection that Linda Burnell has shown towards her first three children, all daughters, is suddenly reversed by the smile of her fourth child, an infant son.

respects genderless—was later undermined in part by the fact that women writers in the early twentieth-century were perceived as lesser than their male counterparts, as Clare Hanson has pointed out (65). And her miscarriage and abortion were no doubt reminders that reproductive responsibility was not shared equally between the sexes. Her resentment of how insidious the double standards were for men and women she made clear in a chastizing letter she wrote to Murry, incensed that he would take it for granted that she do the housework:

So often, this week, Ive [sic] heard you and Gordon talking while I do the dishes . . . 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. (*CLI* [1913]: 125)

Resist as she did being displaced from the centre because of her gender, Mansfield found that she was nonetheless marginalized because of it.

But what displaced Mansfield more from English (and New Zealand) society were conditions other than gender. There was her brother Leslie's tragic death in 1915 (from a grenade while fighting in Belgium), which triggered in Mansfield a severe form of self-imposed exile, causing her to retreat to France, to withdraw from Murry, and to renounce the world to the point of near suicide. Overwhelming evidence indicates that it was her tuberculosis, however, from 1918 onwards, that most galvanized her sense of exile.¹⁹ Her awareness of her impending death distanced her from others and rendered involuntary what began as voluntary exile, her illness necessitating long bouts of enforced

¹⁹ Until Mary Burgan's book, *Illness, Gender, and Writing: The Case of Katherine Mansfield*, the extent to which of Mansfield's illness affected her writing had not been discussed substantively.

bedrest, isolation, medical treatment, and removal to European climates more hospitable than England's.²⁰ She referred to her condition of separateness as "that shadowy country that we exiles from health inhabit" (*Letters to Murry* [1920], 549). On the margin of life itself, Mansfield was forced to live apart from those for whom she cared most deeply.

This ominous cloud of sickness, and the uncertainty and solitude it brought with it, made her feel irreparably uprooted, her dreams of a home and stability now blighted with doubts well-founded. She obtained comfort from reading Chekhov, with whom she had identified all of her life and whose ruminations on his illness toward the end of his life expressed feelings of displacement and loss that she recognized in herself. In the portion of one of his letters she felt important enough to transcribe into her journal, Chekhov uses a metaphor of an uprooted tree to convey how illness had robbed him of simple pleasures allowed most people:

'I am torn up by the roots, I am not living a full life, I don't drink, though I am fond of drinking; I love noise and I don't hear it—in fact, I am in the condition of a transplanted tree which is hesitating whether to take root or to begin to wither'.

Following this entry Mansfield added, "So am I exactly" (*Scrapbook* [1922], 278).

Perhaps none of Mansfield's characters better epitomizes the exile's hollow homelessness wrought by denial than Ma Parker. Having borne trial after trial in her life, the most recent being her grandson Lennie's death, she is

²⁰ In his discussion of Mansfield's changing attitudes toward her own country, Gurr contends that Mansfield left New Zealand "thinking of herself as an expatriate, not an exile" (36).

forced to suppress her grief and suffer her employer's petty accusations before turning out into a crowded, but alien, street. She decides against returning home, fearing that she will "break down" and frighten her daughter Ethel. Hemmed in at every turn by people towards whom she feels she must present an appearance of composure, she is denied a place to be herself and release her closeted feelings: "Where would she go? . . . Wasn't there anywhere in the world where she could have her cry out—at last? . . . There was nowhere" (308-9). Obligated to separate herself from her emotions, she feels divided and vagrant in a compassionless world.²¹

Mansfield's characteristically detached and objectified way of portraying her own self as divided or multiplied, reflects her unsettled and ambivalent conception of identity, as does her lifelong habit of slipping with almost pathological ease between first-person, second-person, and third-person descriptions of herself. A 1907 journal entry demonstrates one instance of this self-doubling; here we observe a first-person self imparting advice to a displaced self envisaged in the second-person:

Oh, victory must be mine. With both hands I embrace the thought.
Hold, firm, and let the music crash and deafen. It cannot hide the
beating of my heart.

Oh, Kathleen, I pity you, but I see that it has to come—this great
wrench. In your life you are always a coward until the very last moment,

²¹ The perspective of profound exile could be described as seeing nothingness at the end of the road yet being unable to retreat, like Ma Parker's feeling that she has nowhere to turn. V. S. Naipaul, whose expressions of disillusionment upon migrating to London in many respects paralleled Mansfield's, captures the perception of complete rootlessness with a few quick strokes:

I came to London. It had become the centre of my world and I had worked hard to come to it. And I was lost. London was not the centre of my world. I had been misled; but there was nowhere else to go. (45)

but here is the greatest thing of your life. Prove yourself strong.
(*Journal*, 20)

Mansfield's textual self-divisions, it should be noted, fall roughly into two categories, one not as symptomatic of internal strife as the other. The former can be explained by her tendency to dramatize her own experiences for the purpose of art, conscientiously transmuting her own subjective experiences into objective material—and into objectified selves—for stories. The journal she kept during her 1907 New Zealand camping trip, brimming with impressions she garnered for later use, is a case in point. Ian A. Gordon, editor of the published version of this journal, *The Urewera Notebook*, illustrates how "The Woman at the Store," "Millie," "How Pearl Button was Kidnapped," and portions of "At the Bay" are adaptations of sketches in this journal, which suggests that when Mansfield recorded her impressions of people and landscapes during the camping expedition she was already 'pre-packaging' some of them for stories she intended to write later (27-30).²²

Stylistic features in *The Notebook* bear this out. Certain entries reveal an experimental voice, an unmistakably hybrid one, hovering between fiction and non-fiction. In the following excerpt, for example, Mansfield dislodges her recorded perception of a tangible present, conveyed through phrases such as "these briars" and "these . . . valleys," when she assumes a more distant and objectified view, conveyed by using the past tense ("was" and "put") and by describing herself in the third person ("Katie"):

²² All of Mansfield's journals, from her earlier and later years alike, include story sketches and fragments of dialogue for stories, some of which she developed. She confided to Murry her affection for what she called "cameos" or "vignettes," which were in essence written snapshots: frozen-in-time, character profiles captured with a sensitivity to psychological detail (Murry *Scrapbook*, vii).

Like stones bright bare hills—the great basins—the hills—the wonderful green flax swamp and always these briars—bush on the distant hills—these fascinating valleys of toitoi swayed by the wind—Silence again, and a wind full of the loneliness and the sweetness of the wild place—Katie in the morning in the manuka paddock saw the dew hanging from the blossom and leaves—put it to her lips and it seemed to poison her with the longing for the sweet wildness of the plains—for the silent speech of the Silent Places—the golden sea of blossom. (*Urewera Notebook*, 72)

Melding autobiography, poetry, photographic record, fantasy, she strategically embellishes reality here, bending it to the purpose of fiction. Deliberate as these permutations of experience may be, they nonetheless entail a curious envisioning of the self from outside—an extraterritorial perspective.

These fiction-laced sketches, however, represent only one kind of Mansfield's renditions of a split self. Other journal entries reflect a more noticeably disturbed and problematic sense of identity, as does the one she wrote upon resolving to enter the Gurdieff Institute, just months before her death:

I have thought of M. [Murry] to-day. We are no longer together. Am I in the right way, though? No, not yet. Only looking on—telling others. I am not in body and in soul. I feel a bit of a sham . . . And so I am. One of the K.M.s is so sorry. But of course she is. She has to die. *Don't feed her.* (*Journal* [1922], 331)

Her wrestling here with irreconcilable and objectified 'selves' reflects an identity whose emotional fractures reach deep—a source of both pleasure and pain to her, as another journal entry shows:

I was conscious . . . of a huge cavern where my selves (who were like ancient sea-weed gatherers) mumbled, indifferent and intimate . . . and this other self apart in the carriage, grasping the cold knob of her umbrella, thinking of a ship, of ropes stiffened with white paint and the wet, flapping oilskins of sailors . . . Shall one ever be at peace with oneself? (*Journal* [1920], 203)

She leaves a strong impression of being hostage to her restless imagination while simultaneously longing for the stability offered by a unified self.

Mansfield's numerous fictional accounts of how characters' identities become instantly, and often inexplicably, de-stabilized further attests to her personal concern with the fragile, arbitrary, and mutable nature of identity. Her own ambivalence and insecurity about her most intimate relationships with others help explain her adeptness at choosing sites where characters' identities in relation to others are seemingly most secure in order to effect the most dramatic sense of instability. In the ironically titled "An Ideal Family," for example, old Mr Neave, while picturing his alienated "other self" as a withered spider climbing "endless flights of stairs" (a metaphor for the treadmill existence that has separated him from his wife and daughters), comes to the abrupt conclusion that he doesn't really know his family (373):

What had all this to do with him—this house and Charlotte, the girls and Harold—what did he know about them? They were strangers to him. Life had passed him by. Charlotte was not his wife. His wife! (374)

His identity as husband and father, which presumably has served him faithfully during all the years of his marriage, quite suddenly shatters, resulting in his acute estrangement and alienation. Likewise, a number of Mansfield's stories

deal with spousal estrangement, some focusing exclusively on sudden spousal estrangement sparked by feelings of rejection or not belonging (such as "An Ideal Family," "Bliss," "The Stranger," "Poison," and "A Cup of Tea").²³

In sum, then, Mansfield's perception of herself as exiled grew from a continuum of factors, not all of which involved physical exile, but nonetheless brought inner journeys that exacted exile's psychic toll. Her fragmented identity, resulting from the various ways she felt marginalized—as a colonial, as an emigrant, by a sense of not belonging and difference, by gender, by Leslie's death, by terminal illness—formed a cast of mind bent on framing both her fictional and non-fictional narratives in terms of displacement, alienation, uprootedness, and unstable identity.

So far, this chapter has examined several of the ways exile impacted adversely on Mansfield and how her personal writing and fiction bear the signs of this. Her exilic perspective had another side, however, one that was overtly more optimistic and generative, and whose existence hails back to an important contradiction within Mansfield, mentioned earlier: her yearning for the stability represented by a home and community, and her concomitant determination to break free from constraints and shape her own destiny. Mansfield's determination to reject stability and her courage in detaching and dissociating from what was familiar and secure is what inspired her to actively embark on plans for artistic self-development and aggressively court new experience for what she could learn. This same independent spirit caused her to continually

²³ Mansfield's unfinished story "All Serene!" most probably belongs in the list of stories depicting sudden spousal estrangement. Like "Bliss," it portrays a young and somewhat naive woman who dotes on her husband in a precariously-perfect bubble of a marriage. The story being unfinished, we don't witness the actual burst, but there is enough foreshadowing to suggest its inevitability.

challenge herself to create new identities and develop rapidly as an artist. It allowed her to take the forward-looking exilic leap. Mansfield wanted to obtain a stability superior to that of people such as her parents, which she equated with deadening compromise, stagnation, and loss of self: "I must wander; I cannot—will not—build a house upon any damned rock" (*Journal* [1907], 11).

Edward Said's observation that "[e]xiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience" ("Mind," 54) could have been a credo of Mansfield's, for she was enthralled with the notion of self-renewal and any opportunity to "break barriers." Before leaving New Zealand, she wrote of wanting "[l]iberty, no matter what the cost, no matter what the trial" (*Journal* [1907], 15). So, if Mansfield's leaving New Zealand had exacted the cost of a destabilized identity, of discontinuity, fragmentation, and rootlessness, it had initially offered the promise of freedom and unencumbered growth. Further, the restructuring of identity is more often a necessity than a prerogative for the exile, who invariably feels stripped of his or her former identity. The process of re-fashioning or self-fashioning one's identity in order to adapt to the new environment is always difficult, even though some about-to-be *deracinés* view it in advance as a liberating and welcome challenge, as Mansfield did.

Her journals and letters confirm that her belief in the renovative power of self-composition was a powerful inspiration to her—albeit an inconstant one, its attendant surges of optimism alternating with constricting cynicism. In an early journal entry Mansfield wrote in New Zealand in 1908, she defines "will" as "the realization that Art is absolutely self-development." She felt then that she could fashion her character by freely selecting qualities that she admired in other writers and blending them together to form her own unique identity: "To weave the intricate tapestry of one's own life, it is well to take a thread from

many harmonious skeins" (*Journal*, 37). Even in the late stages of tuberculosis, several years later, she still exhibited tremendous resolve and determination to will her destiny. In 1922 she wrote, "the fault lies in trying to cure the body and paying no heed whatever to the sick psyche"; "A bad day. I felt ill . . . The weakness was not only physical. *I must heal my Self* before I will be well" (*Journal*, 331; 295). Although she knew she had no control over the misfortunes that life had contracted her, she felt that she could dictate the terms and conditions of her fate and achieve moral victory over her illness if she were able to commandeer mind over body.

Mansfield articulated her belief in free will and in the individual's power to shape his or her destiny more obliquely in her stories. This might seem untenable in light of the fact that the majority of her characters who are trapped within unlikeable selves or hateful circumstances fail to shape their destinies; never achieving any realizable liberation, they instead only entertain dreams of escape. In addition, Mansfield's personification of her characters' (like her own) conflicting impulses as separate, immiscible selves unmistakably emphasizes their internal discordance rather than self-possession. Yet their very act of envisioning alternative selves and alternative ways of being posits the possibility of their unrealized potential, of imagined growth and change. Re-visioning themselves into an alternative location and time is also an attempt to re-position themselves within an imagined centre.

In differentiating between the potential of exile and its often bleaker reality, Joseph Brodsky, in "The Condition We Call Exile," says that, in reality, the "exiled writer [is] constantly fighting and conspiring to restore his significance, his poignant role, his authority" (16). Yet, despite Mansfield's knowledge that her unrooted self was more vulnerable, her pursuit of a

cohesive, unified, and stable self—even her belief in the existence of such—was a subject on which she equivocated. One reason for this is that she sometimes obtained pleasure in her multiplicity, pleasure from acting roles and 'trying on' different characters, and pleasure from having a secret self, as critics have well documented. She did not view her facility for adopting different personas to suit different people and situations exclusively in negative terms, not always equating role-playing with falseness. Because of this inherent contradiction in her, her writing needs to be considered as a whole in order to gauge the relative degrees to which she felt compromised by the mercurial and duplicitous vein in her nature and the degree to which she felt enriched by it.

Considered as a whole, what unquestionably emerges from Mansfield's journals, letters, and stories alike, in her repeated renditions of displacement, alienation, and longing for both inner and outer forms of stability, is predominantly a negative view of instability. The hundreds of letters alone that she wrote to Murry bear witness to this; they are saturated with desperate rhetorical attempts on her part, often puerile and pitiable, to inculcate an intimacy between them that was largely unreciprocated and hence beyond reach.²⁴ They also include countless references to a future home and children—expressions of her desire for a conventional life—also beyond reach. In 1922 came the final realization that the "miracle" would not happen: "I sink

²⁴ Mansfield found Murry's emotional distance from her much more difficult to bear than their physical separation from each other. In one 1913 letter she refers to a longed-for but unrealized romantic overture from Murry as "a miracle" (*CL I* [1913]: 126). Disappointed with a letter she had received from him in 1922, she wrote in her journal,

It gave me a strange shock to find M. [Murry] never even asked how things were going. A boyish letter like so many I have had, but absolutely impersonal. It might have been written to anyone . . . There's no strain—nothing that binds him . . . He is at present just like a fish that has escaped from the hook. (*Journal*, 295)

into despair . . . I have 'given up' the idea of true marriage" (*Journal*, 296). And what emerges from Mansfield's journals, as shown, is a dichotomous view of herself, one side revealing her feelings of displacement, discontinuity and fragmentation, the other comprised of assertions of her identity that seem provoked by a need to recredit a perceived deficit. Even her acting, which she could cast in a positive light, she also saw in terms of compensation: "To act . . . to see ourselves in the part—to make a larger gesture than would be ours in life" (*Journal* [1921], 275). And finally, although her stories may occasionally allude to the glamorous freedom of rootlessness, they overwhelmingly take as their focus the victimization of her characters and their vulnerability to forces that are beyond their control or comprehension.

