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Mansfield as (Post)colonial-Modernist: Rewriting the Contract with Death

Janet Wilson

Mansfield's (Post)colonial-Modernism

Mansfield's dualistic positioning, crossing international modernism with (post)colonial critique, stems from her habitation of multiple, layered states of being, magnified by her various allegiances to, and estrangements from, her New Zealand white settler and English migrant identities. This pluralism enables her great New Zealand stories like 'At the Bay', 'The Garden Party', and 'The Dolls' House', as well as the last stories written from late 1921 to July 1922 (the date of her final story 'The Canary'), to be located within a (post)colonial-modernist framework. Mansfield represents various images of childhood from her bifurcated positioning through a world view dominated by death and mortality, and a consciousness that goes beyond the invocations of savagery and the spirit of the place in early stories and sketches of New Zealand: for example, 'Old Tar', in which hauntings by the dispossessed 'other' create atmospheric destabilisation and undermine the settler's ostensible ownership of land; 'In the Botanical Gardens', where a hostile emanation in the native bush implies the sense of guilt at white settler intrusion; or in 'The Woman at the Store' where the savage spirit of the land roams unchecked at sundown.¹ The white settler point of view is undermined in an aesthetics of narrative fracture in these earlier stories – ellipses, omissions, paradox – whereby ghostly emanations from the past and phantasmagoric presences constitute the divided and ruptured condition of colonialism. In invoking such experiences of displacement in her later stories, however, Mansfield, possibly now haunted by the past of her earlier stories, recreates her own colonial childhood. She suggests a vision of possibility, now bounded and framed by mortality, formulating her understanding of colonial otherness through her study

of family relations and the presence of the uncanny as a form of ‘difference within’.² These stories in particular have been associated with her elusive form of nationalism, and her reputation as a ‘ghostly presence’ in the national literary consciousness, ‘a phantasmic and sometimes troubling sign of displacement’.³ Yet the more psychical underpinnings of the late stories, as she worked at the limits of consciousness, creating intuitive enlightenment and visionary perspectives unmediated by language, and piling up moments or glimpses through images and epiphany, also reaffirm her literary modernism.⁴

Mansfield’s propensity for psychic experiences and paranormal perceptions is evident from her journals and letters, but there has been little research on the impact of these channels of communication especially in enabling her to access, with memory, her family and early life. Only towards the end of her life, when she needed to reconnect to her childhood and aimed to incorporate the shadowy, ubiquitous presence of death, did they apparently become a catalyst for composition. The greater spirituality of her later work appears in allusions to the Bible, Shakespeare and Chaucer, marking her search for something, a religion or belief system on which she could build a faith as her options in life diminished, and construct a barrier to physical disintegration as experienced in the premonitory dream of her own death of December 1919.

[. . .] I went to sleep. And suddenly I felt my whole body breaking up – it broke up with a violent shock – an earthquake, & it broke like glass. A long terrible shiver, you understand, & the spinal cord & the bones, and every bit & particle quaking. It sounded in my ears – a low, confused din, and there was a sense of flashing greenish brilliance, like broken glass. When I woke I thought there had been a violent earthquake. But all was still. It slowly dawned upon me – the conviction that in that dream I died.⁵

From 1919–20 when she was living in Menton, she was thinking through the relationship between the body and mind, searching for a way to cure her soul so that her writing might also be improved, thus preparing a spiritual path that would take her to Fontainebleau and Gurdjieff in October 1922.⁶ In October 1920, for example, she wrote to Murry in ways which suggests that salvation, linked to a pantheistic force, borders on the mystical:

Does your soul trouble you? Mine does. I feel that only now [. . .] I realise what salvation means and I long for it. Of course I am not speaking as a Christian or about a personal God. But the feeling is . . . I believe [. . .] Help thou my unbelief. But its to myself I cry – to the spirit, the essence in me – that which lives in Beauty. [. . .]. And I long for goodness – to live by what is permanent in the soul.⁷

Increasingly incapacitated by her illness, she drew upon her emotional and psychic resources to access the past, inducing pre-sleep, hypnogogic visions and images by adopting a semi-conscious state:

It often happens to me now that when I lie down for sleep [. . .] I feel wakeful and lying here in bed I begin to live over little scenes from life or imaginary scenes. Its not too much to say they are almost hallucinations: they are marvellously vivid. I lie on my right side & put my left hand up to my forehead as though I were praying. This seems to induce the state. Then for instance its 10.30 p.m. on a liner in mid ocean . . . [. . .] All these things are far realer, more in detail, richer than Life. And I believe I could go on until . . . there's no end to it. I can do this about anything.⁸

