

THE MODERNIST SHORT STORY

A study in theory and practice

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CHAPTER I

The short story: theories and definitions

The rise of the modern short story in the 1880s and 1890s indicates that the written story enjoyed a period of significant development – arguably the birth of a new kind of short story – which was concurrent with the emergence of literary modernism.¹ This concurrence is more than circumstantial: there are various connections between the formal properties and capacities of the short story and the new ways of representing the social world displayed in modernist fiction. This survey seeks to investigate the nature of the relationship between modernism and the short story, an area, strangely neglected by critics, which has important resonances both in terms of literary history, and in defining the role of fiction-making in the twentieth century: the short story encapsulates the essence of literary modernism, and has an enduring ability to capture the episodic nature of twentieth-century experience.

I am proposing a connection between the generic capacities of the short story and the way in which writers have depicted their social world, a connection which stems from a special kind of literary experience relevant to readers, as well as to writers, of short stories. L. P. Hartley, discussing the status of the short story in the 1960s, noted how readers were apt to ‘devour them singly on a news[s]heet’, but would be disinclined to read them in collections. The reason for this was (and is) the ‘unusual concentration’ the genre demands, a concentration which permits no respite in a *series* of short stories because “‘starting and stopping’ exhausts the reader’s attention just as starting and stopping uses up the petrol in a car’.² Hartley’s yardstick was the comparatively favourable fate of the novel, and this

same comparison – novel versus short story – has proved pervasive in short story criticism, as we shall see. The main point here, however, is Hartley's emphasis on a unique kind of attention demanded by the short story. Susan Lohafer writes that short stories 'put us *through* something – reality warp is the shorthand for it', and this may be the best shorthand definition we can come up with, indicating as it does two key elements of the short story: its intensity and its exaggerated artifice.³

The remainder of this opening chapter examines short story theory and indicates how the critical field has been dominated by a simplified 'single effect' doctrine, derived from Edgar Allan Poe, which invites a reunifying approach to familiar short story characteristics such as ellipsis, ambiguity and resonance. A different methodology is then outlined which acknowledges and interprets the *disunifying* effects of ellipsis and ambiguity, indicating how this kind of disruption establishes a connection between text and context. This methodology is particularly helpful in approaching the modernist short story because there is a stress on literary artifice in the short story which intensifies the modernist preoccupation with formal innovation. The approach indicates how form and context work together, how experimentation is the linchpin of modernism and of the social perspectives it offers. This premise and its theoretical foundation are tested in the body of the book, which comprises five author-specific chapters – on James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Wyndham Lewis and Malcolm Lowry – in which close readings of major modernist stories are made.

Any attempt to define a literary form has to mediate between conflicting requirements. The impulse to provide a terse, aphoristic description, based on empirical formal characteristics, must be tempered by an historical understanding: literary forms are continually evolving, even when they rely heavily on conventional gesture and device. Thus a *single* definition of the short story is both inaccurate and inappropriate: the diachronic perspective should always qualify the synchronic observation. The valid, historical definition of a literary form, therefore, examines *prevailing tendencies* rather than essential qualities, and

the current work, taken as a whole, is an extended attempt to define the modernist short story by accounting for the adaptation, in a particular era, of certain perceived generic qualities. Before beginning this extended analysis, however, it is necessary to consider the prevailing tendencies of the short story as an emerging modern form, and in this field of genre criticism extant scholarship is both a help and a hindrance.

Various attempts have been made to establish a taxonomy of modern prose forms, and a major problem with much of this work is its failure to account fully for the mutable, evolving nature of genre.⁴ Susan Lohafer's book on the short story, though an important work in the field, is representative of this failure, based as it is on an avowed 'interest' which 'is not historical but generically aesthetic'.⁵ However, much short story criticism engages with the form as an emergent, modern one (conceived in the nineteenth century) and so the qualities described can quite properly be appropriated as historically specific tendencies.⁶ Moreover, this criticism also decries a tradition which was the immediate inheritance of the modernists, a tradition which they questioned and subverted. Short story criticism, then, locates itself historically (often inadvertently) because it deals with a young form. The following survey of short story theory is designed to locate certain tendencies which were often modified and adapted by the modernists. Inevitably, such a survey is not in accord with the monolithic tendency of some of the critical work examined.

The most obvious problem facing the short story critic concerns narrative length, and this problem is usually tackled by a quantitative distinction between novel and story. This approach is epitomized in an important essay by Mary Pratt, who proceeds from the premise that 'shortness cannot be an intrinsic property of anything, but occurs only relative to something else'. Pratt takes the novel as the yardstick which 'has through and through conditioned both the development of the short story and the critical treatment of the short story', and, in doing so, she replicates the bias she analyses: she allows her *own* critical approach to be governed by the novel which supplies her with a neat, but reductive, binary opposition. This

results in a very distorted definition of story, a conviction that a 'hierarchical relation' obtains between novel and story. It is the use of this extrinsic 'hierarchical relation' to account for 'the practice of the short story' as being somehow 'conditioned by its relation to the novel, as the smaller and lesser genre' that is particularly dubious.⁷

The assumption that short story length is relative only to the novel is plainly inadequate, and applies, again, to a hidebound critical purview more than it does to fictional practice. A story offers a *short* experience in comparison with many things – watching a film, for instance – and the novel is only one point of comparison, however important. Any comparison based purely on quantity serves only to reinforce an unreasoning 'bigger-is-better' value judgement, and to obscure the main issue: the length question must be secondary to a consideration of *technique*. It is only when quantity and technique are examined together, as mutually dependent factors, that quantity acquires any significance. So, although E. M. Forster's assertion that 'any fictitious prose work over 50,000 words' constitutes a novel has provided a rough basis for distinguishing novels from short fictions,⁸ we must still concur with Norman Friedman that a measure based purely on a word-count 'is a misleading one because it centres on symptoms rather than causes'.⁹ Anthony Burgess suggests a (more suitable) holistic approach when he claims that in the Sherlock Holmes stories of Conan Doyle we witness 'the story doing a kind of novelistic job and doing it briefly'.¹⁰ Elizabeth Bowen makes a similar point about the stories of Henry James and Thomas Hardy: 'their shortness is not positive; it is nonextension. They are great architects' fancies, little buildings on an august plan'.¹¹ The charge here rests on an over-intricacy of plot, a problem which identifies a fundamental structural divergence. Short story critics generally agree that in the novel 'the dramatic events...are linked together by the principle of causality', as in the Holmes stories, or in the stylized folk-talkes of Hardy. A little-known collection of short fiction by G. B. Stern, entitled *Long Story Short*, constitutes a practical investigation of the implications of length and technique in the story. The most significant feature about the pieces in this volume is their complexity of plot. They are far

more involved and convoluted than is usual, a fact indicated in the collection's title: these plots have been artificially compressed – they are long stories rendered short. The prime example is 'The Uncharted Year', a 7,000-word fiction with a fantastically complicated plot, but which contains nothing else: the experiment results in a thin surface narrative – pure anecdote – with a trite moral tacked on at the end, in an attempt to give the piece a depth its structure cannot support.¹²

There is general critical consensus that the genuine short story severely restricts its scope for plot or action, and concentrates rather on reiteration through pattern. The short story, according to this view, involves only 'one dramatic event', with other subordinate events which 'facilitate the understanding of the main event'.¹³ Hierarchical comparisons between novel and story have also proved inviting over this issue of action and its scale. Mary Pratt has summarized this comparative exercise in which 'to some extent, the moment of truth stands as a model for the short story the way the life stands as a model for the novel'. The 'hierarchical relation' between the two genres, in the critical literature, results in a tendency to view the restricted action of the story as feeble novelistic imitation:

The identification of the short story form with moment of truth plot was to some degree prescribed by the prior association between the novel form and the life. The lurking associations are these: if the short story is not a 'full-length' narrative it cannot narrate a full-length life: it can narrate a fragment or excerpt of a life. And if from that fragment one can deduce things about the whole life, then the more novel-like, the more complete, the story is.¹⁴

The 'lurking associations' here are those of a critical prejudice which favours the novel as the fictional norm, a view of the novel which is obviously vulnerable: the identification between novel and full-length life is clearly inadequate, especially in relation to the modernist novel. It is sometimes claimed that the unit of time in modernist fiction is the day, whereas in nineteenth-century fiction it is the year.¹⁵ One can compare *Mrs Dalloway* with *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Ulysses* with *Emma*. Naturally this is not a hard-and-fast rule, but it does indicate a general shift in the treatment of time. It is interesting to note

that *Mrs Dalloway* and *Ulysses* were both originally conceived as short stories. Even in their final forms both novels hinge on single significant events – Clarissa Dalloway’s party, the meeting of Bloom and Stephen – the episodes around which these books are structured. In their suggestion, through limited action, of the full-length life, *Ulysses* and *Mrs Dalloway* are representative of a tendency common in modernist literature, and a tendency particularly well suited to the short story. The question of length is relevant here, but in a way which actually reverses the formula identified by Pratt. Many readers, for instance, may find the extended, piecemeal evocation of character in early twentieth-century fiction tedious. Virginia Woolf’s novel *Jacob’s Room* would be an extreme example of this formless technique that may be better suited to short fiction. The modernist story, in other words, may be seen to contain the distilled essence of the modernist novel, at least as far as it is usually perceived.

A conventional distinction between novel and story – the whole life, or the crucial year, against the single episode – might, then, also apply to the most obvious differences between the nineteenth-century novel and modernist fiction in general (and the modernist story in particular). This evolving opposition reinforces the notion of genre as contextually variable, but it also indicates a major fault with the simple novel/story opposition: the modernist story, far from being ‘smaller and lesser’ in any technical sense, actually exemplifies the strategies of modernist fiction.

The taxonomy of prose forms is complicated by the introduction of a third term – novella – which occupies a mid-ground between novel and story.¹⁶ Although the term itself is problematic, the theory which accompanies it is helpful in basing distinctions on matters other than length. Judith Leibowitz, in her *Narrative Purpose in the Novella*, is concerned with ‘the functions served by techniques in specific contexts’, and establishes a scale of technical function for the three prose forms: she claims that the narrative task of the novel is ‘elaboration’, while that of the short story is ‘limitation’. Narrative purpose in the novella, characterized as ‘compression’, combines the two in such a way as to give a ‘double effect

of intensity and expansion'.¹⁷ This apparent contradiction in terms centres on the novella's dependence on a 'theme-complex', the development of interrelated motifs which suggest an outward expansion of thematic concern, even while a limited focus is maintained. A parallel device is 'repetitive structure' which also suggests thematic expansion through a redevelopment of ideas and situations.¹⁸ Such techniques, according to Leibowitz, enable Thomas Mann (for example) to imply (without stating and without shifting focus) that the personal dissolution of Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* is indicative of the downward path of all civilization.¹⁹ Leibowitz's distinction between short story and novella may be unworkable: the use of theme-complex and repetitive structure are relevant, to some extent, to the shortest fiction examined in this survey. Yet this foregrounding of technique – the cultivation of expression through form – accurately locates the central tendency of modernist short fiction.²⁰

This coincidence between the modernist preoccupation with form and the capacity of the story is significant, and is only one of several such correspondences. The modernists' compression of time and dependence on symbolism are the two most obvious parallels: the short form often implies the typicality of a specific episode, while narrative limitation demands oblique expression through image and symbol.

Beyond these obvious parallels, the artifice of the story, particularly amenable to the artistic self-consciousness of the modernists, has further implications for the presentation of material: reception and analysis proceed from a grasp of pattern, of juxtaposition and simultaneity. Michael Chapman makes this point through comparison, as one might expect, with a notional novelistic convention:

Discussion of the novel usually proceeds most fruitfully by way of a detailed consideration of surface structure (which is syntagmatic and governed by temporal and causal relations); shorter fiction with greater immediacy signals deep structure (paradigmatic and based upon elements... which are not in themselves narrative).²¹

The artifice of the short story facilitates another modernist preoccupation: the analysis of personality, especially a con-

sideration of the fragmented, dehumanized self. The self-conscious nature of the story 'alerts us to the fact that ... characters ... are within the text part of the design that bears and moves them',²² a meta-fictional capacity resulting from 'the artificiality of the genre [which] makes authorial distancing a prerequisite of success', and this involves 'contrivances which mark the author's detachment from his [or her] characters'.²³ An inevitable corollary of these factors is a generic tendency towards paradox and ambiguity, another modernist hallmark: authorial detachment and the resulting emphasis on artifice and structural patterning (paradigmatic elements) give rise to an uncertain surface structure.

These capacities of modernist short fiction conform to the accepted characteristics of modernist literature in general: the limited action and an associated ambiguity and preoccupation with personality; and the self-conscious foregrounding of form and the concomitant reliance on pattern – paradigmatic devices – to express that which is absent from the surface, or syntagmatic level of the narrative. It is in the interpretation of these elements, however, that the real problems of short story criticism present themselves. There has been a general tendency to unify these elements, to view them as constitutive of an implicit formal unity not explicitly emphasized in the narrative. The modernist project, however, is far more radical than this would suggest, and actually gives rise to highly unstable work in which many elements are problematized. The notion of a single, exemplary action, for instance, is often taken as a structural centre, the validity of which is implicitly questioned. Indeed, most familiar tenets of short story criticism correspond to devices which the modernists deployed in an ambiguous way. A more detailed look at short story theory, and its monolithic tendency, will illuminate this problem of perception.

When one begins to read in and around the field of short story criticism two things soon become obvious. The first thing is that the theory is patchy and repetitive, with no strong sense of enlargement and development. This has to do mainly with the dominance of the short story's bigger sibling the novel; dominant, at least, in the minds of literary critics who have established a cumulative poetics for the novel out of all

proportion to that achieved for the neglected short story. The second realization is that, by virtue of the repetition, a single aesthetic *does* appear to emerge: a consensus by default, in effect. This consensus involves reiterations or adaptations of Poe's short story theory, affirmations, with differing degrees of enthusiasm, of Poe's stress on the importance of 'unity of effect or impression'. This 'single' and 'preconceived effect' doctrine, in its purest form, states that 'in the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preestablished design'.²⁴