What vexed Mansfield's longing for stability (and undoubtedly contributed to her chronic rootlessness) in addition to her view that stability always seemed just beyond reach was her suspicion that even the very notion of a unified self was an unfounded illusion. It is worth examining a journal entry in which Mansfield equivocates between two competing conceptions of subjectivity—one version of the self being dispersed, multi-dimensional, pluralistic, and the other, cohesive and permanent. Although this passage is probably her strongest assertion of any on the viability of a permanent self, it is nonetheless tinged with doubt:

[T]he popularity of that sly, ambiguous, difficult piece of advice: 'To thine own self be true . . . True to oneself? which self? Which of my many—well really, that's what it looks like coming to—hundreds of selves? For what with complexes and repressions and reactions and vibrations and reflections, there are moments when I feel I am nothing but the small clerk of some hotel without a proprietor, who has all his work cut out to enter the names and hand the keys to the wilful guests.

Nevertheless, there are signs that we are intent as never before on trying to puzzle out, to live by, our own particular self. *Der Mensch muss frei sein*—free, disentangled, single. Is it not possible that the rage for confession, autobiography, especially for memories of childhood, is explained by our persistent yet mysterious belief in a self which is continuous and permanent; which, untouched by all we acquire and all we shed, pushes a green spear through the dead leaves and through the mould, thrusts a scaled bud through years of darkness until, one day, the light discovers it and shakes the flower free and—we are alive—we are flowering for our moment upon the earth? This is the moment, after all, we live for,—the moment of direct feeling when we are most ourselves and least personal. (*Journal* [1920], 205)

While the second version of how Mansfield conceives of the 'self' here is often taken as her more sincere opinion, owing to its less jocular and more serious tone (and likely because its placement suggests that it is intended to supplant the first definition), its actual wording mitigates against this interpretation. The way Mansfield frames information here is a measure of her conviction. She initially represents the 'self' by using the first-person pronoun "I" to recall her personal experience, which imparts reliability. But this reliability is diluted in her second proposal of the 'self', where she uses the more impersonal "we" generically, more-or-less as a substitute for 'society as a whole'. Her perception, therefore, is not as refined as the one preceding; any strength of persuasion here comes from Mansfield's posing this view of the self as being ubiquitous. Whereas the "I feel" denotes Mansfield's first-hand, unmediated perception, the projection clause "there are signs" signals an intervention of deductive reasoning, and so offers a more modalized and remote perception of what follows, which imparts more indeterminacy. The phrase "persistent yet mysterious belief" has a similar effect: the version of "belief" she puts forward

she cloaks adjectivally in mystery and inexplicability, therefore giving the impression of its being an assumption taken purely on faith and fostered by wishful thinking.²⁵ Mansfield's posing the possibility of a permanent self in the form of a question ("Is it not possible . . . earth?") is yet another indication of her doubt. Suffice to say that her "belief" in a permanent self fails to hold under scrutiny.

Mansfield's understanding on an experiential level that there was no such thing as unified self—an understanding quickened by exile—allowed her to exploit it artistically, in her various portraits of characters who struggle between competing definitions of the self. 'Artistic exploitation', however, does not mean that Mansfield capitalized on popular tastes. Rather, in many respects she wrote against the grain. Indeed, her customary way of conceiving identity (both in her fiction and non-fiction), through the motif of a fractured self—a device we have become increasingly accustomed to in literature since translocation and modern forms of alienation have become endemic—can be appreciated for its uniqueness when contextualized in relation to some prevailing norms of subjectivity, then and now.

To this end, it is noteworthy that Mansfield's experience of identity as duplicitous or even multiplicitous (like her 'key-issuing, clerk-in-the-hotel' self) in some ways anticipated a theory currently subscribed to that rejects the notion of a pure, essential, uncontaminated 'self' as being impossible in favor a more composite model. This largely postmodern and poststructuralist model often constructs subjectivity as a mosaic of diverse past experiences and absorbed

²⁵ Kate Fullbrook traces the vocabulary in the second part of this passage, which she notes is more mystic and organic than that in the first part, to the influence of nineteenth-century Romantic and symbolist conceptions of an essential self (20).

narratives, none of which proceed out of a vacuum but which derive instead from pre-existing social constructs. Because we live in relation to others and use language, we are constructed by and through others and language. We are inherently heterogeneous and dialogical. In Wilson Harris' words, "[t]he voice of authentic self is [a] complex muse of otherness" (137).²⁶

Yet, it would be risky to claim much beyond outward resemblances between the poststructuralist model of the 'self', currently favored, and Mansfield's view of the 'self'. Not because there are not similarities between these two views—there are—but because the poststructuralist model is inherently neutral in that it supports an equal capacity for harmony as it does for discord among the myriad strands of experience which form the self. This model of the 'self' would be better described as 'multifaceted' than 'multiplicitous', with implied cohesion being the 'default mode', so to speak. In contrast, Mansfield's conceptions of 'multiplicitous selves' almost always represent internal division. Further, her conceptions are distilled from personal experience, and, unlike the neutral model, characteristically denote a self split by trauma and loss into disparately envisioned selves.

²⁶ Psychoanalyst Jane Flax, in *Disputed Subjects*, dispels some widespread misconceptions about a "unitary" self and offers a model of the 'self' that she believes better reflects actual experience. She contends that, though the 'self' may at times appear cohesive, it actually remains 'fluid':

The processes of subjectivity are overdetermined and contextual. They interact with, partially determine, and are partially determined by many other equally complicated processes including somatic, political, familial, and gendered ones. Temporary coherence into seemingly solid characteristics or structures is only one of subjectivity's many possible expressions. When enough are webbed together, a solid entity may appear to form. Yet the fluidity of the threads and the web itself remains. What felt solid and real may subsequently separate and reform. (94)

The perception Flax describes of a 'separation of what felt solid and real' is one that Mansfield represents repeatedly in her fiction, in depictions of characters whose identity and security, once called into question, crumble. Interestingly, this quotation of Flax's occurs in the context of a larger discussion on the perception of those who suffer from identity problems.

More importantly perhaps, the psychosocial context in which Mansfield wrote was not enmeshed in post-structuralist concepts of a multi-dimensional self. On the contrary, Mansfield's manner of conceiving subjectivity was determined by the dominant cultural norms of her era, even insofar as her conception was a reaction to or deviation from them—norms which, for the most part, upheld a standard view of subjectivity as being whole, unified, rooted, and placed.²⁷ "To thine own self be true," Polonius' prescription to Hamlet and what Mansfield referred to as "that sly, ambiguous, difficult piece of advice," belonged to the progeny of determinism, centredness, and self-conviction that had been cradled in Western thought for centuries.

Sydney Janet Kaplan's point, then, that "Mansfield's aesthetics are grounded in a *precocious* recognition of the self as many selves—male/female being only one of several possible polarities," is not in dispute here (169, my emphasis). The very fact that Mansfield constantly perceived and conceived in terms of dualities and alternative selves suggests an aesthetic firmly rooted in rootlessness itself, as has so far been illustrated. What is significant about her equivocation about the self, though, is that her continual yearning for internal coherence in the face of her suspicions that not only was it unachievable but implausible as well ratcheted tighter her emotional strain of exile.

Paradoxically, Mansfield's doubts about the possibility of an essential self offered her potential release from an exilic perspective. Although she knew that a sense of cohesion and continuity were cornerstones to her sanity and

²⁷ Other modernists who also questioned cohesive identity more than their literary predecessors were still challenging the Cartesian model of centred subjectivity which was then normative. What also distinguishes the modernist reappraisal of subjectivity from poststructuralist notion of the self is that modernists mourned the loss of the self whereas poststructuralists privilege fragmentation and rupture (Schwab 5).

belonging, she also recognized, owing to the fact that exile brings with it an ability to conceive of multiple traditions and perspectives, that all conceptions of identity were contingent. Because they were constructed in response to socially-determined needs arising from specific social contexts, it followed that they could just as easily be deconstructed. True liberation, therefore, lay in one's ability to transcend borders and centres, and not in viewing oneself in terms of one's 'relation to' others, which inevitably required 'placing' the self in time and space. The key was in detaching oneself from one's 'object relations', which, Mansfield's journals reveal, was a task she embarked on during the last three months of her life at Fontainebleau, with varying degrees of success.²⁸

²⁸ That Mansfield actively embarked on this journey of disentangling herself from others is most evident in her journal entries written just prior to her entering the Gurdieff Institute in 1922. The near-certainty of her death caused her to sift through her life experiences in order to retain only what was of deepest value to her and to release herself emotionally from bonds which seemed 'false' and unrewarding. "Care no more for the opinions of others, for those voices. Do the hardest thing on the earth for you. Act for yourself. Face the truth," she wrote ([1922], 333). She also wanted to be able to dismantle the barrier that she perceived illness had placed between her and life: "Think of five years' imprisonment. Someone has got to help me to get out" (332). Suppressing her fear that her decision to enter the Gurdieff Institute would cost her Murry's love and respect, Mansfield admitted that much of her marriage was not worth salvaging because it was based on the shrinking hope of future happiness:

What do you have of him now? What is your relationship? He talks to you—sometimes—and then goes off . . . He dreams of a life with you *some day* when the miracle has happened. You are as important to him as a dream. Not as a living reality . . . What do you share? Almost nothing. Yet there is a deep, sweet, tender flooding of feeling in my heart which is love for him and longing for him. But what is the good of it as things stand? . . . He only knows a Wig-who-is-going-to-be-better-some-day. No. You do know that Bogey and you are only a kind of dream of what might be. (333)

Mansfield's process of detaching here, which amounted to a rigorous emotional housecleaning, entailed a mental process akin to what Edward Said describes as the type of thinking required to achieve independence from the negative effects of exile, which entails a "working through attachments," rather than a rejection of them:

Regard experiences as if they were about to disappear. What is it that anchors them in reality? What would you save of them? What would you give up? Only someone who has achieved independence and detachment, someone whose homeland is 'sweet' but whose circumstances makes [sic] it impossible to recapture that sweetness, can

Yet, however much Mansfield might have appreciated this existential paradox on an intellectual level, she derived little comfort from it on an emotional level. Although she wanted in theory to detach herself from those whom she relied upon, seeing this as a weakness in herself, for the most part she could not suppress her deep-seated emotional needs in reality (at least not until the time she decided to become a pupil of Gurdieff's, when her awareness of her approaching death provoked her to an extent to 'let go' as a way of preparing for it).²⁹ Her ambivalence about the ideals of independence and self-sufficiency versus her desire for security tainted her attempts at domesticity which failed when she realized it was a stereotyped expectation which provided false security. Her ambivalence tainted her relationship with Ida Baker whom she relied on for physical and domestic care and whom she hated for it. If anything, illness reaffirmed Mansfield's emotional needs and how socially dependent she was. It intensified her awareness of the sensual and natural world and caused her to desire, beyond everything, to feel vibrant and "rooted":

[to be] warm, eager, living life—to be rooted in life . . . That is what I want. And nothing less. That is what I must try for. (*Journal* [1922], 334)

And it caused her to valorize self-integrity and self-assuredness to the extent that she criticized any ambivalence in herself, viewing it as spiritual lassitude. Feeling that she lacked the necessary faith that Doctor Manoukhin's x-ray treatment would cure her lungs and reproaching herself for doubting his

answer those questions. (Such a person would also find it impossible to derive satisfaction from substitutes furnished by illusion or dogma.) ("Reflections," 171)

²⁹ Her sequestered and somewhat legislated lifestyle at the Gurdieff Institute, in concert with the philosophy in which she was steeped there, facilitated her detachment from others. The best description of this period is James Moore's in *Gurdieff and Mansfield*.

professional integrity (feeling by turns that he was "a really good man" but also "a kind of unscrupulous impostor"), she wrote,

Another proof of my divided nature. All is disunited, Half boos, half cheers.

Yes, that's it. To do anything, to be anything, one must gather oneself together and 'one's faith make stronger'. Nothing of any worth can come from a disunited being. (*Journal* [1922], 293)

But her ambivalence was natural and altogether justified in light of the fact that Manoukhin's treatment did not cure, but weakened, her. The equal tenacity of Mansfield's desire for and doubts about security and permanence generated an irreconcilable tension within her, justifying Kate Fullbrook's observation that "it is this hesitation, this honest uncertainty in the face of desire and need, that finally makes Katherine Mansfield, at times, one of the toughest and darkest of the modernists" (19).

Without exception, then, all of Mansfield's crises of faith in the 'self' trace back to her uprootedness and sense of difference. Her unsettled and unsettling self-representations, her portrayals in her fiction of de-stabilized and fragmented identity, and her search for security and permanence were all responses to the instability in her life, wreaked by a series of exilic traumas. Therefore, any security she could imagine provided some hope of compensation for the terminal loss she felt. This explains why her sense of uprootedness and isolation were most intense when she was angry with Murry for his self-absorption and lack of affection; during these episodes the irreparable flaws in the tent of security she had fabricated around their relationship were most glaring. At these times, when the illusion of security wore thin, she felt most

severely exiled, experiencing most profoundly what Edward Said ascribes to the exile—"the loss of something left behind for ever" ("Reflections," 159):

Nothing makes me ill like this business with J. [Murry]. It just destroys me . . . It was a miserable day. In the night I thought for hours of the evils of uprooting. Every time one leaves anywhere, something precious, which ought not to be killed, is left to die. (*Journal* [1922], 296)

Love wished for was no compensation for love lost. Mansfield craved the affirmation that comes from being positioned. "[L]ife should be like a steady, visible light," she wrote in her journal, her need of a beacon fostered by her recurrent fear of fragmentation and effacement, a fear which she never fully surmounted, not even under Gurdieff's guidance ([1922], 331). Writing to Murry exactly two weeks before her death, she was still at the "mercy" of a dispersed identity in dire need of reparation:

You see, the question is always: *Who am I?* and until that is discovered I don't see how one can really direct anything in one's self. *Is there a me?* One must be certain of that before one has a real unshakable leg to stand on . . . You see, if I were allowed one single cry to God, that cry would be: *I want to be REAL.* Until I am that I don't see why I shouldn't be at the mercy of old Eve in her various manifestations for ever. (*Letters II* [1922], 256-7)

Chapter Two

The Aesthetics of Exile: A Mutable Perspective

Throughout her life, Mansfield was fascinated with artifice. In her journals and correspondence, for example, she often conceived of her life as drama or text. Her penchant for transforming personal, subjective experience into estranged and artificial, sometimes exaggerated, forms of expression is also apparent in her stories, stories thickly populated with characters who view their lives as performances or who perceive nature as art. A stellar example is Miss Brill. A lonely English teacher living in a French metropolis, she is elated when a slight turn of her imagination allows her to refurbish in glamorous terms her weekly outing to the 'Jardins Publiques' where she sits on a park bench watching others:

Oh, how fascinating it was! How she enjoyed it! How she loved sitting here, watching it all! It was like a play. It was exactly like a play. Who could believe the sky at the back wasn't painted? But it wasn't till a little brown dog trotted on solemnly and then slowly trotted off, like a little 'theatre' dog, a little dog that had been drugged, that Miss Brill discovered what it was that made it so exciting. They were all on the stage. They weren't only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting. Even she had a part and came every Sunday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance, after all. How strange she'd never thought of it like that before! And yet it explained why she made such a point of starting from home at just the same time each week so as not to be late for the performance. . . . Miss Brill nearly laughed out loud. She was on the stage. (334)

One of the more intriguing things about this passage is how Miss Brill's fresh gloss on her Sunday ritual exerts a dual effect on her positionality. By mentally transforming herself from audience to actor, by re-visioning herself as spectator-turned-participant, she maneuvers herself from margin to centre. But her stylization of her surroundings, which temporarily offers her importance, belonging, and hence centrality, is also an estrangement of her surroundings because it is a rose-tinted and distorted view and one that paradoxically displaces her from them. Thus, she places herself centrally (or so she thinks) via displacement; she makes events familiar by making them unfamiliar.