These static, silent scenes whose pictorial detail resembles snapshot images, in presenting in outline a more vivid world than real life, can be compared to Mansfield's response to nature's mystical power as 'glimpses' of a timeless moment in which 'the whole life of the soul is contained'. Her comment on these semi-hallucinatory states: 'Only there are no personalities. Neither am I there personally. People are only part of the silence, not of the pattern – vastly different to that – part of the scheme', suggest that they brought her close to the condition of impersonality. Described as 'that moment of direct feeling when we are most ourselves and least personal',⁹ this state was one she increasingly sought in her last years, finally entering Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man in the hope of achieving an organic unity and 'harmony of mind and spirit'.¹⁰ It is comparable to, but different from, Virginia Woolf's moments of being and the images of self-dissolution in her work which include liberation from the limits of personal identity and immersion in the 'unfeeling universe'.¹¹

Mansfield, Leslie Heron Beauchamp and the 'contract with death'

The telepathic gift to conjure up past events and people through entering trance-like states can be traced to what is commonly agreed to be the turning point of Mansfield's art, the tragic death of her brother, Leslie Heron Beauchamp, in a hand grenade accident in Flanders in October 1915.¹² Her intense grief, leading to her vow to commemorate his life by discovering a new prose for the purposes of elegy, included the desire to join him in death through writing, and so transcend the boundaries between death and life. This crucial intersection between art, life and death would dominate her future.¹³ In her diary entry of 29 October 1915, her fluid osmotic identification develops into a desire for reunification through death: 'I welcome the idea of death. I believe

in immortality because he is not here, and I long to join him.' This is mediated by writing: 'I know you are there and I live with you – and I will write for you'; while in the poem 'To LHB', her ghostly brother's invitation to her to join him in death is imaginatively formulated through the poisoned berries he offers her, in an inversion of the Eucharist:

By the remembered stream my brother stands
Waiting for me with berries in his hands
'These are my body. Sister, take and eat.'¹⁴

From now on, Mansfield's earlier feelings of intimacy with Leslie intensified, for as Freud writing on melancholia says, the lost object which cannot be relinquished returns as an aspect of oneself, the ghost of the loved becomes inseparable from the self, part of one's interior being.¹⁵ In her diaries, she mythologises the close relationship she had with Leslie as that of a twinned consciousness: 'we were almost like one child. I always see us walking about together, looking at things together with the same eyes'.¹⁶ This intense, even dangerous intimacy, to the point of being unable to disassociate from each other, is the source of imagery of doubling and mirroring between male and female siblings in stories like 'When the Wind Blows', 'Son and Moon' and 'His Sister's Keeper'. Such symbiosis is most pointedly articulated at the conclusion of 'The Garden Party' in Laura's brother Laurie's echo of her words, after she has seen death for the first time in viewing the young carter laid out on the bed, seemingly asleep:

'But, Laurie' – She stopped . . . 'Isn't life,' she stammered, 'isn't life –' But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.
'Isn't it, darling?' said Laurie.¹⁷

Her meetings with her brother when he was in London in early 1915 (at a time when Mansfield was estranged from some family members), and their reminiscences about the past, reinforcing the feeling of oneness as children united against their parents, meant that Leslie became transformed into a symbolic touchstone, or 'ghostly mentor' after his death.¹⁸ Their shared memories inspired her to compose the first draft of her seminal 'family romance', 'The Aloe', in March 1915, while Leslie's birth and childhood as the much longed-for and only son, are celebrated in 'Prelude' (a revision of 'The Aloe'), and in the later story 'At the Bay'.¹⁹

Leslie's symbolic importance is manifested not just in Mansfield's outpouring of grief after his death, the yearning for reunion and the resolve to commemorate his life in writing, but in his haunting of Mansfield, through ghost-like reappearances. Leslie replaces John

Middleton Murry in her affections as she records his spiritual supercession and the need for continued intimacy: 'You know I can never be Jack's lover again, You have me, you're in my flesh as well as my soul. I give Jack my 'surplus' love but to you I hold and to you I give my deepest love.'²⁰ The uncanny apparition of Leslie displaces Mansfield's husband in the marital bed: 'I wanted J. [John] to embrace me. But as I turned [. . .] to kiss him I saw my brother lying fast asleep – and I got cold. That happens nearly always'.²¹ In this 'phantasmatic space'²² of half-waking, half-sleeping, rendering the self permeable and suggestible to body transmission, the ghost of the prone Leslie lying next to her is both consolation for loss and a silent reminder of her vow: 'I feel I have a duty to perform to the lovely time when we were both alive.'²³ Although these hallucinatory states are seemingly triggered by Mansfield's craving for reunion, they are represented as Leslie's yearnings for her. In the slippage between self and other, waking and sleeping, sexual desire and spiritual awakening, the real moment and desiring imagination, it is the neglect of writing that mobilises his spectral presence: 'When I am not writing I feel my brother calling me & he is not happy. Only when I write or am in a state of writing – a state of "inspiration" – do I feel that he is calm.'²⁴ Mansfield overturned the boundaries of physical death through these imagined reunions from the time she wrote herself into Leslie's death by including her name in his final words, 'Lift my head, Katy, I can't breathe', anticipating the relationship's transition into the sacred and paranormal.²⁵ The search for integration and catharsis, as well as the act of writing distinguishes the haunting, uncanny elements of her work from the Gothic which seeks to obscure rather than to penetrate to the essence of things as she came to want to do.