If this tradition of story surveys beginning with Poe is due partly to a lack of critical concentration and development, it is also due partly to the power and suggestive half-truth of Poe's theory. Structural aspects of the short story have provided a great deal of evidence in support of different unity theories, and Poe's work is an important landmark here. His well-known dictum that the story, unlike the novel, can be 'read at one sitting' is seminal. Of course, the dictum eschews such contextual variables as hard chairs and tender posteriors, but it does locate a comparative 'totality' which the novel lacks. This sense of aesthetic wholeness leads Poe into an analogy with the visual arts: 'by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction'.²⁵ Valerie Shaw, building on this observation, makes the claim that 'at every stage of its development the short story reveals affinities with the style of painting dominating the period in question'. Shaw's 'parallel between the modern short story and Impressionist art' is an astute one, as it accurately locates a 'share[d] acute consciousness of form', but the limitations of the analogy (of which Shaw seems partially aware) curtail its critical usefulness.²⁶ After all, literature remains, primarily, a temporal medium and painting a spatial one. Consequently, Shaw's assertion that 'the story can offer a picture' does not really square with her stated interest in 'the differences between words and visual images' as well as the similarities.²⁷ The analogy risks obscuring the basic distinction between the metaphorical story 'picture' and the literal spatial image on a painter's canvas.²⁸ The same problem complicates

an analogy between photography and story writing, an area into which Shaw extends her discussion.²⁹ The comparison is irreducibly metaphorical, since it provides no theoretical basis for associating the different media, and the notion of a written 'picture' is obfuscating because its metaphorical aspect is partially hidden. There is a sense in which a short story has a unity which is not so evident in a novel, but this unity has to do primarily with linguistic reception and assimilation. Any spatial pattern is grasped by accumulation, or with hindsight, and, as such, is a kind of illusion generated progressively as the text is produced through reading. In short, the perception of story unity, in a spatial sense, is at odds with the inherent temporality of reading and writing.³⁰

Visual metaphors abound in short story theory, a fact which underlines the 'spatial' aspect of the genre, but which also obscures the illusory nature of this aspect. In contrast to 'linear' stories, some critics have discerned 'circular' or 'spiral' story types. Avrom Fleishman discusses the circular stories of Virginia Woolf, stories which return to the point at which they start (and which include 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass' and 'Moments of Being').³¹ Johannes Hedberg adds to this the refinement of the 'spirally' constructed story, a type which 'winds gradually to the centre'; Joyce's 'The Dead' is adduced as an example.³² These spatial metaphors imply a structural unity and also some kind of thematic unity, but there is an unwarranted methodological tidiness in such criticism. Woolf's stories 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass' and 'Moments of Being' both rehearse Woolfian ideas about the fragility of understanding and the intangible complexity of personality. Joyce's 'The Dead' examines the fragmentation of experience and personal identity in a different way, but creates an effect of uncertainty much as the Woolf stories do. These elements of uncertainty derive from a crossover between story and theme, a disjunction between the story pattern or form and the experience (with its external referents) that is not reducible to the form. The conclusion of Woolf's 'Moments of Being' deliberately makes this point when the characterization of Julia Craye, established in the reverie of her pupil Fanny Wilmot, is effectively exploded; and this is a

representative example of a tendency often found at a deeper level: the modernist circular, or spiral story, is usually an exploration of disunity rather than of the simple unity that the visual metaphor suggests.

The perceived difficulty with the cyclic and spiral story concepts may not be confined to the question of modernist uncertainty: it may point to an inappropriate way of thinking about the short story. An underlying problem with the supposed unity of the circular story is indicated in an essay by Rüdiger Imhof on minimal fiction. Imhof examines the ultimate circular story, John Barth's 'Frame Tale' which consists of the two lines 'ONCE UPON A TIME/THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN' printed vertically, back to back, on either side of a single sheet. The piece is presented as if for cutting out and fastening to create a Möbius strip which reads, endlessly, 'ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN ONCE UPON A TIME ...'. 'Frame Tale', as Imhof points out, is 'viciously circular', 'self-referential' and, by virtue of the paradox it represents, it has an 'unmistakable ambiguity'.³³ Whether or not one agrees with Imhof's dubious claim that these factors make 'Frame Tale' literature need not concern us here. The important point is that all perceived circular stories must contain an element of self-referentiality (they 'revolve' around their own points of reference), and that, even when confined to this reflexive dynamic, they can contain elements of paradox and ambiguity, but an ambiguity which is without a context. In the case of 'Frame Tale' this ambiguity stems from the inherently paradoxical nature of the Möbius strip, but this uncertainty may be an inevitable consequence of the circular-story concept: the story which can only explicitly describe its own universe must appear foreign (and hence inaccessibly ambiguous) to those readers (all readers) whose understanding is fashioned by a different system. But no writing occurs in a vacuum: it is always grounded in its social and intellectual context, and the circular-story concept tends to obscure this connection.

Short story writers since Poe have helped to perpetuate the notion of story unity, often using visual metaphors. John Wain has written that successful story writing is a 'knack', 'something

almost physical, the movement of the wrists'. Consequently the writing is 'like a cook turning out a blancmange', since 'with a short story, it turns out right, or it doesn't turn out right'.³⁴ Again, the metaphorical sleight of hand threatens to elide important differences: the 'turning out' of a story is in no technical sense comparable to the 'turning out' of a blancmange, and the comparison amounts to little more than a verbal conceit. This idea of artistic success being dependent upon physical perfection is apparently echoed by other story writers. Katherine Anne Porter has commented that, 'if I didn't know the ending of a story, I wouldn't begin',³⁵ while Katherine Mansfield felt that 'the *labour*' of writing came 'once one has thought out a story'.³⁶ In these expressions of the compositional process, that worrying visual metaphor for the story artefact hovers in the wings. It is shoved unceremoniously onstage in A. E. Coppard's formulation, which stresses the importance of 'see[ing] all round and over and under my tale before putting a line of it on paper'.³⁷ The precise composition of this three-dimensional and scientifically charted object remains unclear. Possibly it is some sort of blancmange.

Theories about story 'shape' also appear in more sophisticated formulations which have their roots in Aristotelian prescriptions about beginnings, middles and ends. Cay Dollerup has summarized various diagrammatic representations – triangles and inverted 'V's – of the tri-part story theory (and its variants), and the interested reader is directed to Dollerup's essay.³⁸ My interest in this kind of theory centres on the effect it has had on less strictly formalist criticism. Ian Reid, in his brief but valuable book, considers the possibility that 'a deep-rooted aesthetic preference' lies behind the 'tripartite sequence'. It is true that the tripartite sequence is a familiar and effective rhetorical device: one thinks not only of fairy-tales, jokes and anecdotes, but also of the structure of very different cultural texts such as political speeches (the three-part list is a basic oratory ingredient), or academic works (which often follow the thesis-antithesis-synthesis structure of Hegelian dialectic). The tri-part theory has some relevance to those short stories which develop traditional tale motifs, but this relevance should be seen

as merely one element among others, rather than as a generic principle. Reid extends and refines his structural discussion, and suggests the notion of 'formal poise' as a basic short story ingredient. In doing so he courts the danger of an oversimplified formal prescription.³⁹ Elaine Baldeshwiler, in an important essay, teeters on the brink of the same reductionism. D. H. Lawrence's short fiction, she feels, achieves a satisfyingly lyrical effect when he 'permits structure itself to be guided by the shape of feeling'.⁴⁰ The idea that the responses of readers, or the emotions of characters, can be anticipated or represented through formal shape can be misleading, and the dangers of this type of theory are manifest in John Gerlach's *Toward the End: Closure and Structure in the American Short Story*: in his introduction Gerlach writes of 'an underlying narrative grid that I think each reader applies to any story and that every writer depends on the reader knowing'.⁴¹ This ready-made narrative grid, with its essential ingredient of closure, lies behind all of Gerlach's subsequent comments, even in relation to the open-ended story because 'the short story is that genre in which anticipation of the ending is always present'.⁴² In a sense this is true, because non-closure in fiction generates its effects from a tension with the closure it denies (a matter discussed more fully in my concluding chapter). Yet this tension is complex, invariably governed more by the anti-closural gesture than by an anticipation of closure. Gerlach's book develops the line of argument put forward in a much earlier essay by A. L. Bader, who claims that the modern short story, despite its apparent lack of structure, actually derives its form from a more conventional, plot-bound story type. The reading process is then a kind of dot-to-dot exercise in which 'the reader must supply the missing parts of the traditional plot'.⁴³ A good way, perhaps, of indicating theoretical continuity – in this case the continuity of the unity aesthetic – but this is not a method particularly suited to analysing literary development and innovation.