The way Miss Brill uses artifice to compensate for her experience of isolation, as implied, bears the stress of exile. Her artistic re-touching of the truth, a seemingly benign activity, attests to the gulf she senses on some level between herself and others, a gulf made shockingly real to her when the young couple whom she has mentally cast as "hero and heroine" in the "performance" fail to act accordingly but, instead, knock her from her falsified centrality with insults. "Why does she come here at all—who wants her?" (335). Further, in manipulating reality she enacts a form of self-exile, which sadly compounds more than compensates for the exile she intuits. The drugged dog, the sky that encrusts to paint, the atmosphere that freezes into stage-setting all hint of anesthesia.¹ The scaffolding beneath her unreal, she occupies an

¹ Death and anesthesia and their connection with artifice are subliminally suggested throughout the story, most notably by Miss Brill's animal fur piece, which she stores in "moth-powder" in a box. When she wears it, she rubs "the life back into the dim little eyes." In the description of her leaving for the park is another allusion to numbness: "She felt a tingling in her hands and arms, but that came from walking, she supposed" (331).

An examination of the submerged content and technical aspects of Mansfield's stories proves fruitful. Like most of her stories, "Miss Brill" is thick with symbolism. As well, Mansfield closely keyed stylistics to the mood and subject matter of her stories. "Miss Brill"

'extraterritorial' or 'un-grounded' position, a place where fantasy has transported her from the discomforts of the margin.

'Extraterritorial' and 'ex-centric', terms that coalesce with concepts of exile, are particularly apt metaphors for Mansfield's and her characters' predominant points of view. Extraterritorial perspectives in her writing include 'un-grounded' viewpoints where reality is distanced like Miss Brill's, and those that hover, equivocating, between multiple and competing perspectives. Ex-centric perspectives, instead, indicate displacement and alienation, and so are more troubled—views from the margin (like Miss Brill's after she is deflated by insults) or views of elsewhere from somewhere. Ex-centric perspectives, therefore, convey the sense of exclusion from a desirable centre. Whereas the term 'extraterritorial' connotes a 'displacement of', a deliberate distancing of oneself—the act of *doing* the displacing—'ex-centric' indicates a 'displacement from', or the experience of *being* displaced (their meanings encompassed by the verb and noun 'exile', respectively). These two perspectives often operate in conjunction in Mansfield's stories, as the example of Miss Brill demonstrates.

This chapter will examine some of the complex ways that Mansfield (both in her journals and stories) and her characters move between different perspectives and implied territorial positions, some of which involve mediations between 'root' and 'artifice'. Mansfield's handling of language, particularly her

was one of the stories she was happiest with because, in endeavoring to get the cadences just right, she felt she had succeeded:

In 'Miss Brill' I choose not only the length of every sentence, but even the sound of every sentence. I choose the rise and fall of every paragraph to fit her, and to fit her on that day at that very moment. 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. . . . If a thing has really come off it seems to me there mustn't be one single word out of place, or one word that could be taken out. (*Letters II* [1921], 88-9)

management of stylistics, her and her characters' self-reflexiveness, their choice of expression, and how they draw attention both to the possibilities and limitations of language, establish markedly *dis-located* perspectives which, when considered alongside her personal responses to exile, can be read as expressions of cultural ambivalence. A survey of these qualities and their effects brings Mansfield's 'aesthetics of exile' into focus.

To Mansfield, artifice was a reminder of her doubleness, sometimes sought, other times criticized. As indicated in Chapter One, her duplicity arose from many conditions (e.g., colonial insecurity vs. artistic superiority, sexual ambiguity, desire for stability vs. a rejection of commitment) and conspired with other factors to bring about her eventual rootlessness. She frequently saw within her contrasted colonial and her 'more worldly' metropolitan experiences abroad, albeit reductively, a split between the natural and the artificial, between the native root and the cultivated European. Both her early and later writing maintain these competing sensibilities in tense balance, despite her shifting affinity with place. Mansfield's story outline about a halfcaste girl from Wellington, for example, who travels between two cultures and experiences a "dual existence"; Wellington's "climatic effects, cloud pageantry"; London's "existence so full and strange"; and a "strange longing for the artificial" is indicative of this bifurcated view in which she pins a nature/art dualism to contrasted conceptions of place (*Journal* [1908], 37-8).

To a large extent, Mansfield's "strange longing for the artificial," particularly in her early career, reflected her belief that raw experience needed to be improved upon, refined and redefined through an aesthetic filter, if it were to become art. "When New Zealand is more artificial," she wrote, "she will give birth to an artist who can treat her natural beauties adequately. This

sounds paradoxical, but it is true" (*Journal* [1907], 10). Her own artificial 'treatment' of New Zealand is inscribed in several journal entries written after her return there from London where, over the course of four years, she had absorbed a fund of art and new ways of seeing that greatly increased her vocabulary of aesthetics. These entries entail an ex-centric, remote point of view in which she defines her impressions of her native surroundings according to a foreign, or imported, aesthetic. Lying on a New Zealand beach, she wrote, "Where the rocks lie their shadow is thickly violet upon the green blue—you know that peacock shade of water. Blue—with the blueness of Rossetti; green—with the greenness of William Morris" ([1907], 9-10). The notebook she took on her North Island (N. Z.) camping trip also includes several sketches in which she anchors her impassioned personal responses to wild, undomesticated beauty to other artists' evocations that to her were icons of a more dominant and cultured, if more distant (and taming?) order to be emulated. She compares new bracken to H. G. Wells' "dreaming flowers like strings of beads" and a "wonderful tangle of willow and rose and thorn" to Millias' painting of Ophelia (*Urewera* [1907], 57; 72). She states of a boy on a horse, "something in the poise of his figure in the strong sunburnt color of his naked legs reminded me of Walt Whitman (34). The "undergrowth—and then the spring" recall Maurice Maeterlinck for her, passions elicited by a raging river evoke Wagner, and a "fern grotto" also finds a parallel in a Wagnerian opera (72; 74; 80).²

² Ian A. Gordon, editor of *The Urewera Notebook*, notes that Mansfield had attended a London production of Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser* and that she also must have seen Millias' painting of Ophelia sometime during the period it hung in the Tate Gallery (from 1897-1909) which coincided with her London stay at Queen's College (105: n35; n40).

Mansfield's art/nature fusions represented more than simply the attempt of an immature writer to find her own voice by borrowing the idiom of well-known artists whom she admired.³ She was also drawn to the inherent tension in bifocal depictions that posed two realities. She even saw it as the artist's duty to sustain a certain dialectic between contrasted entities: "reality cannot become the ideal, the dream . . . That which suggests the subject to the artist is the *unlikeness* to what we accept as reality" (*Scrapbook* [1921], 233). In a sketch titled "The Botanical Gardens" [1907], Mansfield describes an arrangement of flowers as being "such a subtle combination of the artificial and the natural—that is, partly, the secret of their charm."⁴ Though her grafts of artifice upon root in her camping notebook in many instances are less overtly cross-cultural than the above examples and not tied to prominent artists, they just as conspicuously evoke separate realities. Even in her juxtapositions of nature and civilization, such as "the sky in the water like swans in a blue mirror" and "now the day fully enters with a duet for two oboes," the contrast between the organic ("sky," "water," "day") and the refined ("mirrors" and "oboes") suggest two distinct orders and senses of place (*Urewera*, 57; 75). Whereas nature is chaotic, unordered and de-localized, the artificial is, to use Sydney Janet Kaplan's term, "mannered" and therefore socially ordered and situated (56). Thus, Mansfield's contrasting artifice and landscape in this way was an attempt to elicit a kind of inharmonious harmony—a harmony that

³ Although Mansfield over time modeled herself less on other writers, she continued throughout her life to privilege the artist's expression. In 1915, for example, she wrote to Murry from Bandol, France, "I am going in a kerridge to that little Dürer town I told you of," no doubt referring to the German painter Albrecht Dürer (*CL I* [1915]: 225).

⁴ *Poems of Katherine Mansfield*, Ed. Vincent O'Sullivan, (Wellington, N. Z.: Port Nicolson, 1982), 9. (Quoted in Kaplan, 56.)

embodied the same potential friction that she found attractive in the signifier 'halfcaste' with its evocation of mixed origins.⁵ Her perspective in these instances, in contrast to those which privilege the foreign, could be called extraterritorial because she mediates between different points of view that pose alternative realities, neither of which is intended to compel more than the other.

Her expressions of this nature/artifice dialectic were not restricted to the writing she produced in New Zealand. As indicated in Chapter One, she felt predisposed wherever she was to project the reality of an 'other' place, and her coaxing of dissimilarities in her art posed an enduring means of expressing simultaneous realities.

So vigorous is this aesthetic in Mansfield's writing in which she proposes duality by pairing discordant orders that an entire branch of it could be called a 'theatrics of nature'. Miss Brill's painted sky is merely one leaf from a catalogue of similar depictions (both in Mansfield's fiction and personal writing) in which nature is seen to imitate art in a highly stylized manner. A variation of pathetic fallacy, the plainly staged treatment of nature is often intended to complement the self-reflexive, alienated state of the viewer. Here too, Mansfield offers an ex-centric view; in ascribing these static qualities to nature she creates the sense that a more desirable, natural order is masked or beyond reach. In a 1920

⁵ In wanting her protagonist to be a "halfcaste," Mansfield was creating, either inadvertently or by design, as much potential for conflict in her story as for exotic duality, given that the term "halfcaste" can just as easily evoke contexts of belonging as it can not belonging—a point demonstrated by Claudette Sarlet:

'Halfcaste': to be both English and Maori, to sail between Wellington and London, then to return and die in Wellington. 'Halfcaste': to be neither English nor Maori, for the halfcaste really belongs to neither of her parent communities. (138-9)

Considering Mansfield's interest in the instability of perception, she was likely drawn to the inherent ambiguity in the signifier "halfcaste."

journal entry, for example, she employs an image of crudely-assembled fabric sky and painted forest to emphasize her disconnectedness from her surroundings—her dis-location: "I was conscious . . . of the white sky with a web of torn grey over it; of the slipping, sliding slithering sea; of the dark woods blotted against the cape" (*Journal*, 203).⁶ Analogously, old Mrs Bean in "The Wrong House," haunted by reminders of passing time that portend her inevitable death, sees the day in starkly deprived, mocking, and two-dimensional terms:

It was a bitter autumn day; the wind ran in the street like a thin dog; the houses opposite looked as through they had been cut out with a pair of ugly steel scissors and pasted on to the grey paper sky (664).

Again, the viewpoint is ex-centric; Mrs Bean feels displaced from the familiar.⁷

Various critical commentary either directly or indirectly supports the view that Mansfield's cultural ambiguity played a major role in determining the perspectives in her writing. Antony Alpers, for instance, contends that it was Mansfield's sense of cultural and class dislocation in England that caused her viewpoint "to be somewhere else, and somewhere insecure: it had to float"

⁶ "Miss Brill" also opens with a synthetic sky: "Although it was so brilliantly fine—the blue sky powdered with gold and the great spots of light like white wine splashed over the Jardins Publiques—Miss Brill was glad she had decided on her fur" (330).

⁷ There is a threatening tone, a vein of paranoia even, in the way some of Mansfield's skylines appear to have been constructed by human hands that have ruthlessly 'cut', 'torn', and 'blotted' the horizon. The hostile nature of these skies recalls her perception of the ostracizing London geraniums (cited in Chapter One).

In a number of stories she similarly assigns objects persecutory qualities, a behavioral trait indicative of the exile (see Chapter 3, n1). (Two particularly vivid examples of this occur in "Such a Sweet Old Lady" and "The Daughters of the Late Colonel." In the former, the elderly Mrs. Travers feels controlled by her late husband's watch which she feels hates her. In the latter, Josephine and Constantia feel the threatening presence of their dead father when they enter his room; Josephine is unable to open his chest of drawers, fearing he is inside.)

(127). Alpers' point is elaborated by Roger Robinson's observations, all of which implicate extraterritorial perspectives: that the "center fails to hold" in Mansfield's stories; that her "angles of vision" are "unpredictable," "perverse," and "illuminating"; that she subverts "concepts of wholeness and closure"; and that she often represents "genuine dualities, equally true opposites" (4; 5; 6).

Mansfield's experience of exile provided a fulcrum for her un-grounded viewpoints and the lack of centrality in her stories because it kept in suspension the awareness of co-existing places and cultures, and hence, multiple ways of seeing and being. This split vision, or lack of a single, unified view, is indicative generally of the exile's experience of cultural ambiguity, which Edward Said describes in terms of counterpoint:

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is *contrapuntal*." ("Mind," 55)⁸

To tailor Said's analysis to Mansfield, however, we need to add that her perspective was further complicated by the fact that she felt exiled even before she left New Zealand and that her cultural ambivalence was intensified because

⁸ The process by which exiles continually negotiate between two cultures is somewhat analogous to that of individuals attempting to know others intersubjectively. Psychoanalyst Jane Flax notes, "As reflective beings, we seek ways to understand, practice, and improve our particular subjectivity. As persons in relations to others, we attempt to comprehend subjectivities other than our own" (101). It could be said that this process of 'comprehending other subjectivities' is intensified for the exile, who is obliged to decode others' cultural codes in order to assimilate. However, because exiles are uprooted from their original culture, their circumstances require more than just a sympathetic appreciation of another culture from a safe position of familiarity; they are forced to abandon their familiar identity (and culture) and to live within another.

she was a colonial. Judith Kegan Gardiner's observation about Doris Lessing, Jean Rhys, and Christina Stead applies equally to Mansfield:

For the colonial woman writer of the colonizing race and class, the exile that sends her from the colony to the cultural center must always be profoundly ambiguous . . . neither place is home; each is alternately desirable and oppressive. (134)

Gardiner raises a critical point here about the nature of exilic ambivalence that helps explain Mansfield's deconstructive methods of representation, alluded to by Robinson. The dialectic between desire and oppression embodied by multiple choices—the oscillation between impossible alternative choices—ekes out an uncommitted and un-grounded imaginative space. The suspended viewpoint, hovering unsure—at once compelled and repelled—is sustained by a more critical awareness which indirectly defends its own lack of grounding. This critical awareness arises from acknowledging contrary positions from an external vantage, a process which calls into question the implicit ideology (or cultural assumptions and expectations) upholding each set of cultural beliefs and practices. Terry Eagleton makes a similar point while observing the "felt presence of alternative traditions" in the writing of exiled authors James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and W. B. Yeats, when he says that "[i]n no case are these alternatives merely points of refuge. They are themselves deeply implicated in the general undermining of civilized order" (18).

"At the Bay" is a particularly well-developed example of the hovering, extraterritorial narrator typical in many of Mansfield's stories who, by assuming by turns the outlook and idiom of each character, provides a dynamic interplay of perspectives and counter-perspectives. The composition is more polyvalent

than contrapuntal given that the reader is invited to view the world from the contrasted perspectives of several members of the Burnell household, including that of the cat, Florrie. Mansfield's aim for authorial transparency, what she expressed as her desire to get into the skin of her characters in order to portray them empathetically, ensures that no view dominates; as one character's viewpoint is established, another's offsets it. Even elements of nature, such as the sea, are personified. The very first introduction to characters in the story, following a lingering description of landscape and atmospheric effects, presents us with two highly contrasted responses to an early morning ocean swim shared by Stanley Burnell and his brother-in-law, Jonathan Trout, first from Stanley's perspective, then Jonathan's. Deconstruction operates subtly. As the same situation being viewed from diverse angles poses alternative interpretations, no construction holds and certainty is eroded. And because there is no clearly cohesive plot to the story, unity in the usual sense is forsaken; the cumulative foci and the references to passing time are what carry the polyvocal narrative forward. Thus, the viewpoint of the reader, too, is obliged to float in suspended judgment.