The manifestations of the ghostly, spiritual, and spectral in Mansfield's late stories underpins her aim to be inclusive in her writing: "One must tell everything –everything". That is more and more real to me each day. It is after all [. . .] – our little grain of truth.'²⁶ Her spiritual connection to the past included the hidden reality signified by the occult, as Alex Owen points out, the occluded spiritual realm that could only be accessed by the psychic or medium.²⁷ Mansfield identified such a realm with the undiscovered country of her New Zealand childhood, in imagery of mist and (un)veiling as when she notes: 'I tried to lift that mist from my people, and let them be seen and then to hide them again.'²⁸ In 'At the Bay', as Angela Smith notes, the mist 'symboliz[ing] the processes of the human mind at work' may be a narrative method comparable to Woolf's use of mist to veil then reveal a person or consciousness in *Mrs Dalloway*.²⁹ As tuberculosis ravaged her body and depleted her physical strength after 1917, seemingly fulfilling the prophecy of the poem 'To

LHB', Mansfield turned to scenes of family life from a remembered world that she reconnected with through psychic means. This 'spectral condition' is associated with self effacement, a state of impersonality through being possessed by the dead, envisaged as though alive, and it entails the collapse of distinctions between active and passive subject positions, subject and object, witnessing and writing.³⁰ She comments in a letter to Dorothy Brett about writing 'At the Bay':

It is so strange to bring the dead to life again. There's my grandmother with her pink knitting, there stalks my uncle over the grass. I feel as I write 'you are not dead, my darlings. All is remembered. I bow down to you. I efface myself so that you may live again through me in your richness and beauty.' And one feels *possessed*.³¹

The subtle interplay between the ghostly and supernatural in bringing the family back to life in her art distinguishes Mansfield's work from the alienating spectrality of the Gothic. She personalises death as friendly and intimate, making her family live again for her just as she wishes to continue to live again in and through her art.

Mansfield and Occult Practices of the Early Twentieth Century

There is no evidence that Mansfield saw herself as a clairvoyant or a medium or in any way associated with the heightened occult practices of late Victorian and Edwardian England. Yet her attitude towards the mystical seems to vary according to who she was close to at the time. William Orton, in his autobiographical account of his relationship with Mansfield in 1910–11, referring to what they called 'the Buddha room', stresses that 'to Catherine [. . .] the problem of achieving a firm spiritual peace, in the midst of a life that insisted on being vivid and restless, was becoming urgent'.³² But writing in *Rhythm* in 1912, only a year later, she suggests that belief in the supernatural and mystical is inimical to true art:

Mysticism is perverted sensuality; it is 'passionate admiration' for that which has no reality at all. It leads to the annihilation of any true artistic effort. It is a paraphernalia of clichés. It is a mask through which the true expression of the poet can never be discerned.³³

This attitude probably reflects Murry's influence on her thinking then, for his abhorrence of the occult was well known; it was a point of contention between them that caused them to separate in June 1922. In Murry's words: 'Her mind was now moving fast towards the expectation of the other miracle – the attainment of such psychic control as would

enable her to ignore her bodily condition. Into this realm I could not enter at all.³⁴ By 1921 Mansfield was manifesting a more pronounced interest in otherworldly phenomena and Eastern or occult systems of thought as evidenced in her reading of the arcane text, *Cosmic Anatomy and the Structure of the Ego*, sent to Murry by A. R. Orage in autumn of that year, Arthur Waley's translations of poems from the Chinese, and then in 1922, through the introduction of Orage, who had been a theosophist, the theories of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. In this last year of her life, her spiritualist leanings were directed not just to communication with the deceased Leslie, as if through a medium, but to her search for a cure for her illness in the belief that its cause was non-physical, 'But something else & and that if this were found and cured all the rest would heal.'³⁵