In her structuralist account of the short story, Susan Lohafer argues that expectations of closure operate at the level of individual sentences, an approach which (despite its suggestiveness in many ways), is greatly restricted by a delimited,

synchronic view of language. She writes of 'a grammar of fiction' which 'starts with the assumption that fiction is a conscious manipulation of the universal processes underlying the very structure of language itself'.⁴⁴ Lohafer threatens to reduce language and experience to 'universal' structures and shapes, making manifest a danger which is latent in much short story criticism. Lohafer anticipates Gerlach in arguing that the 'idea of progression-toward-an-end concentrates thought and regulates feeling whether or not the end really comes'.⁴⁵ This recurring idea of the story as an end-oriented totality, which makes its presence felt even in absence, is of limited use. As a starting-point for a consideration of formal innovation it can be helpful, but beyond that it can impede critical insight. This absence-as-presence argument seems, ultimately, circular and unproductive.

Visual metaphors for the short story, and the prescriptive narrative frame they often imply, cannot elucidate the form's complexity and (productive) ambiguity. The unity aesthetic which underpins the kind of approach I have been examining also crops up in less formulaic writing on the genre. Clare Hanson, who perceives that 'writers such as Joyce and Katherine Mansfield had rejected the "plotty story" because it seemed to depend too heavily on conventional assumptions about the meaning and value of human experience', can still speak of the 'composed and harmonious whole' in the work of these two writers, and of the 'central symbolic intention' around which modernist short fiction is 'deliberately shaped'.⁴⁶ The fallacious notion of central symbolic intention helps bolster the conception of story as visual artefact, especially when the critic is able to locate a single dominant symbol. In the light of the present discussion Kafka's famous objection to having the insect of 'Metamorphosis' depicted by his illustrator takes on a special resonance.⁴⁷ Kafka's motivation might be plausibly interpreted as a strategy for protecting a resonant, multivalent fiction from the powerful reductionism of the single image.

To speak of multivalence in the context of modernist fiction is not, however, to suggest that a principle of undecidability is operative. Rather, specific kinds of ambiguity are examined in

specific ways. This is a process which Frank Kermode overlooks in *The Genesis of Secrecy* where he reflects on the various interpretations that narrative can support and employs Kafka's parable 'Before the Law' to illustrate a general principle of undecidability in narrative. The Kafka parable is worth considering briefly here since it is, in certain ways, a representative modernist short fiction. It concerns a man who attempts, without success, to gain access to 'the Law', but who is kept out by a doorkeeper. After many years vigil outside this door, before dying, the man discovers that the door, which is now to be shut, was intended only for him.⁴⁸ Kermode's point is that the man in the parable, denied access to the Law, is comparable to the reader of any parable (and, by extension, of any narrative): 'the outsider remains outside'. The point is reinforced by an account of the discussion between K and the priest concerning the interpretation of the parable. Kermode points out that K 'is offered a number of priestly glosses, all of which seem somehow trivial or absurd, unsatisfying or unfair, as when the doorkeeper is said to be more deserving of pity than the suppliant, since the suppliant was there of his own free will, as the porter was not'. The fact that the parable itself 'incorporates very dubious interpretations, which help to make the point that the would-be interpreter cannot get inside, cannot even properly dispose of authoritative interpretations that are more or less obviously wrong', is offered as a representative characteristic of parable.⁴⁹

Yet surely this does not fully account for Kafka's deliberate cultivation of ambiguity, or for the parodic nature of his parable: the 'uninterpretable' nature of 'Before the Law', as a statement about the inscrutability of authority, is the whole point; and the method chosen for this statement is a deliberate short-circuiting of lucid didacticism (the quality conventionally associated with parable). Of course, Kermode's argument is that all narrative is inscrutable in this way, but this overlooks Kafka's deliberate subversion of a notional convention. 'Before the Law', in terms of its broad characteristics, is an exemplary modernist story. Its enactment of ambiguity is typical, as is its simultaneous dependence on, and subversion of, convention:

the rejection of parable as message, as a parallel to the inscrutability of authority, is itself presented in the form of a parable.

One way of getting beyond the unity aesthetic is to develop the view that the modernist story represents some kind of new beginning, an out-and-out rejection of generic convention and device, and there is some precedent for pursuing this convenient idea. A critical commonplace in short story theory is the notion that there are, essentially, two types of story, differentiated by their differing dependence on 'plot', or external action. This is a development and refinement of the novel/story dichotomy discussed above: generally, plot is here seen as part of a formal pattern, but even in this capacity it is not held to be a fundamental factor in some stories. The plotted story, of which Maupassant is seen as a figurehead, is set against the less well structured, often psychological story; the 'slice-of-life' Chekhovian tradition. It is to this tradition that the stories of the modernists (those of Joyce, Woolf and Mansfield in particular) are usually said to belong.

Suzanne Ferguson defines these two types as simple (the anecdote or tale) and complex (the episode). Simple stories concern 'a single character in a single, simple action', while in the complex episode 'the forming elements are thus marshalled towards the ordered revelation of character or, in some cases, the development of symbol, rather than toward plot'.⁵⁰ Eileen Baldeshwiler has supplied alternative terms for this binary opposition: she distinguishes between the conventional, plot-based story ('epical') and the 'lyrical' story, often open-ended, which focuses upon 'internal changes, moods, and feelings'.⁵¹ These succinct terms seem to deal very neatly with the perceived dichotomy.

The two trends – epical and lyrical – are seen by Baldeshwiler as seminal to an historical survey of the short story. Indeed, she begins her article by asserting that 'when the history of the modern short story is written it will have to take account' of these 'two related developments'.⁵² As if in response to this assertion Clare Hanson has structured her history of the short form, *Short Stories and Short Fictions: 1880–1980*, to set the two

trends in opposition. She has even posited a new terminology to distinguish between short *stories* – the conventional, epic, plot-based type – and short *fictions* in which plot is subordinate to internal psychological drama, a category that roughly equates with Baldeshwiler's lyrical story, and Ferguson's complex episode. Hanson's chapter on the modernist era locates Joyce, Woolf, and Mansfield within the latter camp, as writers of short fictions rather than stories.⁵³ The tidiness of this taxonomy is appealing, but when one examines its implications, problems present themselves. To begin with, the term 'short fiction' carries a burden of signification which is not easily cast off: short fiction is frequently used as an imprecise, all-purpose term which subsumes 'sketch', 'story' and 'novella' – any fiction which is not a novel, effectively. The problem with trying to recoup such a generalized term as a specific critical tool is self-evident, and this terminological quibble suggests a larger problem of descriptive accuracy, especially in relation to Hanson's treatment of the modernists. It is true that plot is de-emphasized in the stories of Joyce, Mansfield and Woolf, and this distinguishes their work from the more carefully plotted short fictions of, for example, Henry James and Joseph Conrad. But this de-emphasis is not a rejection: on the contrary, the adaptation of well-plotted story types is an important feature in the stories of Joyce, Mansfield, and Woolf, in whose works a consciousness of conventional story forms provides structure and referential landmarks, even where such conventions are subject to revisionist or ironical treatment. In other words, the dichotomy is apparent rather than real, an overstatement of a shift in emphasis. An accurate analysis of the modernist story must be more flexible than this; it must focus on the innovation achieved through adaptation, rather than on uniqueness as some kind of self-contained entity.