This unresolvable ambiguity is also played out on a smaller scale in the stories, in the conflicting but unbridgeable impulses housed within a single character. In "Prelude," for example, Linda Burnell sees her love and hate for her husband as two very distinct feelings:

There were all her feelings for him, sharp and defined, one just as true as the other. And there was this other, this hatred, just as real as the rest. She could have done her feelings up in little packets and given them to Stanley. (53-4)

Widely pitched moods or extremely contrasted perspectives involving any number of characters, therefore, are often presented with no middle ground.⁹

Mansfield's deconstructionist urges stemming from an unrooted, extraterritorial perspective lend contour to the vast majority, if not all, of her stories. Binary distinctions, a means of posing equally compelling contraries, occur in a number of forms (perhaps the most overt and recurrent are darkness and light; night and day; sun and moon). Likewise numerous are doppelgänger motifs involving doubling or pairing, manifested as characters who are opposites (e.g., the pythonesque Rupert Henderson and the rabbit-like Archie Cullen, roommates in "Honesty"), as characters who mirror each other, even as characters who resemble objects, thus subverting any idea of absolutes.¹⁰

Even children's perspectives, plentiful in the stories, mark dislocation because they pose challenges to familiarity. In rendering children's views, Mansfield defamiliarizes objects and events, and in so doing questions assumptions and dislodges viewpoints (much as she de-stabilizes identities). Young Kezia's surprise at seeing the handyman Pat wearing earrings—"She never knew that men wore ear-rings"—both reflects and challenges cultural assumptions about appropriate gendered behavior (47). In many ways natural exiles, children are positioned outside the social order because they are still learning cultural codes that for adults are more rigidified and often have little or no choice in matters that affect them profoundly.¹¹ Their mispronunciations,

⁹ Alpers accordingly notes the borders between Mansfield's characters when he says that she was able to "achieve that intricate delineation of the spaces between people . . . as the Impressionists had captured light" (127).

¹⁰ Two overt examples of characters resembling objects occur in the short story "Bliss." Bertha Young contrives her outfit to "mirror" her pear tree, and Pearl Fulton is 'paired' descriptively with the moon.

such as "nenamuel teapot," "ninseck," and "nemeral," which on one level can be read as endearing evocations of child-like perception, on another level reflect the earnest work of decoding language, and the mistakes of the foreigner faced with a linguistic barrier (17; 232; 216). Certainty for children is constantly destabilized as they rapidly accommodate new information, which makes them facile at moving between different ways of seeing.¹² To the children in "Prelude," the upside-down ducks in the pond that mirror the real ones are just as convincing: "Up and down they swam, preening their dazzling breasts, and other ducks with the same dazzling breasts and yellow bills swam upside down with them" (45). To them, boundaries between reality and illusion are often blurred, producing hesitancy in the face of equally compelling contraries. When the entire world has a strange unfamiliarity, the unusual is not so disturbing. To Kezia, in "Prelude," parrots appear to fly out of the wallpaper

¹¹ Grinberg and Grinberg point out that children are always placed in a position of exile when parents decide to relocate: "Parents may be voluntary or involuntary emigrants, but children are always 'exiled'; they are not the ones who decide to leave, and they cannot decide to return at will" (125).

¹² Children's ease with contradictions in many respects resembles the "tolerance for ambiguity" that Gloria Anzaldúa ascribes to *la mestiza* (the woman of mixed American Indian and Spanish or Portuguese blood) who negotiates between Texan and Mexican cultures:

In perceiving conflicting information and points of view, she is subjected to a swamping of her psychological borders. She has discovered that she can't hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries. The borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior . . . [she] copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode. (79)

Though Mansfield's experiences cannot be equated too closely with those of Anzaldúa whose mixed ethnicity, class, and proximity to the border impinge somewhat differently on her perspective, Anzaldúa's description of the psychological effects of straddling cultures is nonetheless echoed in Mansfield's exilic perspective. Like Anzaldúa, Mansfield felt pulled in two directions and experienced internal 'border conflicts' (and, as a colonial, felt a certain sense of mixed origins), but perhaps not with such commanding intensity and at such close range.

and past her; in "Sun and Moon," Moon thinks of how "she never knew the difference between real things and not real ones" (154). Illusion at times appears even more persuasive than reality, as is the case when Kezia examines the outdoors through differently colored window panes:

Kezia bent down to have one more look at a blue lawn with blue arum lilies growing at the gate, and then at a yellow lawn with yellow lilies and a yellow fence. As she looked a little Chinese Lottie came out on to the lawn and began to dust the tables and chairs with a corner of her pinafore. Was that really Lottie? Kezia was not quite sure until she had looked through the ordinary window. (14)

Mansfield illustrates, through the tri-colored window that invites Kezia to assume various perspectives, the simultaneity of contrasted realities—a contrapuntal awareness.

One of the more rigorous ways that Mansfield alludes to the magnetic pull exerted by competing alternatives is through her characters' mutable perspectives. In many instances her characters, rather than acknowledge their contradictory impulses the way Linda does by expressing her ambivalent feelings of love and hate for Stanley, embrace a single viewpoint wholeheartedly which they then reject for a radically different one. When Linda first encounters the aloe plant at midday (also in "Prelude"), she sees it as ugly and threatening—"a fat swelling plant with its cruel leaves and fleshy stem" that "cut into the air" and "might have had claws instead of roots"—but when she reconsiders it by moonlight and a previously hidden meaning unfolds the possibility of her own flowering and escape, she is intensely attracted to it: "I like that aloe. I like it more than anything here. And I am sure I shall

remember it long after I've forgotten all the other things" (34; 53).¹³ The effect of these dramatic conversions is in keeping with Mansfield's dual evocations of place and her art/nature juxtapositions in that they all pose polarities which imitate cultural ambivalence. And when the conflict between these polarities is emphasized, as it is here, it mimics even more closely the exile's turbulent mental migrations between contrasted cultures and irreconcilable viewpoints, and the colonial exile's perception of the alternate desirability and oppression represented by any single choice.

This rift between contraries is even more pronounced in Mansfield's overriding focus in the stories on disillusionment and deception. Usually characters' disillusionment, instead of forcing them to readjust their views more rationally, provokes them to take diametrically different views.¹⁴ What Mansfield stresses here is their victimization to overpowering forces: they react to their situations not by rising above them but by moving blindly from one narrow alternative to another, sometimes from one dreamworld to emptiness, unable to see clearly the social or cultural contexts in which they are enmeshed.

¹³ Perhaps Mansfield's two best studies on the mutability of perspective are "The Singing Lesson" and "The Swing of the Pendulum." In both stories, characters move feverishly from one vantage point to its opposite; in the latter story, Viola hastily retreats again.

¹⁴ Mansfield's own instability and string of disillusionments, stemming from the discrepancy between a projected (wished for) and actual reality and very much central to her own sense of exile, are refracted in an array of fictional accounts of how insight turns to delusion. Sydney Janet Kaplan has aptly remarked that the moment when Mansfield "evokes epiphany" within a character, the "moment of enlightenment, exposure, understanding—[is] the instant when the walls come down" (205). It should be added, though, that characters' "understanding" is usually limited in scope and often turns to delusion.

Elaine Showalter makes much the same point as Kaplan but frames it differently by saying that, in Mansfield's characters, "the moment of self-awareness is also the moment of self-betrayal" (246). Her contention that Mansfield's stories are "punitive" because "women are lured out onto the limbs of consciousness which are then lopped off by the author" seems to misinterpret Mansfield's objectives and ascribe to her undue misogynist intent (246). At the least, this view seems untenable in light of Mansfield's interest in representing women's wasted potential, which makes 'pessimistic' a more warranted adjective than "punitive."

Mirrors, masks, shadows, and photographs, all plentiful in Mansfield's stories, also chart ex-centric perspectives by expressing a dialectic between what is familiar and what is foreign, what is visible and what has become eclipsed. (These devices also direct attention variously to the barrier between the inside and outside world, the conscious and subconscious, illusion and reality, and the private self versus the public self.) Masks, a form of artifice, are located within a social context because they are presented to others, the perception that they are necessary usually arising from social constraints that engender vulnerability. In Jeremy Hawthorn's words, "playing a part in society . . . necessitates the repression and concealment of real feelings, emotions, desires" (117).¹⁵ For those whose identities have become destabilized, such as the exile, a semblance of stability is often achieved by adopting a suitable persona. Accordingly, many of the mask-wearers in Mansfield's stories camouflage feelings of alienation, not belonging, and inadequacy.

Though masks have been used to various ends historically, in Mansfield's stories they function exclusively as social barriers, sustaining the division between what is familiar and unfamiliar and/or designating one's status as insider or outsider. Those who perceive others wearing masks feel betrayed by insincerity or shut out by indifference. Although Mona Rutherford in "All Serene!" wants to believe she is close to her husband, her references to him as a "stranger" and her description of his face as being "like a pierrot, like a mask"

¹⁵ Expounding on her own reliance on masks, Mansfield wrote to Murry: "Its a terrible thing to be alone—yes it is—it is—but dont lower your mask until you have another mask prepared beneath—As terrible as you like—but a *mask* " (*CL I* [1917]: 318). In concealing her innermost emotions she resembles the protagonist in her short story "Violet" who reserves her emotions for only her most intimate friends, confiding, "I keep them [emotions] tucked away, and produce them only occasionally, like special little pots of jam, when people whom I love come to tea" (587).

reveal that she only sees and knows his surface, as a foreigner might (475-6).¹⁶ It is therefore she who feels displaced. The social implications of mask-wearing are somewhat reversed in "At the Bay" when the community, who regard Harry Kember with suspicion because he chooses not to mix with them, dwell mainly on their superficial impression of his physical countenance. A loner married to a woman whose 'scandalous' ways they disapprove of, his good looks are deceptively unreal to them; they see him as

so incredibly handsome that he looked like a mask or a most perfect illustration in an American novel rather than a man. Black hair, dark blue eyes, red lips, a slow sleepy smile, a fine tennis player, a perfect dancer, and with it all a mystery. Harry Kember was like a man walking in his sleep. Men couldn't stand him, they couldn't get a word out of the chap. (218-9)

Their unease causes them to displace his appearance into something foreign. (Their distrust of his appearance, it so happens, is warranted; his less-than-picture-perfect character is betrayed when he tries to pressure Beryl into a nocturnal walk against her best interests.)¹⁷ In each case masks denote some measure of social displacement, some form of exile.

Most often, it is the *displacing* properties of mirrors, masks, and photographs that Mansfield attunes to—the viewpoints of outsiders, such as Mona Rutherford, who feels displaced rather than the viewpoints of insiders

¹⁶Although "All Serene!" was unfinished, there are many indications that Mona Rutherford's husband's deceptive looks are intended to forecast deceptive behavior on his part. (See Chapter One, n23.)

¹⁷Notorious for her own masks, Mansfield was nonetheless critical of others with contrived personas. "It is so tiring, isn't it, never to leave the Masked Ball—never—never," she once commented to Murry (*Letters I* [1919], 234).

(the community) who do the displacing. The incongruity between photographs, which characters often see as unreal, artificial, and impenetrable, and the reality they are intended to represent Mansfield renders satirically in "At the Bay," when Mrs. Stubbs shows Alice a photograph of her late husband who wears "a dead white rose in the button-hole of his coat" which reminds Alice of "a curl of cold mutton fat." An inscription below in garish lettering reads, "Be not afraid, it is I," a sentiment which, for all of its absurdity, contains an ounce of profundity in that it presupposes the displacing effects of artificial images (231). When Josephine, in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," contemplates a photograph of her dead mother which, badly faded, suggests to her how little is left of her mother, she concludes that "[a]s soon as a person was dead, their photograph died too," intimating that the past can no more be resurrected by a photograph than the present can be immortalized by one (283). The infidelity of a photograph assumes more disturbing proportions in "A Birthday" when Andreas Binzer, his wife upstairs in childbirth, suffers his own version of anguish while studying a photograph of her in which she (symbolically) is holding "a sheaf of artificial poppies and corn." At first admiring the portrait—in fact so moved by his wife's delicateness and his pride that he kisses the photograph—he then grows increasingly distant from it, questioning its fidelity until it appears completely foreign to him, like a sinister mask concealing something: "In the half-light of the drawing-room the smile seemed to deepen in Anna's portrait, and to become secret, even cruel" (742). His growing irritability proceeds from his inability to match the strangeness of the image with his conception of his wife:

The picture got on his nerves; he held it in different lights, looked at it from a distance, sideways, spent, it seemed to Andreas afterwards, a

whole lifetime trying to fit it in. The more he played with it the deeper grew his dislike of it. Thrice he carried it over to the fire-place and decided to chuck it behind the Japanese umbrella in the grate. (742-3)

His estrangement mirrors the ex-centric view of the exile who has crossed the boundary from the familiar to the unknown and whose prior points of reference have become useless.

Susan Hardy Aiken identifies in the writing of Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen), another exile, a peculiar disconnectedness from objects and a dreamlike quality which she characterizes as a "poetics of displacement" (115). The unreal, foreign, and masking properties that Mansfield's characters perceive in their surroundings—the notable absence of a home base which could also be called a "poetics of displacement"—shape their attitudes toward language as well. For example, Mansfield frequently represents the disparity between characters' subjective experience and objective expression, between world and word. Words fail Bertha Young, in "Bliss," when she attempts to convey to her husband her recent flush of effervescent joy. Frustrated by what she sees as the shortcomings of language, she replies only "[n]othing" when he asks her what she wants to say, while "thinking how much more than idiotic civilization was" (95). Verbal communication becomes similarly truncated between Josephine and Constantia in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" when they try to express their hopes for self-renewal following their father's death. Josephine's feeble "Don't you think perhaps—" is seconded by Constantia's "I was wondering if now—" before they forget what it is they want to say (284).

Here again, characters' inarticulateness or how they become silenced signals their vulnerability—how they feel set apart and excluded by social barriers, overpowered by more dominant cultural forces. Young Kezia's

stuttering, in "The Little Girl," which occurs only in the presence of her father whom she sees as critical, physically overshadowing, and intimidating—an authority figure she feels she cannot please—clearly suggests that he suppresses her voice (67). So too, the desperate and attenuated voice of the aging male café singer in "Honeymoon" bends in submission before the youthful audience who make no allowances for him but, rather, see him bluntly as ineffectual and laughable:

Nothing was heard except a thin, faint voice, the memory of a voice singing something in Spanish. It wavered, beat on, touched the high notes, fell again, seemed to implore, to entreat, to beg for something, and then the tune changed, and it was resigned, it bowed down, it knew it was denied. (397)

Silence is yet another means through which Mansfield conveys characters' voicelessness caused by their ex-centric, or insecure, social placement relative to an imagined centre. Julia van Gunsteren, commenting on the loaded silences in Mansfield's stories, calls attention to characters' awkwardness with conventional dialogue—the misunderstanding and neurotic anticipating which impede conversations and produce inarticulateness. She also notes a contrasted form of communication, or articulation, in the stories that commonly occurs outside language:¹⁸

There are silences during which something might have been said, but wasn't. Something might have been said *if* something had been said. There are soundless reflections and privileged moments, seconds and

¹⁸ William New similarly draws our attention to how the women in "At the Bay" "discover in silence an alternative form of expression" (109).

minutes of silent waiting, but also signs and impressions that communicate more than words ever could. (26)

Mansfield suggests through these silences that the potential rewards of language are diminished when set against a more privileged type of awareness; here, extralinguistic signs are credited with more expression than human discourse, and extralinguistic perception and root intuition are credited with more insight. Here also a nature/artifice duality is brought into play. But when inanimate objects speak in the stories, which they often do, they accentuate human silences and reinforce the isolation characters feel. Baby owls that cry "more pork"—talking trains, bushes, pianos, hammers, the sea—come across as articulate voices of the self-possessed enveloping the more tentative voices of the dispossessed.