Nevertheless Mansfield's capacity to communicate telepathically with family members in her art is analogous to the practice of calling up the dead that was attested in Victorian England and which became more pronounced after World War One when bereaved parents attempted to get in touch with their dead sons. Recent research on telepathy, spiritualism, the supernatural, and other cultural practices of late Victorian and early twentieth-century England delineate the range of practices and the corresponding aspirations.³⁶ Women predominated in functioning as both spiritual and hypnotic channels in developing the new forms of interpersonal connection, according to Jill Galvan, due to their perceived 'sensitivity or sympathy, often imagined as the product of women's delicate nervous systems; and an easy reversion to automatism or a state of unconsciousness'.³⁷ Mansfield's highly nervous, febrile state, heightened by her illness, gave her increased capacity to enter trance-like states. She comments, 'its only since I was really ill that this shall we call it "consolation prize" has been given me. My God, its a marvellous thing!'³⁸ In particular her evidence of nocturnal visitations by ghost-like apparitions of Leslie suggests that hers was a spectral personality, predisposed towards the supernatural, in keeping with Shane McCorristine's modern conception of the ghost as reflecting the haunted nature of the self. Ghosts, phantasms and spirits, for her were not just objective phenomena, but suggest, in the words of McCorristine, that she was 'haunted by death, the past, a fixed idea, hard wired to apparitions of the dead'.³⁹ Such a categorisation implies that the world of Mansfield's experience, the 'everything' that she wished to tell of, existed both in material and immaterial or ghostly forms. In this sense, then, of moving between different realms, as a medium or conductor, she is comparable to the occultists whose practice was to make connections with the spirits of the dead in order to offer comfort and reassurances for the bereaved.

At the same time, Mansfield's spirituality suggests that, as with spiritual mediums and the practice of seances, the permeability of these realms reflected a tightening of the grasp between them, a refusal to let go of the dead and a belief that 'there is no death'.⁴⁰

Certainly her intense belief in the subliminal self and her capacity to recall the dead in lifelike detail, as appears in these and other passages of her non-fictional writings, can be compared to the hope of those who belonged to The Society of Psychical Research (founded in 1882), with its focus on the spiritual, mesmerism and the paranormal, that a spiritual plane of human existence was discoverable.⁴¹ That these 'recovered' memories reappear in the stories, animating the characters, furthermore suggests a practice not far removed from automatic writing, as inaugurated by a subliminal self that is potentially separate from the body. 'At the Bay' introduces Mansfield's recovered memories as recorded in her letter to Dorothy Brett: 'Theres my grandmother with her pink knitting, there stalks my uncle over the grass.'⁴² Kezia's grandmother, Mrs Fairfield, 'sat in a rocker at the window, with a long piece of pink knitting in her lap'; while in the encounter between Kezia's uncle, Jonathan Trout and his sister-in-law, Kezia's mother Linda Burnell in the garden, the memories are transposed; Linda 'stalks over the grass' viewed by 'my uncle': 'He had meant to be there before, but in the front garden he had come upon Linda walking up and down the grass.'⁴³

The Family: 'At the Bay' and 'Six Years After'

Clare Hanson points out that home for Mansfield was *unheimlich* from the beginning, due to her doubled identity structures, caught between the imperial centre and the colonial periphery, and that her colonial background was a copy without an original.⁴⁴ Such ambivalences about self and place help determine the ghostly quality of her nationalism; they are reinforced by her construction of the colonial space of childhood through a nexus of personal interactions, and the obliteration of any sense of temporal sequentiality.⁴⁵ The occult and spiritual forces by which Mansfield, like other mediums in the early twentieth century, was able to locate life alongside death, and that insisted on 'the commensurability between disparate people and things',⁴⁶ can be linked to a spatio-temporal model, what critic Laura Doyle describes as the geomodernism of Mansfield's modernist contemporaries. For example, Virginia Woolf, notably in *Mrs Dalloway*, introduces disparate world views from 'over there' in 'continual horizon reversals', that project a 'strange global circuitry', so presenting 'under the pressure of this post/colonial

world, discrepant subjectivities' and contradictory and conflicting cultural perceptions, as the white characters 'absorb the violence of imperialism'.⁴⁷ Similar disjunctures dominate *A Passage to India*, culminating in the experience in the Malabar caves. Mansfield's New Zealand stories anchor character and event to a local domain rather than introducing explicit horizon reversals that the more expansive novel form made possible, yet the apparently safe domestic realm is threatened by the sudden irruption of the unfamiliar and uncanny. Her stories register disturbances within the white settler class which undermine its occupation of space and are suggestive of the pressure of colonialism and its disruptive legacy: for example, awareness of the proximity of wild, irrational forces to the ordered, civilised world, underpins the violence of the duck's beheading in 'Prelude'.