A key aspect of the unity aesthetic is the idea that the short story concentrates on a single character, and the artistic possibilities of this focus are often seen as limited in a particular way. Whereas the novel has the scope to *develop* characterization, the story is usually deemed to have space only to *show*, to illuminate a certain aspect of character (and/or situation) in a

single moment of insight. Mark Schorer's aphoristic statement – 'the short story is an art of moral revelation, the novel an art of moral evolution' – forcefully represents this tenet of belief.⁵⁴ Elizabeth Bowen concurs with this view: 'I do not feel that the short story can be, or should be, used for the analysis or development of character. The full, full-length portrait is fitter work for the novelist'.⁵⁵ There is an element of obvious truth, of *truism* almost, in these statements, yet they also contain an undercurrent of simplification and distortion. The suggestion is that characterization in the novel can attain a complexity unavailable to the short story, and while this is obviously true in some sense, its implied corollary – the assumption that the short story *reveals* its characterization, suddenly and intensely – is uncritically reductive. Approaches to the short story have expended great effort in explicating the nature of the inner character, revealed in key moments, often through the poetic use of symbol and image. The critical literature, in effect, has established an impression of short story characterization as a puzzle, the solution to which can be found by the application of a kind of generic cipher. This is the critical heritage which has given rise to those text-books, in which famous stories are given the once-over with regard to theme-plot-character. These books are often designed as training grounds for a formulaic study of the novel, and represent a deeply entrenched attitude to the study of literature. The pedagogic and cultural implications of this kind of 'puzzle-solving', with its underlying will to order, reduce and assimilate, are disturbing, especially when it is foregrounded as the key to a literary genre.⁵⁶

Characterization is, admittedly, seminal in the modernist story, where the *emphasis* falls on internal rather than external action. This body of short fiction, therefore, has provided much material for the character-revelation school of reading, an approach underpinned by Joyce's 'epiphany' concept, the 'sudden spiritual manifestation'⁵⁷ which is usually seen as the key to characterization:

The emphasis of modernist short fiction was on a single moment of intense or significant experience. It was not generally thought desirable to break down experience into smaller units still, for example units of language: such a breakdown could theoretically proceed

infinitely, leading to a complete degradation of meaning and value. So the 'epiphany' or 'blazing moment' came to form the structural core of modernist short fiction (and... of many modernist novels). This stress on the fleeting moment is consistent with the prevailingly relativist philosophy inherited by modernist writers.⁵⁸

Clare Hanson here locates an important difficulty in character-revelation readings of modernist stories, a tension founded on the contradiction of interpreting 'a discrete moment or unit of experience' in a particular way, and yet linking such an interpretation to the problematized 'external personality' which, for the modernists, is 'an ever-changing, infinitely adjustable "envelope" surrounding the real self'. The problem is further exacerbated, as Hanson perceives, by 'the "indirect free" style of narration in which the voice of the narrator is modulated so that it appears to merge with that of a character of the fiction'.⁵⁹ This, apparently, is an advance on the 'moral revelation' approach to the significant moment, since, if the narrative itself is problematized, there is no authoritative *voice* to point a moral. Hanson, however, overlooks the possibility that this might be the whole point, and pursues a more conventional way of solving the problem of uncertainty. Her account of Katherine Mansfield's art indicates the kind of 'solution' she finds. Overemphasizing Mansfield's Symbolist inheritance, Hanson actually buttresses the reductive character-revelation approach: 'the strength of Katherine Mansfield's Symbolist technique can be fully appreciated only through close readings. "The Escape" (1920) is, like her other fictions, a total image, a carefully composed expressive appearance in which each naturalistic detail also functions symbolically, contributing to the expression of a mood or a state of mind.' This kind of analysis, in which 'the idea of a concrete image can be extended ... to mean the entire composition of a fiction and not just a single motif,' facilitates a moral vantage point for deciphering character. Hanson enables herself to conclude that the husband in 'The Escape' 'comes to full consciousness of his position, of the exhaustion of his spirit and the impasse reached with his wife', and her purpose in doing so is to present this neatly unpacked epiphany as exemplary: 'such a moment of vision is the quintessence of modernist short fiction'. The

husband's vision is complicated by a simultaneous perception of 'the beauty of the external world and of art', but the reading is far from complex in that it hinges upon a preconceived approach to symbolic pattern and order.⁶⁰

This, surely, is a distortion of the modernist project, especially as it is manifested in the short fiction. If narrative authority and the stability of personality are both problematized, what grounds are there for this emphasis on authorial order and control? One might equally interpret the use of symbol as objective correlative for internal mood as fluid and uncertain; as *emblematic* of that 'ever-changing' personality. Indeed, *not* to do so implies more about the reductive habits of critical theory in general (and short story criticism in particular) than it does about modernist writing.

Pertinent here is Wayne Booth's argument that even in the most impersonal novel there is an implied author whose personal values are expressed in the total form.⁶¹ This indicates a unity established through the back door, and Hanson seems to have a similar conviction about the short story. Yet the cultivated disunity of the modernist story should lead us away from the search for a unifying authorial presence, and towards a focus on the historical gaps and conflicts in a text. These gaps and conflicts, which I take to be the central aspect of evolving generic form, inevitably result in an uneven textual surface.

Hanson's delimited reading of Mansfield is anticipated by Valerie Shaw, who rightly points out that 'Mansfield moves so freely in and out of the minds of all of her characters that they end up existing on the same level, leaving no way of gauging the author's attitude to her subject'. The problem, as Shaw perceives it, is solved by an integrated use of 'figurative' language – a strategic use of symbol and metaphor – which enables Mansfield 'to balance sympathy and judgement'. The aesthetic preference for 'balance', and for the 'judgement' it affords, lies behind Shaw's conservative view of the epiphany as an ordering principle: 'most worthwhile short stories do contain a definite moment at which understanding is attained, sometimes involving a response no deeper than, "So it *was* the butler who killed Lord Mountjoy", but often turning the reader

inward to reassess his [or her] own moral or ethical standpoint'.⁶² If one agrees that a 'worthwhile' story involves some kind of 'moral or ethical' challenge, one might also argue that the significant moment in modernist fiction can, with worthy intent, challenge the concept of momentary understanding itself. Woolf's 'Moments of Being', referred to above, can be seen as structured around a *non*-epiphany which makes just such a challenge. In fact, most of the accepted modernist 'epiphanies' are problematic. The 'significant moment' in *Dubliners* constitutes the most surprising example of this, being consistently undercut by unreliable narrative.

The problem facing short story critics is to find a way of escaping their own reductive formulae. Indeed, the critical literature often exhibits the kind of contradiction that can point beyond the formulae. Julio Cortázar, for instance, has contributed to the visual artefact aesthetic, but his comments also reveal its limitations. Cortázar's metaphor for story composition is 'modelling a sphere out of clay', and, despite the obvious comparison with Wain's blancmange theory, the idea is developed into a more significant area: 'to put it another way, the feeling of the sphere should somehow be there before the story is ever written, as if the narrator, subject to the form it takes, were implicitly moving it and drawing it to its maximum tension, which is what makes for, precisely, the perfection of the spherical form'. There is an inherent contradiction here between plasticity and physical perfection, not perhaps in the process of fashioning clay, but certainly in relation to the short story as a finished product. Cortázar develops the misleading aspect of this analogy in discussing the 'autarchy' of the 'great story', denoted by 'the fact that the story has pulled free of its author like a soap bubble from a bubble-blower'. The contradiction, however, is illuminating. Cortázar effectively locates the dynamic of the modern short story which is actually at odds with its *apparent* formal unity, and this dissonance is identified in his resonant statement that 'a story relie[s] on those values that make poetry and jazz what they are: tension, rhythm, inner beat, *the unforeseen within fore-seen parameters*' (emphasis mine).⁶³