In other instances in the stories, language functions more overtly as a social weapon, underscoring its exiling potential. A social tool that facilitates closeness and community, language, Mansfield shows, has an opposite effect when it is used to exclude by being withheld or ridiculed in others. In "The Little Governess," for instance, the hotel waiter's coldness toward the governess reaffirms her status as an outsider. Having felt condescended to by her, he deliberately denies her any helpful information when she asks after the woman who had come to fetch her: "' . . . ?' 'Pardon, Fräulein? Ach, no, Fräulein. The manager could tell her nothing—nothing' . . . 'How should I know?' . . . 'That's it! that's it!' he thought. 'That will show her'" (189). (Her textual voice being 'silenced' by ellipses also reinforces her exclusion.) Or when William visits his wife and children, in "Marriage à la Mode," he is unable to insert a word edgewise into the continuous wall of chatter that proceeds from Isabel and her

highly-affected artistic friends who, in his absence, have become installations in his home. Effectively eclipsed by their demanding presence which deprives him any opportunity to express his pent-up affection to Isabel, he is reduced to silence when he finally secures a moment alone with her: "They walked together silently. William felt there was nothing to say now" (317). The link between his vulnerability and language is re-established after his departure, when Isabel, to entertain her friends, reads his love letter aloud in a parodying manner: "*My darling, precious Isabel. . . .God forbid, my darling, that I should be a drag on your happiness*" (319). His own words she de-contextualizes and abuses, turning his sincerity and intimacy into a weapon against him. (Mansfield's italicization of his words emphasizes how they have become stylized objects of ridicule.)

Language in the stories, too, frequently assumes the displacing properties of the mask. With pronounced self-reflexiveness in some cases, Mansfield's characters view language as inert and lifeless, as an impenetrable surface bereft of meaning. Such an attitude is epitomized by the 'married man' in "A Married Man's Story," who, when he asks rhetorically, "aren't those just the signs, the traces of my feelings? . . . Not the feelings themselves," alludes to the chasm separating signs from what they are intended to signify (423-4). Other times, the mocking quality of language imitates the mask in its displacement of characters. When parodic voices issue from inhuman objects in the stories, similar to the taunting reflections in mirrors that talk back to characters, Mansfield creates the impression that these characters see the entire external world as adversarial, its various components engaged conspiratorially. The young woman in the doctor's office in "This Flower," after having received a grim health prognosis, is left cold and unsatisfied both by the "odious"

ministrations of her doctor and her self-interested, albeit solicitous, husband who has been spared the truth at her request. Corresponding with her doctor's masking of her real condition and her own sense of unresolved anxiety, she reads into—or rather hears into—the barrel-organ music the curt quip "That's all I got to say, to say,/ That's all I got to say" (662).¹⁹

Besides characters' distrust of language for its artificiality, affectedness, and misrepresentations, there is a decidedly contrasted attitude toward language exhibited by both Mansfield and her characters, also linked to exile. As described in Chapter One, an important facet of Mansfield's exilic perspective involved the pleasure of exile more than its pain. This stance is reciprocated by characters' delight in the recuperative properties of language and also in its capacity to produce strangeness and artificiality. This attitude, in part, marks characters' desire to eschew conventional perspectives; seeing with the eyes of a foreigner allows one to more easily challenge cultural codes and entrenched beliefs. Edward Said comments on the inspiration that can attend exile, "While it perhaps seems peculiar to speak of the pleasures of exile, there are some positive things to be said for a few of its conditions. Seeing 'the entire world as a foreign land' makes possible originality of vision" ("Mind," 55). Mansfield's own unusual perspectives and unconventional treatment of language imparts a provocative freshness to her work, resulting in stylistic features that are no doubt what cause William Walsh to observe in her writing "a perception which

¹⁹ Evidence suggests that Mansfield fashioned the experiences of the female protagonist in "This Flower" largely on her own.

is quick, candid and exact; reaction which is open and uncommitted by a cargo of presupposition" (155).²⁰

Mansfield conveys her characters' indulgent delight in the rich, sensual, evocative properties of language in several ways. In "A Truthful Adventure" (probably the most literally autobiographical of her stories), the descriptive prose from a guide-book to Bruges transports Katherine to imaginary bliss; after sampling only a sentence, she is stirred to passionate reverie:

'The little town lies spread before the gaze of the eager traveller like a faded tapestry with the silver of its canals, made musical by the great chiming belfry. Life is long since asleep in Bruges; fantastic dreams alone breathe over tower and mediaeval house front, enchanting the eye, inspiring the soul and filling the mind with the great beauty of contemplation.'

. . . It sounded extremely comforting, and my tired heart, tucked away under a thousand and one grey city wrappings, woke and exulted within me. (529)

The dark lining to Katherine's silver cloud, to twist a metaphor, is that the city fails to satisfy her inflated expectations inspired by the guide-book; as she attempts the city's lauded attractions, one-by-one, "[w]ith the memory of the guide-book clinging about," she uncovers its more disappointing reality (533). The evocative properties of language are foregrounded in "An Indiscreet Journey" when an old woman on a train, noticeably moved by the letter she is reading, is pictured as slowly 'sipping' every sentence and looking out the window to savor it before "tasting" another (618-9). And throughout the

²⁰ One example of Mansfield's unconventional treatment of language is the way she frequently disrupts standard syntax (e.g., by placing verbs or adjectives before the nouns they modify).

stories, Mansfield frequently stresses the ability of language to tap subterranean channels of awareness, spark memories, or inspire pleasurable fantasies.

One particularly noteworthy and, like the examples above, bittersweet allusion to the emotive and sensory resonances of language occurs in "A Dill Pickle." The male character tells his former lover how his recollection of her voice speaking the names of three flowers stirs a memory of a dormant, compelling (semiotic?) language:

'Do you remember that first afternoon we spent together at Kew Gardens? You were so surprised because I didn't know the names of any flowers. I am still just as ignorant for all your telling me. But whenever it is very fine and warm, and I see some bright colours—it's awfully strange—I hear your voice saying: 'Geranium, marigold and verbena.' And I feel those three words are all I recall of some forgotten, heavenly language. (168)

The memory of a "forgotten, heavenly language" has obvious connections with the exile's projection of a lost, heavenly place. Mansfield herself used the metaphor of a hidden country to convey the possibilities of prose: "People have never really explored the lovely medium of prose. It is a hidden country still—I feel that so profoundly" (*CL II* [1919]: 343). Language to her in many ways represented a means of repatriation, a way of re-creating a lost past and forsaken history. Language allowed for 're-vision' which Adrienne Rich calls "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (518). It increasingly became the only means with which Mansfield could reconstruct what had been dismantled. Her equating a "hidden country" with a prose which could infiltrate darkened, mysterious realms accords with Paul Coates' observation that the exile is perpetually

searching beyond the visible present for traces of lost country: "To be obsessed with the invisible world below the visible one is to be an exile, seeking out the gaps in the present through which one's lost native country might seep" (136). Thus, when Mansfield addressed in her journal her dead brother—another loss—and said she wanted their "undiscovered country to leap into the eyes of the Old World," she proposed using a "*special prose*" to recapture the memory of New Zealand, a prose with wonderfully evocative properties: "all must be told with a sense of mystery, a radiance, an afterglow." In the same breath she writes of "trembling on the brink of poetry" (*Journal* [1916], 94). She later used similar terms to express her belief in language's recuperative power: "The english language is so damned difficult but its also damned rich and so clear and bright you can search the darkest places with it. Also its *heavenly* simple and true" (*CL II* [1918]: 96).

Starkly contrasted with these instances in the stories where language figures emotively—inspiring poignant feeling, re-awakening dormant desire, searching recessed alcoves of memory, recovering loss—are instances where characters also exploit the signifying power of language but with different motivations. Instead of using language for the purpose of reclamation and re-positioning, in these instances they engineer it for sheer novel effect, for entertainment, yet in a manner still indicative of exile. Their clever verbal constructions are not the products of penetrating insight but more often reveal shallowness or insensitivity. Their disconnectedness from memory and the past and determined *unwillingness* to see beyond the surface betokens their cultivated rootlessness, sometimes their desire to anesthetize feelings of separation and loss. Their perspectives, therefore, can be seen as un-grounded.

This attitude toward language is unmistakable in passages depicting foreigners who, upon encountering new surroundings, strive to describe them as touched with unfamiliar charm. To do so, they defamiliarize and displace events. In "Violet," the female narrator amuses herself by embellishing an ordinary street scene in a foreign city with peculiar accents: "On the stone benches nursemaids in white cloaks and stiff white caps chattered and wagged their heads like a company of cockatoos" (586). These characters foreshorten their gaze to only the visible surface and tease images into forced strangeness.

Though Mansfield had experienced the same motivation to estrange (writing in one of her letters, "one wants to feel a stranger for these things to have their charm"²¹), she also understood the problems that can occur when an appreciation of the present depends upon dressing it up as something different. One way she explicitly spells out the liability of self-exile is through characters' detached impressions of scenery through train windows, in which the ever-changing, motion-picture images of landscapes framed by window double as metaphors for the un-grounded, uncommitted, 'canvassing' view of the foreigner. The 'little governess', whose lack of discrimination abets her victimization, accordingly paints a fairytale impression of the view from her train window. Her simplistic artistry corresponds with her shallow grasp of the encroaching danger posed by her immediate circumstances:

A cold blue light filled the window panes. Now when she rubbed a place 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

²¹ *The Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, Ed. John Middleton Murry, (New York: Knopf, 1929), p. 408. (Quoted in Kaplan, p. 81.)

thread of a river. How pretty it was! How pretty and how different!
Even those pink clouds in the sky looked foreign. (182)

With almost willful naiveté, she suppresses her suspicions about the man sharing her train compartment, determined to see him—a classic 'wolf in sheep's clothing'—in similarly "pretty" terms: as a sweet, "fairy grandfather" who offers her strawberries, ice-cream, and a private tour of Munich, she rationalizes, out of paternal kindness (187). The asocial and apolitical implications of a 'remote perspective' are made clear in "An Indiscreet Journey" when the female narrator's child-like, lyrical impressions of a war-ravaged countryside, observed through a train window, belie reality to the extent that she wonders if there really is a war. Her desire to be entertained rather than to engage critically causes her to oversimplify the passing view and impose homogeneity on complex issues. Cemeteries appear cheerful; images of many soldiers contract into a single, emblematic, stylized soldier whose posture she further abridges, stereotypes, and displaces with comic inscription.²²

In still other ways we sense Mansfield's rejection of 'amusement park' language, particularly in her satirical treatment of characters' use of overly-dramatic language. The self-reflexiveness common to many of her characters at times elicits on their part a certain 'double-take' toward language which, in turn,

²² Most of Mansfield's stories about travelling reflect her own experiences; her impressions in her journals and letters of train travel exhibit the same detached perspectives as her characters', the same linguistic diversions away from unadorned reality. In her fiction too, she often toys with language in ways that separate sign and signified. And in many instances she deliberately draws attention to her own stage-managing techniques where language functions as, in Kenneth Burke's words, a "vast pageantry of social-verbal masques and costumes and guildlike mysteries" (362). For example, the cinematic quality in her stories—series of vivid impressions that melt—resembles the view of a traveller who surveys surroundings without ever touching down. Narrative focus alights briefly on impressions and sounds that are momentarily foregrounded with lyrical intonation but whose significance and connection to plot, never spelled out explicitly, remain tenuous and subliminal.

produces the highly refracted view that all the world's a stage; all the stage, a text. Mansfield draws attention to the performative aspects of language, for instance, when characters 'freeze-frame' aspects of their visual surroundings and title them as works of art. Beatrice, in "Poison," does this when she sets eyes on the table laid for two and announces, "'The Luncheon Table. Short story by—by—'" (675). Tagging experience with 'headline' captions as such effectively refracts, reduces, and displaces it into something artificial and commodified, and Mansfield accordingly portrays those who stage superficial impressions, manipulating language solely for provocative effect, as either shallow (e.g., the dinner guests in "Bliss"), insensitive (e.g., Isabel's house guests in "Marriage à la Mode"), or insincere (e.g., Beatrice).

Mansfield hints strongly in these sketches, moreover, at the impermanence and menacing falsity that attends life being lived as art and text. She frequently shows a desperate and pathetic side to characters such as Bertha in "Bliss" who manipulate language or stage events (e.g., costume, scenery, decor) to particular effects when their constructions hold precious significance only for themselves. Their preciousness, she intimates, comes with a certain knowledge, on some level, that all is arbitrary and could collapse at any moment, that they use artful creations to compensate for emptiness.

This interesting contrast, then, between how Mansfield portrays language as provocative and engaging on one hand and artificial and alienating on the other sets up a noticeable tension between what could be called surplus and deficit signification. These two extreme perspectives of language—as gateway to liberating expression or barrier to communication—reflect the contrary impulses of the exile who alternates between a desire for transformation and freedom from commitment and a need to make experience

more real and less alien. While surplus signification often effects some measure of displacement, deficit signification—the silences, silencing, inarticulability—usually reflects it.

Even Mansfield's and often her characters' mode of representation which continually strains toward simile and metaphor mirror these contrary impulses. The numerous appearances alone in her stories of the words "seemed," "as if," and "as though" are intended to expose the process of revision—of searching for analogy, of adding something left unsaid. This imparts a quality to Mansfield's stories similar to what Michael Seidel refers to in the work of exiled writer Vladimir Nabokov as the exile's "unending compulsion to supplement" (177).²³ In some cases in Mansfield's stories, enhancement or transformation of the commonplace seems to be the motivation:

even the bath tap *seemed* to gush stormy applause ("Mr Reginald Peacock's Day," 145);

The stove was still alight and the lid of the kettle had just begun to lift, cautiously, stealthily, *as though* there was someone who wanted a peep and pop back again. ("Second Violin," 496, my emphasis)

The initial descriptions here are displaced when re-imaged as something new and unlikely. Thus, a kind of double signification, or surplus signification, occurs. Re-stating something in different terms is also a way of refusing any absolute value by acknowledging more than one possible interpretation, which again reflects a contrapuntal awareness.

²³ Paul Coates' remark that "the adjectival style is the style of the exile" (72), although not pointedly exemplified of Mansfield's writing, corroborates Seidel's observation that the writing of exiles often exhibits stylistic features of 'supplementation'.

In contrast to these examples of supplemetation are examples where compensation seems more the motivation, characters' impulse to revise driven more by alienation (evident in their more uneasy projections):

it *seemed* to her there was presence far out there; someone very desolate and longing watched them pass and cried *as if* to stop them—but cried to her alone ("Six Years After," 458);

it *seemed* to her that the hands—the minute hand especially—knew she was watching them and held back. ("Such a Sweet Old Lady," 485, my emphasis)

In these cases, characters struggle to shape certainty from uncertainty, to make meaning from what seems incomprehensible. The impression imparted is one of deficit signification—of the inadequacy of words to retell experience.

Not always is the stylistic evidence of supplemetation and compensation in Mansfield's fiction so clearly separable. As witnessed with her own exilic viewpoints, contradictory impulses often operate in tandem. Her impulse to improve upon New Zealand and make her "undiscovered country to leap into the eyes of the Old World" was engendered not only from a desire to transform what seemed drab and pedestrian into something exciting and universal that could transcend borders but also from a sense of cultural marginality and colonial inferiority. Thus, her faith in the renovative power of language issued from feelings of difference and superiority, while her perception of the inadequacy of representation—the need for re-vision—came, in part, from a sense of marginality, inferiority, and loss. Her inability to fully escape these conflicting impulses helps explain the surfeit of extraterritorial and ex-centric perspectives in her fiction.