Like Mansfield herself, her characters are prone to sudden visitations, as the uncanny appears in the midst of the everyday, a tangible reminder of Homi Bhabha's point that the colonial presence is 'always ambivalent', and 'partial'.⁴⁸ Beryl, in 'At the Bay', for example, is one of Mansfield's divided and disrupted characters who, like Raoul Duquette in 'Je ne Parle pas Français', evades the present moment and constructs a false self.⁴⁹ Tropes of hauntology and the uncanny appear in Beryl's interweaving of fantasy with reality as lovers materialise in her room, and she reprises the very compliment – 'what a little beauty you are!' – that the odious Mrs Harry Kember had paid her earlier. 'But, in spite of herself, Beryl saw so plainly two people standing in the middle of her room. Her arms were around his neck; he held her. And now he whispered, "My beauty, my little beauty".'⁵⁰ As Nicholas Royle states, the uncanny conveys 'a sense of ghostliness, of strangeness, given to dissolving all assurances about the identity of a self'; its performative dimension appears in Beryl's self-appellation, a calling into selfhood, as she names herself to the imagined other:⁵¹

[. . .] it's as though, in the silence, somebody called your name, and you heard your name for the first time. 'Beryl!'
 'Yes, I'm here. I'm Beryl. Who wants me?'
 'Beryl!'
 'Let me come.'⁵²

The blurring of boundaries between inner and outer worlds and the apparent inseparability between the inner voice that calls out and the juxtaposed response to that call registers the structure of the uncanny where identity is haunted from within.⁵³ Beryl's real-life suitor appears like a ghostly shadow as if summoned up from the dead: enigmatic, manifested only as a voice, then tantalisingly within reach, he is a nameless

apparition and so all the more sinister and threatening: “Good evening, Miss Beryl,” said the voice softly.⁵⁴

Mansfield’s most overtly haunted story, ‘Six Year’s After’, composed in early November 1921, six years after Leslie’s death, imagines her parents’ reaction to their loss.⁵⁵ But through the question – ‘Can one do nothing for the dead?’⁵⁶ – Mansfield also projects the sense of widespread suffering at needless death in the years after the Great War, the contemporary concern about the souls of the dead, evident, for example, in the advertising of lectures intended to instruct on how to make contact with the departed, that Freud noted.⁵⁷ The story stresses how the needs of the dead continue to intrude upon and interrupt the lives of the living. Its apparently normal opening, introducing a couple travelling on a steamer, is destabilised to reflect the mother’s grief and intense identification with her son. Relationships are skewed, as Mansfield herself experienced when the phantom Leslie returned to haunt her. Cognitive mistakes occur as in the wife’s address to her husband as ‘Father’ or ‘Daddy’ (reminiscent of Mansfield’s address to her brother in her journals as though either a lover or a child), suggesting the presence of the ghost-like child who appropriates and ventriloquises the mother’s voice.⁵⁸ As the ferry throbs along, the wife ‘gazed through the rust-spotted railing along which big drops trembled, until suddenly she shut her lids. It was as if a warning voice inside her had said, ‘Don’t look!’ The appearance of the irrational disturbs and distorts natural phenomena, ‘Lonely birds, water lifting, white pale sky – how were they changed?’ Her reverie turns into a hallucination that he is calling to her, creating a phantasmatic space, similar to what Mansfield herself experienced in her paranormal reunions with Leslie:

And it seemed to her there was a presence far out there, between the sky and the water; something very desolate and longing watched them pass and cried as if to stop them – but cried to her alone.

‘Mother!’

‘Don’t leave me,’ sounded in the cry. ‘Don’t forget me! You are forgetting me, you know you are!’ And it was as though from her own breast there came the sound of childish weeping.⁵⁹

The dead’s haunting of the living appears through the symbiotic mother-child relationship – his apparent weeping at being lost to her coming from her own breast at losing him. The story’s setting on a steamer that crosses over from one place to another, symbolically from life to death, reinforces the hallucinatory, dreamlike state and the transitions between different time frames that suggest their permeability. The conclusion reprises an earlier sentence – ‘And the little steamer

pressed on' – which occurs before the mother's hallucinatory vision of her dead son, and anthropomorphises the steamer, an animistic trope that is also associated with the uncanny and the spectral: 'And the little steamer, growing determined, throbbed on, pressed on, as if at the end of the journey there waited . . .'⁶⁰ The ellipses which break off the throbbing, suggestive of a heart beat, hint at a darker ending, the encroachment of death.⁶¹