An apparent conflict between form and content has been

noted by several critics. János Szávai detects 'an internal contradiction' in the short story which derives from its origins in the oral anecdote. As in the spoken tale, argues Szávai, there is an illusion of reality – an authorial effort to present a story as *true* – which is at odds with the higher plane where the story's 'essence' is to be found; 'the actual meaning lies beyond' the 'first stratum of reception'.⁶⁴ Another critic writes of "'slice-of-life" stories' (the Chekhovian tradition), and considers how they 'reflect the confusing and complex formlessness of life itself', yet their 'structure can still be thought of as the inverted "V"' because 'in their unique view of reality these stories imply a conscious plotting that is not antithetical to the view of plots with beginnings, middles, and ends'.⁶⁵

Despite the formalist emphasis of his book, John Gerlach also displays awareness of an anti-formalist story element. Apropos of Hemingway, he considers the significance of stories which are structurally closed, yet thematically open.⁶⁶ John Bayley makes several remarks which point towards dissonance as an informing generic factor. He considers 'the short story element' to be 'an unexpressed paradox'. Stated less paradoxically, Bayley's belief here is that 'one of the most vital effects of the short story' is 'the impression that there is always something more to come'.⁶⁷ Bayley continues to refine this imprecise, but suggestive aesthetic:

Fully to succeed the short story must forgo its self-conscious emphasis on concentration, and appear both leisurely and enmeshed in the speculative, as any other genre may be. It must seem both formally to preclude, and secretly to accept, speculation on matters excluded by itself... The incompatibility between its art and its mystery must become its own justification.⁶⁸

The frequency with which these formulations appear attests to the importance of paradox to the short story, yet the question of the *significance* and *function* of paradox remains unaddressed by these critics. The major stumbling-block is the contradiction perceived between form and content, a perception which results from a preconceived notion of form. A more helpful approach would construe the new form as content itself, innovation as

statement, and as a contradiction only of the old notion of form. It is a question of 'grasping form no longer as the symbolic mould into which content is poured, but as the "form of the content": which is to say, grasping form as the structure of a ceaseless self-production, and so not as "structure" but as "structuration"'.⁶⁹ The problem hinges on finding a critical approach and a language which is rigorous enough to theorize the evolving, hidden side of a text. Such a language has generally been missing from short story criticism, and, since the elements of ambiguity and paradox cannot be precisely dealt with without such a language, critics have taken refuge in the nebulous concept of 'mystery'. Bayley believes that the short story must suggest 'that its mystery cannot be yielded up',⁷⁰ and this idea of 'mystery' has been mentioned by several critics, usually as a *fundamental* generic factor. Eudora Welty has written that

the first thing we see about a story is its mystery. And in the best stories, we return at the last to see mystery again. Every good story has mystery – not the puzzle kind, but the mystery of allurement. As we understand the story better, it is likely that the mystery does not necessarily decrease; rather it simply grows more beautiful.⁷¹

Another example is found in Ian Reid's book, which concludes with a chapter on 'Essential Qualities?', the query indicating the uncertainty of the concept. The chapter ends with a quote from William James concerning his brother Henry's tales and the 'feeling' they arouse 'of baffled curiosity as to the mystery of the beginning and end of their being'.⁷²

These theories of mystery and uncertainty might appear to represent the polar opposite of the unity aesthetic; but the idea of narrative mystery has not proved to be at all incompatible with the 'decoding' approach which redeems the ambiguous story from uncertainty by imposing symbolic order upon it. Clare Hanson summarizes this view in writing that 'the ellipses in the works of the modernists generally occur...when the author...sacrifices narrative continuity to symbolic order'.⁷³ But even if the mystery element is perceived as apparent rather than real – as the result of the rejection of epical narrative

convention – there remains a resonant dissonance between order and disorder which needs to be addressed. The dot-to-dot exercise re-establishes order at the expense of devaluing, and hence *misrepresenting*, the element of disorder.

An example of symbolic effect will help to clarify this problem of misrepresentation. Extant readings of Katherine Mansfield's story 'Bliss' indicate the problems that arise when a 'symbolic order' is sought in modernist writing. The story traces the happiness of its protagonist, Bertha Young, during a day which culminates in a dinner party at which she is the hostess. Her feeling of elation, which she cannot define, becomes focused into an imagined bond with a dinner guest, Pearl Fulton, a beautiful young woman who is 'a "find" of Bertha's'.⁷⁴ Her buoyant feelings, caused largely by her attraction to Pearl, she channels into a newly found sexual desire for her husband Harry. Her bubble of euphoria is burst when she sees Harry and Pearl in each other's arms as the guests are leaving.

Bertha's 'epiphany' involves a dawning (but incomplete) awareness of her own latent homosexuality, a development conveyed by the symbolic associations of the pear tree in the story. Initially, the tree is assessed by Bertha as a symbol of her own life, and then, as she and Pearl stand admiring it together, she imagines it unites them. Finally, having discovered Harry and Pearl embracing, she turns to the tree apparently expecting to find it somehow changed in accordance with her new mood, only to find it 'as lovely as ever'.⁷⁵ Walter Anderson is fully justified in arguing that the polarity of the love triangle here is homosexual rather than heterosexual: it is not that Pearl and Bertha are in competition for Harry, but rather that Harry and Bertha are rivals for Pearl. Accordingly, Anderson interprets the pear tree as a symbol of Bertha's sexuality, its tallness representing her (unrecognized) homosexual aspirations and its rich blossoms expressing her desire to be sexually used.⁷⁶ That these aspirations remain unfulfilled is conveyed by the sight of the tree 'as lovely as ever' at the story's close.

The story's symbolism has provoked much debate, a fact which suggests that it may be less determinate than the symbol-hunting critical approach has allowed.⁷⁷ Anderson's reading, I

feel, is accurate as far as it goes. Indeed, an explicit association is made between Bertha and the tree when 'she seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life'.⁷⁸ There is, however, a fluidity in the tree's symbolic purport; in addition to its function as emblem of Bertha's sexuality, there is also a sense in which the tree and that which it embodies is distanced from her. This is made manifest when Bertha, having witnessed the embrace, rushes to look at the pear tree, her happiness destroyed:

Bertha simply ran over to the long windows.

'Oh, what is going to happen now?' she cried.

But the pear tree was as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still.⁷⁹

Bertha here has cause to revise her earlier evaluation of the tree as a symbol of her own life: it is now thoroughly out of tune with her feelings. These different functions of the tree are reinforced by the pun on 'pear', which can also be heard as 'pair', suggestive of Bertha's personal identification with the tree, and also of her (later) notion that it somehow unites her with Pearl. 'Pear' can also be heard as 'pare', suggestive of the peeling away of Bertha's delusion, a process which presumably begins when she feels the tree to be divorced from her situation as the story ends. In creating this distance between character and symbol Mansfield skilfully widens her symbolic scope: the pear tree is now both emblematic of Bertha's sexuality *and* representative of the blossoming, fecundating processes of nature from which she is excluded. This exclusion highlights her predicament as frustrated homosexual and as unwilling participant in a heterosexual system. The symbol is at once Bertha and yet not-Bertha, a formal contradiction which summarizes Bertha's personality contradiction and non-identity. (This disruption of symbolic order is consonant with the modernists' fragmented presentation of personality.) Such a complex use of symbolism is commonly detected in poetry, but is rarely observed in discussions of short fiction.