The ways Mansfield and her characters handle language, moreover, pose some inherent contradictions about cultural ambiguity and multiple inscription. Though she knew that dramatizing objects with artful allusion could perform an attack on aesthetic stasis and allow for renewal, it could also enact displacement by making the environment unreal. Surface constructions, though seductive, could be double-edged if viewed as signs devoid of referents, effaced and marooned like the exile.

Chapter 3

'Subjects without Selves'

A French pimp well-acquainted with Paris street life and most comfortable in a greasy little café, the narrator Raoul Duquette in "Je ne parle pas français" is extroverted, opportunistic, vain, promiscuous and of ambiguous sexual orientation, undomestic, and perpetually in debt—in short, a calculating charmer who craves affection and continual affirmation of his self-worth. By comparison, the narrator in "A Married Man's Story" is English, introverted and brooding, sedentary, cruelly indifferent, and settled domestically (with a wife, child, and house; hedged into his writing desk by books and surrounded, as he says, by "all the paraphernalia, in fact, of an extremely occupied man" [422]). And just as diametrically different as their outward appearances are their narratives of their personal histories:

My name is Raoul Duquette. I am twenty-six years old and a Parisian, a true Parisian. About my family—it really doesn't matter. I have no family; I don't want any. I never think about my childhood. I've forgotten it (66);

The Past—what is the Past? . . . Who am I, in fact, as I sit here at this table, but my own past? If I deny that, I am nothing. (433-4)

Whereas Raoul Duquette prefers to suppress his history—to bury it, as he says, "under a laundry basket"—the 'married man' chooses instead to linger obsessively and possessively over his history's disquieting pages.

But despite their substantively different temperaments and circumstances, these two narrators are surprisingly alike. Both are noticeably unsettled about their histories. In one narrator's case this is made apparent by his preoccupation with the past, in the other's, with his disinheritance of it. What either directly or indirectly emerges from their narratives is that they both have been traumatized in childhood in ways that have precipitated feelings of abandonment and orphanhood.¹ And resulting from their internal sense of discontinuity is a serious breakdown of the narrative of the 'self'; their repeated efforts to define themselves and their absorption with identity betray their fear of effacement.

Two of Katherine Mansfield's darkest, most disturbing, and somewhat neglected stories, "Je ne parle pas français" and "A Married Man's Story" are particularly penetrating studies on the psychology of exile. Like the writing examined in Chapter One, these stories do not depict literal instances of physical translocation but, rather, investigate the psychic states that serve to define exile. Although Mansfield might have based the characters of Raoul Duquette and the 'married man' in line and form on Francis Carco and John Middleton Murry respectively, there is ample evidence to indicate that she drew substantively from her own experience to complete their portraits.² Many

¹ Grinberg and Grinberg note that exiles and adopted persons share several of the same identity problems, if problems occur, and entertain similar fantasies as well. Common to those with either an adopted country or adoptive parents is their knowledge of a breach with the past and of their inability to return. In addition, they often assign persecutory qualities to lost objects (such as parents or country) or to replacement objects. Likewise, those in both groups are subject to feeling plagued by a sense of involuntary rupture to their internal narrative of continuity and, as a consequence, often resist the need to surrender to a new identity (200-2).

In a similar vein, Edward Said holds that "[e]xiles are always eccentrics who *feel* their difference (even as they frequently exploit it) as a kind of orphanage" ("Mind," 53).

² Although most critical opinion proposes that Mansfield modelled Duquette on Francis Carco, Mansfield's comments to Murry on the origins of "Je ne parle pas français" do

aspects of her characterizations echo the complex reactions to her own exile that she chronicled in her journals and letters (some of which will be discussed). That she repeatedly chose to represent rootlessness and did so with such remarkable insight also attests to the autobiographical hues in these two portraits.

While almost all of Mansfield's stories render the effects of exile in some way, "Je ne parle pas français" and "A Married Man's Story" offer closer and more sustained views of the types of identity conflicts that promote an exilic perspective. To begin with, each story includes a first-person narrator whose exclusive objective is to provide a candid and confessional narrative, or auto-commentary, on himself. Mansfield's framing device as such creates a convenient aperture through which we can view how each of these characters constructs his identity, how he imagines himself within a social context, and how he establishes himself in relation to his audience. This aperture is widened by the fact that both narrators are authors who write their narratives. In both cases, they fix repeatedly upon the process of composition itself and, in so doing, betray their struggles with self-construction, with voice, and ultimately

not entirely corroborate this theory. Her vagueness to Murry about the story's genesis lends credibility to a different version—that her own experiences were a primary source for the story:

The subject I mean lui qui parle is of course taken from—Carco & Gertler & God knows who. It has been more or less on my mind ever since I first felt strongly about the french. . . . I read the fair copy just now and couldn't think where the devil I had got the bloody thing from—I cant even now. Its a mystery. Theres so much less taken from life than anybody would credit. The african laundress I had a bone of—but only a bone—Dick Harmon of course is partly is [here the sentence tails off; she refrained from writing "you"]. (*CL II* [1918]: 56)

Concerning Mansfield's disparaging remark about the French, it is conceivable that, in making the protagonists in these stories males and in making one of them French, she was displacing qualities in herself that she didn't like on to what she viewed as 'other' in order to criticize them more freely.

with authority. As well, these two stories function almost solely as critiques of some of the most negative psychological effects of exile, while sidestepping any of its enriching potential. Thus, the overall clarity of Mansfield's purpose here enables a more straightforward reading than does the more intentional ambiguity in many of her other stories.³

Moreover, these stories vividly outline an important and fundamental link between history and exile which is interpersonal, or social, *social* because personal history and exile are similarly narratives of oneself in relation to place, to objects, and foremost, in relation to others. One's narrative of interpersonal 'relations' forms the basis of one's identity and, ultimately, of one's sense of belonging or not belonging. The inverse corollary of narratives of exile, it follows, are narratives of nationalism, which are predicated on what Edward Said refers to as a common "history selectively strung together in a narrative form" ("Reflections," 162) and Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community" (6-7).⁴ As with narratives of nationalism, 'selection' and 'imagination' play equally vital roles in the perception of exile as well.

³ Mansfield made clear her intentions to portray Raoul Duquette unambiguously in "Je ne parle pas français" in a letter she wrote to Murry in 1920. Murry was acting as liaison between her and the publisher of the story who demanded cuts to which she vehemently objected on the grounds that she didn't want the sharpness of Duquette's portrait—his malignant cynicism and spiritual malaise—to be obscured. Livid, she wrote, "No, I certainly wouldn't agree to the excisions if there were 500000000 copies in existence. . . . Shall I pick the eyes out of the story for £40. . . . The *outline* would be all blurred. It must have those sharp lines. The Times didn't object" (*CL III*: 273). It is interesting that even now, 76 years later, most editions of this story (and others) remain the censored version.

On the completion of "Je ne parle pas français" in 1918, Mansfield felt she had broken new ground by going further into her subject than she had previously, commenting, "I stand or fall by it. Its as far as I can get at present and I have gone for it, bitten deeper & deeper & deeper than ever I have before" (*CL II* [1918]: 56).

⁴ Benedict Anderson cites practices besides narrative which have been used to inculcate a sense of imagined nationhood, including institutions, visual means (e.g., art, flags, insignias, emblems), and music (e.g., national anthems).

Obsessively aware of the unavoidable agency involved in self-construction, the two narrators in question allot disproportionate attention to arbitrariness and bias in their self-portraits. Their experiences of discontinuity have sharpened their awareness of the provisional nature of personal identity (and history), of its being a fluid process that one continually reshapes through selection and emphasis and, at the same time, that one composes from a palette limited to the culturally-defined narratives at one's disposal. Both narrators' hypersensitivity to the contingent nature of identity, consequently, militates against their forming any deep attachments with others and connections to place but, instead, fosters rootlessness and makes them view their lives as performances. As a result, both are socially duplicitous, concealing their 'secret' thoughts and vulnerability, adopting masks, pretending, and deceiving. Emotionally, they are both shells—suffering from paralysis of the heart.

Their lack of 'author'ity is self-fulfilling. Each character grasps for significance by constructing the 'self' in narrative form, after which, in a non-committal, abortive gesture, he proceeds to rescue himself from his construction, establishing an endless cycle of self-validation and invalidation.

Owing to the 'married man's' history (his 'story') of an unhappy and traumatic childhood (involving the mysterious death of his devoted mother whom he suspects his overshadowing chemist father has poisoned in order to further his clandestine love interests), he is attracted to cultural texts that romanticize abandonment and adoption:

You know those stories of little children who are suckled by wolves and accepted by the tribe, and how for ever after they move freely among their fleet, grey brothers? Something like that has happened to me.
(428)

In an imaginative act of self-construction, he temporarily supplants his own sordid history fraught with scenarios of abandonment with a more appealing text where "the tribe," the "fleet," the "grey brothers" evoke the imagined family and community he feels cheated of. But no sooner than he articulates this fantasy, he deconstructs it, remarking on its artificiality:

But wait! That about the wolves won't do. Curious! Before I wrote it down, while it was still in my head, I was delighted with it. It seemed to express, and more, to suggest, just what I wanted to say. But written, I can smell the falseness immediately . . . "Fleet." A word I never use. When I wrote "wolves" it skimmed across my mind like a shadow and I couldn't resist it. Tell me! Tell me! Why is it so difficult to write simply—and not simply only but *sotto voce*, if you know what I mean? That is how I long to write. No fine effects—no bravura. But just the plain truth, as only a liar can tell it. (428)

By adjusting his focus, first from the cultural texts that he appropriates in order to doctor his identity ("those stories") to the self-conscious act of writing, then to actual words—the linguistic building blocks of composition—he progressively destroys whatever illusions of cohesiveness and comfort were offered by the once-alluring and nourishing 'suckled-by-wolves' text and rivets his attention on the arbitrariness of self-construction. He undercuts any pleasure taken by his 'possession' of the word "wolves" (implied in his inability to "resist" it) by proposing the difficulty in writing "sotto voce," by intimating the impossibility of an 'essential' voice deafened to cultural noise and dialogical rumblings. In a final *coup de grâce*—"the plain truth, as only a liar can tell it"—he penultimately collapses all narratives, his own included, by cynically

questioning the truth value of all texts, emphasizing instead the deceptive nature of stories and the implicit agency, hence bias, of the storyteller.

His preoccupation with composition and 'story' together with his unreliability as a narrator serve to emphasize what he sees as the fictive quality of narratives—a concept reinforced by the title "A Married Man's *Story*." Having been deceived by stories in the past, he lacks faith in them. Nothing holds for him.

He continues over the course of his narrative to draw attention to the unreliability of the "truth" as he perceives it, to his unreliability as a narrator, and to the questionable veracity of his memory. After recounting the details of a bedside visit from his dying mother who told him she had been poisoned by his father, he wonders,

Did that visit happen? Was it a dream? Why did she come to tell me? Or why, if she came, did she go away so quickly? And her expression—so joyous under the frightened look—was that real? (435).⁵

He frustrates his attempts to make meaning and derive identity through narrative by challenging the epistemic means by which knowledge and therefore narrative 'truth' is produced.

⁵ There are many intriguing resonances between "A Married Man's Story" and *Hamlet*. The image of the 'married man's' mother is portrayed almost as an apparition like the ghost of Hamlet's (similarly poisoned) father, which establishes unreliability on the part of both protagonists. Their unreliability poses the possibility that the images they remember of victimized parents (who both, via indirect pleas, disclose the identity of their killers) are the products of obsessed and disturbed imaginations. Both protagonists feel paralyzed as a result of their existential crisis of uncertainty; both feel guilty, culpable by default for doing nothing to prevent or avenge the murders of their parents. Emotionally crippled by their pasts and overly introspective, both are unable to return affection, their indifference toward the women closest to them (Ophelia; the 'married man's' wife) bordering on cruelty. At the heart of both men's festering dilemmas are identities fragmented by rival versions of truth and entitlement.

Obviously fascinated with these character qualities, Mansfield wrote in her journal, "But I could write a thousand pages about Hamlets" ([1921], 275).

But what more profoundly undermines his identity than his propensity to destabilize his own narrative are the worried and lacklustre narrative threads of his past that define him. Inasmuch as he would prefer to be rid of them, he nonetheless realizes they have formed the fabric of his identity. Without them, he says, he is "nothing." In describing the neglect he suffered as a child, he likens himself to a pale plant starved for light, placed in a cupboard and forgotten, exiled from quintessential life-giving forces such as other humans. His effaced, "withered bud" identity, he implies, was deformed by the absence of attention, affirmation, and self-worth (430). As a child he felt silenced like the dead bird that his schoolmates hid in his pocket, thinking of himself as "a silent voice inside a little cage" (433). Fittingly, the 'married man' never discloses his name but, in keeping with his pattern of self-effacement, he recalls how his jeering schoolmates who hated him nicknamed him "Gregory Powder"—another allusion to his unstable identity. His summation of the importance of his past to his identity is therefore doubly ironic: "Who am I, in fact, as I sit here at this table, but my own past? If I deny that, I am nothing." It is precisely his history that has prevented him from establishing his 'somethingness'. And, in a manner, he does "deny" his past—by altering, escaping, invalidating, and questioning it.

His feelings of unredressed loss from being expatriated from an idyllic, sunlit childhood have seriously handicapped his ability to engage socially in the present. Alienation, hostility, and disorientation—all 'disorders' of exile—effectively govern his perception. He owns that he has grown increasingly estranged from his wife and insensitive to her needs, describing his dealings with her as one long insufferable performance in which he avoids intimacy by

hiding behind a mask of indifference (428).⁶ He likewise feels no affection for his infant son, whom he refers to dispassionately as his wife's child.

Insufficiently in possession of himself, he dispossesses his son:

[I]n this light, his soft arms and legs waving, he is extraordinarily like a young crab. A queer thing is I can't connect him with my wife and myself—I've never accepted him as ours. Each time when I come into the hall and see the perambulator I catch myself thinking: 'H'm, someone has brought a baby!' (424)

His inability to truly engage in the present maligns his perception, causing him to view his surroundings as unreal; he sees his child in Kafkaesque embodiment as alien. His disinheritance of his son ultimately affirms his own lack of affirmation and placement, the self-inflicted break to his lineage effectively and masochistically ensuring his own discontinuity.