Antony Alpers notes that all but three of Mansfield's last stories share the subject of death or bereavement;⁶² but it would seem that her encounter with the dead as living figments is inseparable from her desire to reimagine the family circle which has been broken by death, separation, distance – of reassembling it in a new configuration. Just as haunting and haunted as 'Six Years After' is 'The Dolls' House'. According to Mary Burgan, 'our Else' wearing 'a long white dress, rather like a nightgown', whose 'cropped hair and enormous solemn eyes' made her look like 'a little white owl',⁶³ is a spectral figure of Mansfield's baby sister, Gwen, who died when only three months old and Mansfield less than two years; her guilt at not being able to share the dolls' house with her sister makes this story an act of symbolic restitution, Burgan claims, a completion in art when 'our Else' sees the little lamp, of what real life had denied.⁶⁴ A similar need to complete the family circle by recalling the members who have been lost or excluded by death, is the symbolic 'rebirthing' of Leslie through writing, of making recompense to the dead, in the fragments called 'The New Baby'.⁶⁵ These reprise the hints of Leslie's birth at the end of 'The Aloe' and 'Prelude', and of Linda's encounter with the new baby in 'At the Bay'. Four versions of this fragment exist, consisting of different parents (one of the mother and grandmother and three of the father) so comprising a full picture of the adults' response. Like the ellipses which signal the conclusion of stories deemed formally incomplete – 'Six Years After' and the missing sections of another late story written in September 1921, 'Weak Heart' – these ghostly textual fragments, which survive Mansfield's destruction of much else that was fragmentary, suggests the desire to construct a larger picture of a revitalised sense of family and of future possibility.

Conclusion: Mansfield's Haunted Imagination

Mansfield's attraction towards the ghostly and spectral to access an occluded realm and for creative renewal, can be deduced from comments in her critical writing such as that 'childhood must have a haunting light upon it if it is to satisfy our longing as well as our memory'.⁶⁶ In her last months the process of dying became imbued with the desire for

self-reform, spiritual repair, and the shedding of false selves; as James Moore writes, 'Katherine bent her will to the ideal of spiritual regeneration.'⁶⁷ Her dissatisfaction with her old stories, according to Orage's report of conversations they had at Fontainebleau, was because 'The old details now make another pattern; and this perception of a new pattern is what I call a creative attitude to life.'⁶⁸ This comment can be read alongside Mansfield's account of her psychic recall of past events in her journal entry of December 1919, where the term 'pattern' refers to art, and the term 'scheme' to life: 'People are only part of the silence, not of the pattern – vastly different to that – part of the scheme.'⁶⁹ Yet 'a series of patterns' made by the grandmother in 'Prelude', also resonate with homeliness, defining a place where one can reside.⁷⁰ Her mediumship provides access to phantom-like, silent characters in order to animate them, and the silent world, a source of joy, as she wrote to Murry: 'What is this something that waits – that beckons?'⁷¹ During her time at Fontainebleau (when she rejects her earlier satires as malicious and a little deceiving), she implies that this shaping process requires a particular attitude and that artistic merit should be linked to moral value:

The artist communicates not his vision of the world, but the attitude that results in his vision; not his dream, but the dream state; and as his attitude is passive, negative, or indifferent, so he reinforces in his readers the corresponding state of mind.⁷²

Mansfield's use of modern modes of communication, such as telepathy, mediumship or automatism, as well as other space-and time-collapsing technologies of the early twentieth century like the camera and the telegraph, which obliterated temporal linearity in reconstructing the past, is an overlooked dimension of her literary modernism. It has never been linked to her problematic status as a colonial writer in Europe, which as Alpers points out made her insecure because she did not know her audience.⁷³ Yet her command of these communicative conduits enabled her to reconnect with her imagined colonial audience from her doubled outsider/insider position, extend her project of family reconnection and to overcome the twin abysses of distance and death. Significantly the female characters of the late stories – the mother in 'Six Years After', the heroine of another late story, 'Taking the Veil' – are also granted spectral glimpses of the invisible world of the beyond that interrupt and overlap with their material, mundane world, through fleeting phantasmagoric appearances or perceptions which are only partially discerned or apprehended. Mansfield's telepathic reconnections to family members and to her childhood self, as she imaginatively re-replaces herself in her homeland through a network of domestic

links, allows her to shape (post)colonial space as disturbed and newly disordered. In the sense that her writing is ‘time frozen’ (by contrast to the animation of space), it is comparable to that of contemporary diasporic writers who can only access their homeland through limited points and references to particular moments in time: as in the case of Indian born, Canadian-based writer Rohinton Mistry who, in novels like *Family Matters* and *A Fine Balance*, recreates Mumbai society and its history from a distance.⁷⁴ But the difference is that Mansfield’s late stories, written when a physical return to New Zealand was impossible, access a world of doubled forms, ghostly appearances and phantom-like spirits, as responses of the haunted imagination to the urgent need to overcome distance and loss and to outmanoeuvre impending death, by repossessing and recreating the vanished world of childhood, and arresting and redefining her life in new forms of her art.