This example demonstrates how disorder and contradiction can be productive. In concentrating on symbolic pattern,

however, the reading, as it stands, is geared to exposing the limitations of the symbol-hunt: to some extent it discredits, by following, the same restricted methodology. This is not to say that symbolism is irrelevant in reading the story, but that its role is complicated and enriched by other factors, particularly the use of discourse and fictional frame.

The premise of this chapter has been that the literary effects generated in modernist stories derive from a tension between formal convention and formal disruption, and that this paradoxical dual essence has been recognized, but not adequately theorized in existing short story theory. A more coherent approach, and one which removes the apparent paradox, can be achieved through an application of the Althusserian concept of 'relative autonomy'. Basically, this involves seeing the disruptive literary gesture as an instance of relative autonomy; as something which is simultaneously conditioned by, yet critical of its ideological context, a context which can be equated with literary conventions and whatever world-view they encompass. This element of criticism need not always be an overt aspect of the text, and may be the product of a contemporary reinterpretation; for the modernists, however, the disclosure of ideological context is often an integral part of their formal experimentation.

The value of this approach can be illustrated by a brief consideration of a well-known text as an example, for instance, Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure*: if we consider the economic exigencies of magazine publication to have had an important influence on the novel's *structure* – its episodic and incident-full nature – we are still left with a great deal more to say about its effects, what it can be made to show.⁸⁰ The point here is that although the convention of episodic writing often imposes a powerful force of trivialization, Hardy was yet able to engage with the serious contemporary issues of sexual morality and education, and in a challenging way: formal convention is disrupted to provide the structure for a new kind of content. Hardy, though obliged to cram the book with happenings, does not allow his readers to become involved simply with the plot; rather, he spoils and disrupts a straightforward identification

with the novel's causal progression. A key example of this follows the death of the children, when Jude and Sue, in the midst of their grief, pause to discuss the *Agamemnon*, from which Jude finds himself quoting. As John Goode perceptively remarks, 'not only does Jude produce an apt quotation which shows his knowledge more than it illuminates the situation, but Sue suddenly looks out of her understandable hysteria and both awards him an accolade and tells the reader how to assess his quotation'. We are called upon to question the value of Jude's knowledge and, by extension, the worth of the type of education he values. This is typical of a novel, which 'again and again ... breaks out of its frame' in 'mak[ing] an intervention in highly controversial issues of the day'.⁸¹

Certain problems arise in trying to define and theorize this relative autonomy, or partial distantiation, and the principal difficulty should be briefly mentioned. Althusser has been charged with political capitulation for his theoretical stance in this area; and this charge hinges on the amorphous category of the aesthetic, and on the way in which the concept of relative autonomy has been linked with the aesthetic quality of art. If the element of autonomous vision is equated with the aesthetic (as some form of universal category), then one can easily see how Althusser could be 'charged with reinscribing the categories of bourgeois aesthetics within Marxism'.⁸² The issue can be viewed more positively, however.

A crucial document here is 'A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre', in which Althusser outlines the concept of relative autonomy in art: 'I do not rank real art among the ideologies, although art does have a quite particular and specific relationship with ideology.' The duality of this relationship hinges on the fact that 'what art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of "seeing", "perceiving" and "feeling"... is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes'.⁸³ Later in the letter, Althusser, discussing the language of art as a "'spontaneous" language', points out that 'every "spontaneous" language is an ideological language, the vehicle of an ideology, here the ideology of art and of the activity productive of

aesthetic effects. Like all knowledge, the knowledge of art presupposes a preliminary *rupture* with the language of *ideological spontaneity* and the constitution of a body of scientific concepts to replace it'.⁸⁴ Here, there are two things in particular to note. The first thing is that 'the knowledge of art' is distinguished from the 'language of *ideological spontaneity*', the art language itself. This mid-ground of knowledge implies a critical position, a political interpretation *externally* applied. The second (connected) point is that aesthetics and ideology are presented as linked in some way. The 'aesthetic effect', in essence, is relatively autonomous, but is simultaneously delimited by the ideological factors bearing upon it. The 'knowledge of art' is accorded a privileged status, but this is dependent upon an external political understanding of ideology. One should be wary of putting too much weight on so slight a document as the 'Letter on Art', but it is highly valuable as a preliminary signpost to the politicizing of the aesthetic as a variable, contextually dependent category.

The dual essence of art – its simultaneous contextual dependence and contextual critique – is only viable if the context in question can be made available (at least partially) through the text. History, that is to say, has to exist as an extra-textual reality which locates and defines literary production. This may amount to no more than an imperfect reconstruction by the critic, based on a personal period-knowledge, but it is this element of referentiality which redeems the knowledge of art from the 'subject-less discourse of conceptual science' and gives it a context.⁸⁵

If the category of relative autonomy (and its application) is accepted, together with the possibility of reconstructing history as absent cause, then one can follow a critical methodology which corresponds to the Althusserian '*symptomatic*' reading. This is the reading which 'divulges the undivulged event in the text it reads, and in the same movement relates it to *a different text*, present as a necessary absence in the first'.⁸⁶ This type of interpretation, in Fredric Jameson's formulation, is characterized as 'the rewriting of the literary text in such a way that the latter may itself be seen as the rewriting or restructuration of

a prior historical or ideological *subtext*, it being always understood that that “subtext” is not immediately present as such, not some common-sense external reality, nor even the conventional narratives of history manuals, but rather must itself always be (re)constructed after the fact’.⁸⁷ The question remains of where to look for ‘the undivulged event’, the revealing ‘ideological subtext’. Jameson, again, suggests an answer:

In the case of Althusserian literary criticism proper ... the appropriate object of study emerges only when the appearance of formal unification is unmasked as a failure or an ideological mirage. The authentic function of the cultural text is then staged rather as an *interference* between levels, as a subversion of one level by another; and for Althusser and Pierre Macherey the privileged form of this disunity or dissonance is the objectification of the ideological by the work of aesthetic production.⁸⁸

In citing Macherey Jameson alludes to the former’s *Theory of Literary Production*. In a later essay, however, Macherey rejects the category of aesthetics, but, even so, the interpretive formulation outlined in this collaborative essay with Etienne Balibar is apposite in this context:

The first principle of a materialist analysis would be: literary productions must not be studied from the standpoint of their unity which is illusory and false, but from their material disparity. One must not look for unifying effects but for signs of the contradictions (historically determined) which produced them and which appear as unevenly resolved conflicts in the text.⁸⁹

For an illustration of historically significant dissonance in a short story, let us return briefly to Mansfield’s ‘Bliss’. As we have seen, Bertha’s ‘epiphany’ in the story involves a dawning awareness of her own latent homosexuality, but this semi-revelation is greatly compromised by the personal confusion and alienation which are simultaneously uncovered. This equivocal ‘epiphany’ – the laying bare of personal dissolution, which is the point of the story – is also partly determined by a certain contextual, ideological restraint: the cultivation of

obscurity in dealing with matters of sexuality was determined as much by social restriction as by aesthetic formula. C. A. Hankin, discussing 'The Modern Soul' (1911) and 'Bain Turcs' (1913), has pointed out this historical determinant:

In dealing with bisexuality, Katherine Mansfield was entering difficult territory. ... she was writing about a subject which in the aftermath of the Wilde trial was considered morally wrong, if not 'forbidden'. ... There is an ambiguity, then, in the texture of these two stories which reveals itself in devious plot structures, confusing shifts of point of view, innuendo and a heavy reliance upon symbols.⁹⁰

The subtext of 'Bliss' (1918), which centres on Bertha's sexual confusion and indecision, can be seen as having been repressed, in part, by the same historical conditioning. The sexual plot, impossible to present overtly, is conveyed by a sophisticated symbolism. The divergence of critical opinion over the story's symbolism is an understandable response to the story's indirect method, a method partially inspired by the silencing force of social taboo.