The 'married man', however, cannot sustain his self-negation because the pain he suffers from seeing himself as an outsider is too intense—a point continually stressed in his narrative. Unable to progress beyond his childhood thirst for validation and community, he imagines an alternative kind of community in order to cope. He recalls the cataclysmic yet epiphanic moment in his life when, while experiencing an anguishing moment of hopelessness at the prospect of being terminally exiled from the comradeship and affection of humans, he was overcome with the sensation that the whole room had come alive for him and that he suddenly felt a profound and liberating kinship with everything in it. He revisits the 'wolf' narrative he had formerly discredited,

⁶ D. Müller-Hegemann, in his paper "Human Uprooting," cites "lack of emotional expression" as one of the symptoms of psychic morbidity exhibited by maladjusted migrants, a behavioral trait common to both the 'married man' and Raoul Duquette (109).

reaching once again for the solace offered by the illusion of "silent brothers" whose trustworthiness to him lies in their muteness which is "beyond words" and therefore beyond human deception:

The barriers were down. I had been all my life a little outcast; but until that moment no one had 'accepted' me; I had lain in the cupboard—or the cave forlorn. But now I was taken, I was accepted, claimed. I did not consciously turn away from the world of human beings; I had never known it; but I from that night did beyond words consciously turn towards my silent brothers. (437)⁷

His delusion of centredness, ironically, displaces him further from the community he needs to repair his identity. By subverting his 'story' (history), he has become dehumanized like the wolves, depersonalized and socially silent.⁸ The term "A Married Man" in the title is thus shot through with irony because, by defining him in terms of his intersubjective and culturally

⁷ The 'married man's' retreat from society into solitude and his preference for the comforting thought of his imaginary "grey brothers" over humans sounds surprisingly like a journal entry of Mansfield's:

I know not the world . . . I live only, only in my imagination. All my *feelings* are there and my *desires* and my ambitions. It is not that I wish so much to renounce the world—it has gone. I have left it—one little step—I did not even look or know—and now where I am in my secret unseen place I shall abide. (*Journal* [1912], 48)

⁸ The 'married man's' style of narration confirms his social reticence. Although he is writing (presumably in a diary), he addresses an audience, using the second-person 'you', which reveals his manner of interacting socially. He opens his story guardedly, his first sentences short and expressionless—blank statements of fact—as if he has not yet established trust in his imagined listener: "It is evening. Supper is over. We have left the small, cold dining-room, we have come back to the sitting-room where there is a fire. All is as usual" (422). His sentences become progressively longer and more confiding as he uncovers layer by layer psychological layer of his past, their tempo keyed to his earnestness to be understood. The textual changes mirror his transformation from a stiff to relaxed state following his wife's departure to bed: "She is gone; she will not come back again to-night. It is not only I who recognise that—the room changes too. It relaxes, like an old actor. Slowly the mask is rubbed off" (428).

sanctioned relation to his wife, it 'places' him in a social context.⁹ "The world forgetting, by the world forgot"—an epigrammatic phrase Mansfield used more than once in her stories—aptly defines the compounding effects of exile.¹⁰ In the 'married man's' case, his crisis of discontinuity becomes self-fulfilling: exile begets self-exile which, in turn, begets exile.

Raoul Duquette deals with past trauma differently. He believes that in severing himself from his past he has survived it, and in order to prove his theory, he actively cultivates a sense of freedom and revels in being detached and socially adaptable. Indeed, his aspiration to be an utterly self-fashioned 'modern' writer is reflected in a philosophy founded on the very precepts of disconnectedness and discontinuity:

I have made it a rule of my life never to regret and never to look back. Regret is an appalling waste of energy, and no one who intends to be a writer can afford to indulge in it. You can't get it into shape; you can't build on it; it's only good for wallowing in. Looking back, of course, is equally fatal to Art. It's keeping yourself poor. Art can't and won't stand poverty. (65)

Whereas the 'married man', it could be said, has too much history because he is immobilized by it, Raoul Duquette likes to travel light. Accordingly, his

⁹ The title "A Married Man's Story" is open to other interesting connotations as well. It is also used ironically in that the 'married man' is not committed whatsoever to his marriage. However, because the 'married man' views his marriage as suffocating and equates it with entrapment, the term 'married' also allies negatively in the story with loss of identity and deadening compromise.

While some of the titles of Mansfield's stories, such as "Bliss," "All Serene!" and "An Ideal Family," are used ironically because they name emotions that in the stories involute into their opposites, other titles explicitly capture thematic content of the stories, such as "The Stranger," "The Man Without a Temperament," and "The Escape."

¹⁰ Mansfield uses this expression in "Taking the Veil" (410) and "Poison" (678).

narrative is lighter and less brooding than the 'married man's' and is kept aloft, ironically, by an edge of undercutting satire. Duquette too hides behind a mask, but one of jaded cynicism rather than indifference concealing depression. Unlike the 'married man', who is engulfed in misery to the point that he avoids humans, Duquette, instead, seeks the company of others because he relishes attention and enjoys observing human drama. But he is similarly incapable of forming any deep connections with others. In his case, however, it is because he makes a virtue of impermanence.

But his persona of disaffectedness is transparent almost from the start of his narrative. His social duplicity is matched by a schizoid, double-voiced, narrative in which he pathologically betrays that in reality he is irreparably wounded by his childhood past and also noticeably distraught by recently frustrated desires. His exiled history seeps through, for example, when he recounts what he calls the "one memory that stands out" for him in which, at around age ten, he was seduced by an African laundress who had bribed him with sugared cakes and had swung him in a laundry basket (66). Although he doesn't frame this past event in abusive terms, it can easily be inferred from some of his 'teiling', if offhand, remarks that he too, like the 'married man', feels robbed of a normal childhood. For example, he makes a point of disclosing that the incident was "significant" in defining him (leaving us to infer how), and he also remarks flippantly that, from that afternoon onwards, his entire childhood had been "kissed away." (The sexual encounters continued.) That he suffers loss from a ruptured past is also borne out in his fantasies of a repatriated lost Edenic childhood in which he imagines himself and the woman Mouse as innocent childhood friends who enjoy an unselfish ("All the wild strawberries are for you Mouse. I won't touch one"), non-sexual, non-exploitive intimacy in

a "little house on the edge of the sea, somewhere far, far away"—that is, somewhere removed from corruption (90-1).¹¹

His hunger for intimacy complicates his rule of never regretting and causes vulnerable roots to occasionally put down despite his best efforts to lop them. He betrays his underlying desires as he recounts his meeting and instantaneous infatuation with the English writer Dick Harmon. He then traces his captivation with Mouse, Harmon's lover, whose sincerity, innocence, and vulnerability had compelled him, he says, to break his rule to never regret. Both relationships serve as unhappy reminders of his own vulnerability because both, in different ways, had enacted his rejection and abandonment. His disappointment that each of these relationships ended without coming to any fruition he finds difficult to suppress, despite his contrary claims. In fact, his entire narrative, disorganized and non-linear as it is, revolves around his recollection of them.

One of the ways Duquette anesthetizes himself from suffering is by dissociation. He displaces his pain onto another 'self' concocted (rather comically) as a fox-terrier who restlessly and relentlessly searches for the owner from which it has been exiled. Dividing himself as such into disparately embodied 'selves' gives birth to a fractured, multi-layered narrative that stymies any resolution between his conflicting impulses yet allows for their distinctive expression. The distinctiveness of the separate 'selves', appropriately enough, grows hazy at times, underscoring the point that his identity and the fox-terrier's are ultimately entwined.

¹¹ Mansfield's idea for "little house on the edge of the sea, somewhere far, far away" appears to be fashioned on nostalgic memories of the seaside New Zealand settings of her childhood, in Wellington and Day's Bay.

His internal split is demarcated most sharply when he suffers most. For example, he recalls being struck by an avalanche of agony upon discovering the phrase "je ne parle pas français" written on a café blotter. He later discloses that the phrase had reminded him of Mouse, who had twice spoken it to him, and of Dick Harmon, thereby opening a chapter from his past that he preferred shut. He felt rejected when Mouse had spoken the words to him because he suspected that she had used a negligible language barrier as subterfuge to distance herself from him. "*Je ne parle pas français*," he later writes, "[t]hat was her swan song for me" (90). Downplaying his regret, he now trivializes the powerful impact the phrase had on him earlier by dismissing it as a "stupid, stale little phrase" (64). He continues ruthlessly along this trajectory of denial by mounting a diatribe on the importance of forgetting:

I've no patience with people who can't let go of things, who will follow after and cry out. When a thing's gone, it's gone. It's over and done with. Let it go then! Ignore it, and comfort yourself, if you do want comforting, with the thought that you never do recover the same thing that you lose. (65)

He pictures his disowned and disembodied "other self," lost and needy, caught in the very acts that he has just attacked: remembering, regretting, and trying to recover something lost:

Je ne parle pas français. Je ne parle pas français. All the while I wrote that last page my other self has been chasing up and down out in the dark there. It left me just when I began to analyse my grand moment, dashed off distracted, like a lost dog who thinks at last, at last, he hears the familiar step again.

'Mouse! Mouse! Where are you? Are you near? Is that you leaning from the high window and stretching out your arms for the wings

of the shutters? Are you this soft bundle moving towards me through the feathery snow? Are you this little girl pressing through the swing-doors of the restaurant? Is that your dark shadow bending forward in the cab? Where are you? Which way must I turn? Which way shall I run? And every moment I stand here hesitating you are further away again. Mouse! Mouse!' (65)

Having finally acknowledged the 'pathetic' side of his nature—his more human and emotional one—aptly figured as a faithful fox-terrier who is "lost" "in the dark" and who searches for the "familiar," he irritably attempts to master the 'dog within':

Now the poor dog has come back into the café, his tail between his legs, quite exhausted.

'It was a . . . false . . . alarm. She's nowhere . . . to . . . be seen.'
'Lie down, then! Lie down! Lie down!' (66)

His inability to completely silence his (fox-terrier) need to redress a terminal loss results in a clearly fractured identity.

Despite Duquette's occasional mention of his cumbersome emotions, Mansfield gives us a narrator who is cunningly successful at mastering the 'dog within' and in remaining adrift. Duquette keeps commitment and vulnerability at bay by abandoning Mouse before she has a chance to abandon him.

(Abandonment, closely related to exile, is a central motif in the story.)

Callousness and cynicism have become so ingrained that he is incapable of compassion and of expressing genuine emotion with others. Upon claiming to have been moved to "real" tears after confiding his "submerged life" to Dick Harmon, he indirectly reveals that it has been a calculated performance: "I saw them [the tears] glittering on my long silky lashes—so charming" (72). His

lack of faith in others has rendered him spiritually blind and cynically inclined to see people as objects:

I don't believe in the human soul. I never have. 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, or squeezed fatter than ever, until finally the Ultimate Porter swings them on to the Ultimate Train and away they rattle. (60)

His brutal reduction of humans to soul-less, inanimate, empty objects who are acted upon violently—who are "packed," "started," "thrown," "tossed," "dumped," "lost," "found," "emptied," "squeezed," and 'swung' by outside forces—reflects a history of victimization in which he was cut from nurturing roots.¹² Capitalizing, in a sense, on his victimization, his response to having been sexually exploited in the past is to use his sexual power as a commodity for exploiting others.

To make her purpose clear, Mansfield strategically juxtaposes Duquette's lack of commitment with Mouse's strong feelings for Dick Harmon and Harmon's ties to his mother (to his past), ties that bind Harmon with obligation and guilt to the (dysfunctional) extent that he deserts Mouse. (Harmon, who is simultaneously pulled in two directions—literally, to Paris and London—by two competing forces, reacts to the strain of exile by retreating to his 'mother' country, whereas Mouse, to save face, feels she cannot return home, making her

¹² Duquette's view of people as insignificant, empty shells with no authority over their destiny but bound to serve others meshes closely both with Mansfield's cynical view of herself as the "small clerk of some hotel without a proprietor, who . . . [must] enter the names and hand the keys to the wilful guests" and also with the 'married man's': "we are—little creatures, peering out of the sentry-box at the gate, ogling through our glass case at the entry, wan little servants, who never can say for certain, even, if the master is out or in" (427).

exile more complete and regretful.)¹³ So desensitized is Duquette to interpersonal passion that he can respond with only perplexed indifference to Mouse's remorse at Harmon's leaving her. "She wept so strangely," he comments dispassionately, grief being foreign to him (88). He later comments with equal amazement,

Why, they were suffering . . . those two . . . really suffering. I have seen two people suffer as I don't suppose I ever shall again. (90)

Although the heightened melodrama and pathos with which Duquette invests his description of Mouse's and Harmon's torment over their losses make their portraits less than sympathetic, their capacity for passion nonetheless attests to their humanity and, in so doing, emphasizes Duquette's indifferent nature.

Their demonstrative grief touches no heartstrings in Duquette. He regards their

¹³ Furthering the idea that Harmon is anchored elsewhere, Mansfield has Duquette compare Harmon to a sailor who is poised to return to his ship at any moment.

To Murry's comment that Raoul Duquette is "conscious of having no roots. He sees a person like Dick who has roots and he realises the difference. But what he hasn't got, he doesn't know," Mansfield replied,

It struck me then and the sound of it has gone on echoing in me. It is really the one thing I ask of people and absolutely the one thing I cannot do without. I feel so immensely conscious of my own roots. (*CL II* [1918]: 103; Murry's letter on 104, n1)

The apparent contradiction in Mansfield's assertion of the strength of her own roots and her expressions of rootlessness can be explained by her latent rekindling of a neglected interest in New Zealand. As the possibilities of her return to New Zealand grew increasingly remote, her attachment to it ran deeper. After her brother Leslie's death in 1915, she wrote of wanting their "undiscovered country to leap into the eyes of the Old World" (*Journal* [1916], 94). And by the last year of her life, when physical weakness made returning to New Zealand out of the question, she longed to return more than ever:

The more I see of life the more certain I feel that it's the people who live remote from cities who inherit the earth. London, for instance, 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. And another thing is the longer I live the more I turn to New Zealand. I thank God I was born in New Zealand. A young country is a real heritage, though it takes one time to recognize it. But New Zealand is in my very bones. What wouldn't I give to have a look at it! (*Letters and Journals* [1922], 260)

suffering as a spectacle both entertaining and repellent. Because he has resolved to shield himself from emotional injury, their vulnerability merely inflames his impatience and further justifies his affected disaffectedness and his view of the futility of regret. When Mouse confides in him that she suspected Harmon would leave her—

'I knew all along, of course . . . From the very moment that we started. I felt it all through me, but I still went on hoping . . . as one so stupidly does, you know' (88-9)—

and Duquette, feigning compassion, responds, "'As one does'," she is describing the selfsame fox-terrier desires that he struggles hard to deny.

Duquette also circumvents commitment by marginalizing himself socially. He finds autonomy and mobility of sorts in the underbelly of Paris, occupying a flat where he evades the rent-collecting concierge, uses his kitchen as a rubbish bin for old paper, and where his clothes and furniture are not paid for. He frequents a "dirty and sad" café where he fittingly takes a corner seat where he can solicit customers and observe the "strange types" that pass for clientèle. In one way, he derives a perverse sense of community from being a regular at the café where he partakes of the "familiar, purplish stuff" (coffee), takes pleasure in being able to describe in scathing detail and with self-satisfaction the mannerisms of the waiter and the 'madame', and where he is mutually well-observed: "Madame knows me" (63; 91). But it is a marginal and illegitimate community and one that further negates him. So, by criticizing it, he displaces himself from it.

Because Duquette is not thoroughly committed to this 'community of illegitimacy' and because he aspires to be accepted on more legitimate terms, he

lives a dual existence, straddling two cultures but feeling rooted in neither. While he defines himself as "a gentleman, a writer, serious, young, and extremely interested in modern English literature" and has made his way into literary circles, he is more of a poser, as even the titles of his novels—*False Coins*, *Left Umbrellas*, and *Wrong Doors*—satirically suggest (91). On the margins of both cultures, he inhabits a non-community, or in essence what Gloria Anzaldúa calls a "borderland" which could be described as a metaphoric catchment zone for misfits, social transgressors, and aliens:

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mullato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'. (3)

And what ensures Duquette's occupation of a 'borderland', or non-community, and thus perpetuates his transitoriness is his ambivalence about his 'dual citizenship'. On one hand, he wears his professed membership in divergent communities as a badge of power, as he does when he boasts his sexual prowess with every "class of woman":

It isn't as though I've known only one class of woman—not by any means. But from little prostitutes and kept women and elderly widows and shop girls and wives of respectable men, and even advanced modern literary ladies at the most select dinners and soirées (I've been there), I've met invariably with not only the same readiness, but with the same positive invitation. (68)

But his pretensions to middle-class literary society and his desire to be esteemed on more legitimate terms cause him, on the other hand, to deny his social duplicity.¹⁴ When he thinks that Harmon has snubbed him for having base associations, for instance, he assuages his overblown sense of abandonment by working himself into a suitable lather of outrage:

'Curse these English! No, this is too insolent altogether. Who do you imagine I am? A little paid guide to the night pleasures of Paris? . . . No, Monsieur. I am a young writer, very serious, and extremely interested in modern English literature. And I have been insulted—insulted'. (74)

But Duquette's moral indignity is unprecedented, comic even, when viewed alongside his more salient mercenary nature. He uses crude terms of conquest, for example, to describe his first meeting Harmon, whom he compares to a fish who came right out of the water after his bait (71). And he betrays his tendency to devalue himself and his over-eagerness to subjugate his identity in order to gain Harmon's affection when he admits to feeling "more like a little fox-terrier than ever" when Harmon parts with him (73).