Notes

- The phrase ‘Rewriting the contract with death’ is Roger Luckhurst’s. See Shane McCorristine, ‘“Magical Thinking”: a Symposium’, University of London, 11–12 May 2007, *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 17 (Fall 2007); http://www.usask.ca/re/1st/jrpc/report17_magicalthinking-print.html (accessed 14/08/12).
1. Janet Wilson, ‘“Where is Katherine?”: Longing and (Un)belonging in the Works of Katherine Mansfield’, in Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson, eds, *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays* (London: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 175–88.
 2. The term comes from Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 109–10, and cited by Elleke Boehmer in her essay ‘Mansfield as Colonial Modernist: Difference Within’, in Kimber and Wilson, eds, pp. 57–71 (p. 58).
 3. See C. K. Stead, ‘Meetings with “the Great Ghost”’, in Kimber and Wilson, eds, pp. 214–28; Linda Hardy ‘The Ghost of Katherine Mansfield’, in Rhoda B. Nathan, ed., *Critical Essays on Katherine Mansfield* (New York and Toronto: G.K. Hall & Co and Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993), pp. 75–92 (p. 78).
 4. Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy 1870–1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 62.
 5. Margaret Scott, ed., *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, 2 vols (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), Vol. 2, p. 180. Hereafter referred to as *Notebooks* followed by volume and page number.
 6. Antony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), pp. 311–12, records how she contemplated Catholicism after her cousin, Connie Beauchamp, and her friend, with whom she stayed in Menton, tried to convert her.
 7. Vincent O’Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984–2008), Vol. 4, pp. 82–3. Hereafter referred to as *Letters*, followed by volume and page number. This passage is cited by Maurizio Ascari, ‘Katherine Mansfield and the Gardens of the Soul’, *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, 2 (2010), pp. 39–55 (pp. 52, 55) (n. 65) with reference to ‘In the Botanical Gardens’.
 8. *Notebooks*, 2, p. 181.
 9. *Notebooks* 2, pp. 181, 204.
 10. Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life* (London: Palgrave, 2000), p. 142.

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11. Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press [1987] 2010), p. 185.
12. See, for example, Ian Gordon, ed., *Undiscovered Country: The New Zealand Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Longman, 1974), 'Introduction', p. xv.
13. On this crisis see the essays by Gasston and Aretoulakis in this volume.
14. *Notebooks 2*, pp. 15, 16, 29.
15. Freud 'Mourning and Melancholia', trans. J. Strachey, Pelican Freud Library 14 (Harmondsworth: Penguin), pp. 237–58. Cited by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell, eds, *The Victorian Supernatural* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 10–11.
16. *Notebooks 2*, p. 15.
17. *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield*, Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan, eds, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), Vol. 2, *The Collection Fiction of Katherine Mansfield 1916–1922*, p. 413. Hereafter referred to as *Collected Fiction 2*. See Emmanouil Aretoulakis's reading of this story in his essay in this volume pp. XX to XX.
18. Andrew Gurr, *Writers in Exile: The Literary Identity of Home in Modern Literature* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1981), p. 46.
19. On Mansfield's relationship with Leslie and her responses to his death see Mary Burgan, *Illness, Gender and Writing: The Case of Katherine Mansfield* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 101–5.
20. *Notebooks 2*, p. 16.
21. *Notebooks 2*, p. 58.
22. Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking: 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 2. Mansfield illustrates her claim that such spaces of bodily transmission 'redefine intimate, sexual, familial, national ties between people against the usual patriarchal models of inheritance and community via marriage and the nuclear family', in 'Six Years After'.
23. *Notebooks 2*, p. 16.
24. *Notebooks 2*, p. 58.
25. See J. Lawrence Mitchell, 'Katie and Chummie: Death in the Family', in Kimber and Wilson, eds, pp. 28–41 (pp. 35–6).
26. *Letters 4*, p. 57.
27. Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 19.
28. *Letters 1*, p. 174.
29. Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield & Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 167.
30. H. D.'s theory of impersonality, consisting of 'dialectical tensions that continuously dissolve and subsequently reinscribe categories of identity such as gender', is comparable to the transitions in these moments of recall; see Rochelle Rives, *Modernist Impersonalities, Affect, Authority and the Subject* (London: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 17, 53. See also F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads, 2001), p. 47.
31. *Letters 4*, p. 278. This seems to have been an ongoing preoccupation; see the journal entry of April 1915: 'You cannot think what pleasure my invisible, imaginary companion gave me. [...] but – it's a game I like to play – to walk and to talk with the dead who smile and are silent – and free quite finally free' (*Notebooks 2*, p. 13).
32. William Orton, *The Last Romantic* (London: Cassell, 1937), p. 277.

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33. Mansfield, Review of Victor B. Neuberg's *The Triumph of Pan* (Thomas Burleigh, 155 Victoria St., S.W.), in *Rhythm*, 6 (July 1912), p. 70.
34. Alpers, p. 362. In Alma de Groen's play about Mansfield's final days in Fontainebleau, the differences of opinion over her belief in the occult bring about her separation from Murry. See *The Rivers of China* (Paddington: Currency Press, Pty Ltd, 1988), Act 1, Sc. 3, p. 9. I should like to thank Dr Anna Smith for this reference and for her comments and suggestions made on a draft of this essay.
35. 20 January 1922, *Notebooks 2*, p. 319.
36. See, for example, Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy 1870–1901*; Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell, eds, *The Victorian Supernatural*; Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn, eds, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Spiritualism and the Occult* (London: Ashgate, 2012); Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991); Tatiana Kontou, *Spiritualism and Women's Writing from the Fin de Siècle to the Neo-Victorian* (London: Palgrave, 2009).
37. Jill Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channelling, the Occult, and Communication Technologies, 1859–1919* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010), p. 12. She adds, 'Women were exemplary go-betweens because they combined the right kind of presence with the right kind of absence.'
38. *Notebooks 2*, p. 181.
39. Shane McCorristine, *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England 1750–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 19.
40. Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Wilburn, 'Introduction', in Kontou and Willburn, eds, p. 4.
41. Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium*, p. 4.
42. *Letters 4*, p. 278.
43. *Collected Fiction*, pp. 357, 364.
44. Clare Hanson, 'Katherine Mansfield's Uncanniness', in Kimber and Wilson, eds, pp. 115–30 (p. 119).
45. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 9.
46. Kontou and Wilburn, 'Introduction', in Kontou and Willburn, eds, p. 1.
47. Laura Doyle, 'Geomodernism, postcoloniality and women's writing', in Maren Tova Linett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 129–45 (pp. 139–40).
48. *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 107, 86.
49. Sarah Sandley, 'The Middle of the Note: Katherine Mansfield's "Glimpses"', in Roger Robinson, ed., *Katherine Mansfield: In From the Margin* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), p. 85.
50. *Collected Fiction 2*, p. 368.
51. Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 16.
52. *Collected Fiction 2*, p. 369.
53. Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p. 124.
54. *Collected Fiction 2*, p. 370.
55. This is close to what Claire Drewery calls an 'uncanny story', about the haunting of a psyche; see her *Modernist Short Fiction by Women; The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (London: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 68–9.
56. *Collected Fiction 2*, p. 424.
57. See Clare Hanson, 'Katherine Mansfield's Uncanniness', p. 116, citing S. Freud's *The Uncanny*, trans. D. McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003 [1919]), pp. 148–9.

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58. *Collected Fiction 2*, pp. 421, 424.
59. *Collected Fiction 2*, p. 423.
60. *Collected Fiction 2*, pp. 423, 424.
61. Antony Alpers in his edition of *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 574, notes that this is a posthumous fragment, or an abandoned story, but the ellipses may be a substitute ending.
62. 'Preface' to *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, p. xxvii.
63. *Collected Fiction 2*, p. 417.
64. Burgan, pp. 18–20.
65. Burgan, pp. 101, 104, comments that Mansfield's project of recapturing the past included re-establishing Leslie's 'rebirthing', i.e. his right to be reborn.
66. Katherine Mansfield, *Novels and Novelists, 1888–1923*, ed. John Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1930), p. 288. Review of *Adam of Dublin*, by Conal O'Riordan.
67. James Moore, *Gurdjieff and Mansfield* (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 140.
68. A. R. Orage, 'Talks with Katherine Mansfield', *The New English Weekly*, 19 May 1932, p. 111; compare her comments after Leslie's death: 'Only the form that I would choose has changed utterly, I feel no longer concerned with the same appearance of things. The people who lived or who I wish to bring into my stories don't interest me any more. The plots of my stories leave me perfectly cold' (*Notebooks 2*, p. 32).
69. *Notebooks 2*, p. 181.
70. *Collected Fiction 2*, p. 69.
71. 18 October 1920; Letters 4, p. 75. Quoted by Alpers, *Life*, p. 320.
72. Orage, p. 111.
73. Alpers, *Life*, pp. 329–30. See Todd Martin's essay in this volume, pp. XX–XX.
74. I am grateful for this insight to Melanie Wattenbarger, a Marie Curie doctoral student at the University of Mumbai, who is currently working on Rohinton Mistry and other migrant novelists based in Canada.