Duquette's difficulty in extricating himself from his 'community of illegitimacy' is stated forcibly at the end of his narrative. He tells how, when his fantasies about childhood innocence are interrupted, he slides almost involuntarily into his habitual performance of pimping:

¹⁴ Mansfield's changing attitude toward her own 'dual citizenship' might well have influenced her unsympathetic portrait of Duquette. In 1908, before she had become disenchanted with London and so posed the glamorized notion of 'dual citizenship' in her story outline about the halfcaste from Wellington, she was enamored with the selfsame prospect of transitoriness and cultivated detachment that she was to criticize so harshly exactly one decade later in her rendition of him. She had no way then of knowing how quickly her freedom would sour to imprisonment.

And so on and so on until some dirty old gallant comes up to my table and sits opposite and begins to grimace and yap. Until I hear myself saying: 'But I've got the little girl for you, *mon vieux*. So little . . . so tiny.' I kiss the tips of my fingers and lay them upon my heart. 'I give you my word of honour as a gentleman, a writer, serious, young, and extremely interested in modern English literature.' (91)

By conflating his two narratives of desire—of recovered innocence and of being a successful writer—with the more alienated narrative in which he mechanistically conceives of humans purely in terms of their exchange value, he debases any genuine hope of legitimacy and community afforded by his dreams.¹⁵ His habit of dissimulating, which has become second-nature to him, ultimately devalues all of his personas, real or imagined, making his proclaimed "word of honour" here a charade. Having forsaken his history, he feels at liberty to construct himself as anything, but all of his self-constructions, unanchored to social context, are unstable. Performances all, they list with infidelity.

His ruptured past and ensuing breach with his own narrative history, hence sense of continuity, have diminished his ability to discern between illusion, or surface appearance, and reality. It is as if he himself has been relocated and trapped within a stratum of fiction and façade, unable to put faith in anything beyond. This is pointedly illustrated when, while contriving to achieve a visual appearance he hopes will pass for literary respectability, Duquette temporarily deludes himself into believing that appearance and reality

¹⁵ The uncensored version of part of this passage puts forth Duquette's degenerate nature more explicitly. It reads, "'So little . . . so tiny. And a virgin.' I kiss the tips of my fingers—'A virgin'— and lay them upon my heart." *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield: Definitive Edition*, ed. Antony Alpers, (Auckland, N.Z.: Oxford UP, 1988), p. 299. (Quoted in Burgan, p. 136.)

are one and the same. Surveying himself, he seizes upon what seems a delicious paradox:

He was looking the part; he was the part . . . How can one look the part and not be the part? Or be the part and not look it? Isn't looking being? Or being looking? (75)

He unwittingly reveals that on some level he knows his respectability is forged, a costumed performance—a "part." He later admits hearing a barely audible voice inside him calling his bluff: "But I confess that something did whisper . . . 'You—literary? you look as through you've taken down a bet on a racehorse!' But I didn't listen" (75). Yet he chooses to deny his 'voice of reason' because doing so tactically releases him from moral restraint and allows him to continue passing pretense for authenticity.

Deprived of 'object relations' that affirm his continuity, he seeks an endless train of objects upon which to reflect himself and re-face his effaced identity; lacking intrinsic confirmation of his identity because he has lost the narrative of 'self', he seeks extrinsic affirmation of his worth to offset the 'recognition' he receives at the café.¹⁶ Appropriately, he is pictured at different times in front of a mirror orating his importance and narcissistically projecting the identity he wants echoed back to him (the mirror motif again suggesting how his imaginative existence is confined to surface images). In attempting to consolidate his identity through refracted means—by anticipating how others see him—the objectified surface serves as a proxy for the absent social context.

¹⁶ Jenijoy LaBelle, in her examination the various functions of mirrors in literature, in *Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass*, notes that, in addition to the purpose of "self-presentation," mirrors are also used for "self-conception" (57).

Because of his difficulty in affirming himself socially, he depends upon tangible and multiple proofs of his existence in order to assert his all-too-ephemeral identity:

I am like a little woman in a café who has to introduce herself with a handful of photographs. 'Me in my chemise, coming out of an eggshell. . . Me upside down in a swing, with a frilly behind like a cauliflower.'
(68-9)

His habitually feminizing himself is also a means of soliciting superficial attention. To counter his perceived insubstantiality—his fear of social erasure—he relies on refracted, extrinsic surface reproductions with which to 'flesh out' his identity.

He compensates for his marginality by savouring any opportunity, as he says, to be "master of the situation" (62). He repeatedly affirms his worth in ways intended to convince himself that he has 'upstaged' others: "'After all I must be first-rate. No second-rate mind could have experienced such an intensity of feeling" (64). His desire for validation, evident in his pointedly dialogical questions which demand responses, drives his monologue:¹⁷

If you think what I've written is merely superficial and impudent and cheap, you're wrong. . . . If it were, how could I have experienced what I did . . . ? That proves there's more in me and that I really am important, doesn't it? (69)

¹⁷ I refer here to Bakhtin's definition of dialogism. In "The Problem of Speech Genres" in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, he proposes that most utterances are inherently dialogical in that they presuppose an audience and therefore anticipate a response. In his four essays in *The Dialogic Imagination*, he elaborates on different preconditions for and manifestations of dialogism.

Indeed, his entire monologue is an exercise in self-construction and self-representation, a point reinforced by his repeatedly addressing a presupposed captive audience.

Duquette's pattern of self-validation and invalidation is reproduced strikingly on the level of text. Adverse to committing himself to any particular image or any single version of the 'truth', he frames a large part of his narrative in the negative, more at ease with negation than construction. This trait is evident throughout his narrative, but is particularly pronounced in the dozen or so opening paragraphs that 'rough in' his character. He begins,

I do not know why I have such a fancy for this little café. It's not as if it had anything to distinguish it from a hundred others—it hasn't. (60)

By maintaining extensive focus on what isn't, he avoids affirming what is, as he does in this evasive sketch:

And then there is the waiter. Not pathetic—decidedly not comic. Never making one of those perfectly insignificant remarks which amaze you so coming from a waiter (as though the poor wretch were a sort of cross between a coffee-pot and a wine-bottle and not expected to hold so much as a drop of anything else). (61)

Besides making him an unreliable narrator, his taking a 'negative view of things' strategically waylays his audience and allows him narrative control over them. He purposefully traps the reader in discursive cul-de-sacs by retreating before fulfilling the promise of significance. And the more he compounds negatives, the more labyrinthine his constructions become. Though he hints at the importance of the phrase "je ne parle pas français" early in his narrative, he purposely delays disclosing its significance, and only does so one morsel at a

time. He similarly immobilizes the reader by evading through equivocation. For example, he claims to live in a street "that might or might not be discreet," adding as an aside, "Very useful, that" (67); likewise, he recalls "drifting along, either going home or not going home" (62), intentionally pairing inverse statements so they will self-cancel and signify nothing. Though he exults in exploiting the freeplay of the signifier for the perceived authority it gives him, his empty signifiers which deflect meaning paradoxically divest him of authorial power and mimic the void within him. Even the title "Je ne parle pas français," framed in the negative, contributes to the aura of deficiency and impotence that emanates linguistically from Duquette.¹⁸

Duquette's narrative, therefore, enacts his own lack of continuity and placement, its compounded displacement and multiple refractions of real experience reflecting a perception of uprootedness and nullity. And because he views his narrative as a performance in self-representation that need not be corroborated with fact, it is strained. Laden with meaningless signification, it is an impenetrable façade lacking depth.

More attuned to surface craft than substance, Duquette repeatedly draws his audience's attention to the arbitrariness and artificiality of text and to the fact that he is stage-managing his narrative. One way he does this is by cavalierly spouting well-worn 'cultural texts' in an obvious fashion (e.g.,

¹⁸ Although the 'married man', unlike Duquette, shows no interest in manipulating his audience, he uses negatives in ways that complement his indifference and internal void. His negatives function as instruments of denial, reflecting how he feels negated and exiled and how, in return, he denies and exiles others. Imagining his wife in the kitchen, for example, he writes,

Her head is bent, with one finger she is tracing something—nothing—on the table. It is cold in the kitchen; the gas jumps; the tap drips; it's a forlorn picture. And nobody is going to come behind her, to take her in his arms, to kiss her soft hair, to lead her to the fire and to rub her hands warm again. Nobody is going to call her or to wonder what she is doing out there. And she knows it. (425)

"Anyhow, the 'short winter afternoon was drawing to a close,' as they say" [62]). There is a note of mimicry, or undercutting parody, in some of his adaptations of 'cultural texts'. Recalling an occasion where he stood in front of the mirror awaiting Harmon's return, he writes, "'Portrait of Madame Butterfly,' said I, 'on hearing of the arrival of *ce cher Pinkerton*'" (74). At times he deconstructs 'cultural texts' in a more forthright manner:

According to the books I should have felt immensely relieved and delighted. ' . . . Going over to the window he drew apart the curtains and looked out at the Paris trees, just breaking into buds and green. . . . Dick! Dick! My English friend!'
I didn't. (74)

At bottom, Duquette envisages texts as he does humans: as objects without souls. To him, 'ready-made' cultural texts fail to adequately describe his own experience of marginalization yet have performative value; they are therefore somewhat brusquely chosen from a limited selection of ill-fitting facsimiles to suit the occasion. As someone who feels a certain lack of entitlement to mainstream culture from having been relegated to a cultural 'borderland', his mandate is to abuse them.¹⁹

¹⁹ In stories besides "Je ne parle pas français" and "A Married Man's Story," Mansfield, in different ways, draws attention to how 'cultural texts' either impinge upon or become constituents of selfhood. One way she does this is by portraying characters who are aware that they are acting a role, performing to a social script that seems foreign and unfaithful to their true identities, such as Beryl Fairfield, for example, in "Prelude," who exclaims outright, "I'm always acting a part. I'm never my real self for a moment" (58-9). In some instances, characters conform to others' expectations or have been co-opted into persuasive cultural narratives to the extent that the narrative of the 'self' seems impossible to locate. The naive Bertha Young in "Bliss," for instance, very much a 'product of her culture', parrots preordained social narratives for her gender such as what Nancy Walker calls the "marriage plot" and the "happily ever after plot" (5). Yet the object of her desire is more clearly Pearl Fulton than her husband, which contravenes the more culturally dominant 'script' which enshrines normative codes of behavior and dictates that Bertha's desire should be reserved for her husband. Lacking a vocabulary for expressing an 'alternative script of desire', she transfers her ardent longing onto her husband, only to find that he too has been unfaithful

In many points of similarity, the 'married man' and Raoul Duquette magnify different faces of Mansfield's reactions to exile. Like them, she too felt marginalized at a young age, but by less dramatic circumstances. When nearly eighteen, she wrote, "In my life—so much Love in imagination; in reality 18 barren years—never pure spontaneous affectionate impulse (*Journal* [1907], 13). She responded like Duquette, at least for a time, by forsaking her family and country—her history. After exiling herself, she sought security and community elsewhere, a challenge she often found more disappointing than liberating, as illustrated in Chapter One. Like the 'married man', she later became preoccupied with the past in an attempt to repair a loss whose terminal nature was inscribed by a series of events, most noticeably by Leslie's death and the progression of her illness. Her New Zealand stories—all vivid pastoral evocations of remembered childhood—mark her symbolic attempts at repatriation.

What must be remembered, however, is that Mansfield replicated only her darkest emotions and least attractive aspects of herself in 'a married man' and Raoul Duquette. Her bouts of cynicism were offset by other emotions besides. But, by the time she wrote "Je ne parle pas français" in 1917-8 and "A Married Man's Story" in 1918-21, her disillusionment with the prospect of security was acute.²⁰ After having endured many recognizable symptoms of

to the 'script' of their marriage. In still other cases, by contrast, 'cultural texts' function as seemingly rigid narratives designed to keep trespassers out (some of the more overt examples occur in "The Doll's House," "The Garden-Party," and "The Dove's Nest").

Mansfield's representations of how characters' desires are hijacked by stronger cultural forces are in keeping with her exilic perspective.

²⁰ "A Married Man's Story" is more difficult than "Je ne parle pas français" to date because it was unfinished and because there is little correspondence concerning it. I rely on Antony Alpers' estimated dates, which, in light of his evidence, seem convincing.

tuberculosis, she wrote at the end of 1919 of having been "obsessed by the fear of death" for two years (*CL III*: 159). And when she was finishing "Je ne parle pas français," she told Murry that one of her two motivations for writing was the need to sound a "cry against corruption" which she elaborated by saying that what she meant was not a protest (that is, with moralistic intent) but an "*extremely* deep sense of hopelessness—of everything doomed to disaster—almost willfully, stupidly"—a condition not unlike the 'married man's' state (*CL II* [1918]: 54).

Whether from failure to assimilate socially or from a selfhood eclipsed by hegemonic cultural forces, many of Mansfield's characters besides a 'married man' and Raoul Duquette suffer from lack of significance and authority. They are portrayed (to use Gabriele Schwab's words) as "subjects without selves."²¹ Within Mansfield's bittersweet portrayals of how desire is inspired within a character, nurtured and coddled, then cruelly thwarted there is a subtext that stresses the dangers of assimilation where identity risks subordination or erasure, and where authority, or being the author of one's 'self', depends upon a fortified self that can withstand outside assaults.

Like so many of her characters, Mansfield too fought constantly to restore her significance and authority because the road map to her identity had dissolved, her comparison of her life to "sawdust and sand" (*Journal* [1915], 73) a telling metaphor for her own unstable identity (which we catch glimpses of in "Gregory Powder," the 'married man'). Continually revoking familiar reference points upon which to reflect herself, she felt compelled to replenish them, which engendered a perennial need to construct new identities. Because

²¹ This term comes from the title of Gabriele Schwab's book *Subjects without Selves: Transitional Tests in Modern Fiction*, in which she examines the relationship between language and literary subjectivity in selected modernist texts (Mansfield's not included).

the pressure to re-face came, in part, from social expectations, she too, like many of her characters besides the 'married man' and Duquette, wore masks in social situations to protect her vulnerable identity from outside assault. But when the script grew stale, when the mask rubbed off, she required new means of re-validation: "I want to begin another life: this one is worn to tearing point" (*Journal* [1911], 46)

And in other stories besides "Je ne parle pas français" and "A Married Man's Story," Mansfield alludes to disjunctive self-history as being culpable in characters' perceptions of effacement. Her absorption with the fissures in her own identity made her want to represent the psychosocial genesis of such in her stories. It made her purposefully call attention to how identity is constructed according to one's perception of one's relative social placement—according to intersubjective relations that denote belonging or not belonging—and therefore to how stable identity depends upon an intact history whose realizable contexts endow one with coherence and continuity.

The resonances of exile in Mansfield's stories derive extensively from the way her characters come face-to-face with the absence of verifiable means with which to establish their presence and narrative authority. Their desire, usurped by centrifugal blankness and deprived of permanent objects to fix upon (whether texts, images, or persons)—deprived of social contexts for realization—is displaced into either idyllic fantasies of the past, adopted and alien cultural texts of the present, or imagined avenues of escape to transcendent or future sites of pleasure. And so their resultant exilic perspectives, like those of their author, invariably give rise to narratives of vulnerability, disillusionment, and not belonging.

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