Yet Mansfield is not contained by this silencing force. The focus of her story is on the personal muddle caused by the selfsame taboo: the historical limit, or ideological restraint, corresponds to the story's thematic content. The point is to indicate the psychological confusion caused by the ideology of heterosexual conformity, an ideology which prevents Bertha from understanding and expressing her own bisexuality. The ambiguity of Mansfield's method skilfully replicates the uncertainty of the experience. This is the relative autonomy of the story: its ability to reveal the ideology under which it operates.

The imposition of formal unity on a story like 'Bliss' cannot help but obfuscate this interplay between content and context, since those creative elements which cut across the form must be misrepresented, if not ignored. And if, as in my characterization of modernist writing, dissonance is the *crux* of the creativity, such an approach is obviously inadequate.

Those nebulous story concepts discussed earlier, such as 'implication', and 'mystery', are more adequately accounted for in this approach. It follows, therefore, that the problem of

ellipsis or silence in the short story is solved productively not by ignoring it (as the unity aesthetic demands) but of accounting for it, by means of a different aesthetic theory sensitive to history:

The aesthetic is that which speaks of its historical conditions by remaining silent – inheres in them by distance and denial. The work ‘shows’ rather than ‘states’ those conditions in the nature of the productive relations it sets up to the ideological significations which found it.⁹¹

This notion of ‘showing’ is diametrically opposed to the conventional idea of story as implication, because here the focus is on the gaps rather than on the supposed links between them.

The unity approach also provides a vacuous theoretical mould for defining the posited autonomy of modernist art, its supposed disembodiment from social context. It is an approach which makes the story – with its emphasis on form and artifice – appear to intensify those modernist characteristics to which Georg Lukács objected: a social impotence deriving from a deliberate technical distancing from ‘reality’.⁹² The concept of relative autonomy, as I have shown, can be used to illustrate the radical gesture of evolving literary form. The conceptions of story as ‘mystery’, as the expression of an ‘internal contradiction’ or of ‘the unforeseen within fore-seen parameters’, can all be seen as starting-points for a dialectical explanation of short story dissonance: formal rupture is here conceived as one locus of literature’s social justification, its ability to question and transform.⁹³

The central chapters of this book constitute a practical investigation of the technical issues highlighted in this survey of short story theory. The perceived affinities between modernist disruption and the short story form are demonstrated in separate chapters on five modernist writers: (2) James Joyce, (3) Virginia Woolf, (4) Katherine Mansfield, (5) Wyndham Lewis and (6) Malcolm Lowry. This selection of authors affords a detailed and representative account of the subject; it also incorporates analysis of the major stories of the British modernists, as well as

discussion of many stories which have been undeservedly neglected. The concluding chapter, like the introduction, is primarily theoretical: it develops some central issues raised earlier and speculates on the contemporary relevance of the short story. The book is thus structured as a 'sandwich' in which close readings of central texts are enclosed by theoretical discussions. This structure is designed to facilitate a detailed account of the modernist short story which also indicates its formative role in the history and theory of the genre, and which considers its relevance to a contemporary audience.

There is a strong relationship between the opening chapter and the rest of the book, and this indicates two things: first, that the theory of the short story has been largely determined by modernist practice (usually an oversimplified perception of this practice); and, secondly, that the mistaken emphases and assumptions of the genre criticism are reproduced in work on individual authors. Indeed, many of the misleading aspects of short story theory are prevalent in the criticism relating to the authors selected for chapter-length treatment. Work on Joyce's *Dubliners*, for example, has been founded on a simplified aesthetic of unity, and on a 'rebuilding' approach sanctioned by a visual metaphor of Joyce's own, the motif of the 'gnomon', the incomplete geometrical figure mentioned in 'The Sisters'. Perhaps the most misleading aspect in the criticism of *Dubliners* is the stress placed on the linked ideas of entrapment and paralysis, elements which are seen to recur from story to story, creating a governing thematic unity. This focus on common elements implies that the book is more of a novel than a collection of stories, and inevitably obscures the technical effects – and so the generic distinctiveness – of the different pieces. The most enduring tenet of *Dubliners* commentary, however, concerns the supposed illuminating moment or epiphany. The stories in *Dubliners*, often taken to be masterpieces of the moment of sudden revelation in the short story, are here read as problematic narratives, and, consequently, as subversions of the epiphany concept.

The challenge to the unified story concept is continued in the chapter on Woolf, in which the importance of disunity to the

genre becomes obvious. Woolf's experiments in the short story are set in the context of her major objectives as a fiction writer. Her stories – here presented as investigations of narrative fallibility – are shown to put into practice the ideas adumbrated by Woolf in two important essays, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' and 'Modern Fiction', ideas concerning the de-authorization of narrative voice, and the complex portrayal of character.

The question of character and personal identity is central to Mansfield's stories, which are shown to develop a complex and ambiguous method of characterization through complex and ambiguous technical effects. The generic convention of coherent, single-character presentation is disrupted by Mansfield's investigations into the ambiguity of personality. As in *Dubliners*, the moment of 'epiphany' in Mansfield's stories is a point where different impulses converge and conflict, creating dissonant effects. These points of conflict reveal a complicated view of personality, a stress on impersonal identity, determined by a variety of social forces.

The readings made of stories by Joyce, Woolf and Mansfield all draw on the theoretical framework outlined in this opening chapter: formal dissonance and relative autonomy are shown greatly to illuminate the techniques of these authors. The tensions and dissonances discerned in their work are centred on a simultaneous dependence upon, and extension of, the conventional short story form. The resulting disruption is used to express a complex view of the interaction between individual experience and social organization.

Another (associated) theoretical component of the book, common to the chapters on Joyce, Woolf and Mansfield, is drawn from the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin's concept of dialogics is employed to show how the modernists frequently cultivate a dialogized style – involving a conflict of voices – as an integral part of their disruption and complication of narrative. This understanding of dialogics differs from some applications in which the dialogized text is merely one which contains a variety of coexisting voices. I place an emphasis on the idea of *conflicting* voices, which is a crucial aspect of Bakhtin's writings about narrative. This concept of dialogized narrative

provides a further challenge to any simplistic notion of short story unity, and supplies a rigorous way of interpreting the modernists' ambivalent portrayal of character.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 cover what I take to be the core of the modernist short story, and demonstrate its principal attributes: the cultivation and celebration of complex identity, and the rejection of ideological restrictions of various kinds. These chapters account for the main impetus of literary modernism, and engage with features commonly identified as seminal to the modernist project. It is particularly significant that key modernist features and documents – such as the celebrated essays by Woolf, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown', and 'Modern Fiction' – have a special relevance to short story composition. Joyce, Woolf and Mansfield are essential authors for consideration in a discussion of modernism, and, effectively, they select themselves for inclusion. The other author often identified strongly with British modernist fiction is D. H. Lawrence, and a brief explanation of the exclusion of Lawrence from this survey is, perhaps, called for.

Lawrence stands in a difficult relation to mainstream modernism, and critics continue to debate his relationship to the movement. Where his novels are concerned this issue is certainly problematic, but, as a short story writer, Lawrence's position is far easier to determine. Unlike the extravagant formal experiments of his major novels – witness the exuberant excesses of *Women in Love*, for instance – Lawrence's stories are predominantly conservative in structure and form. There are local exceptions to this, such as the impressionistic ending of 'The Prussian Officer', but the stories usually exhibit a highly disciplined use of the conventional story form, placing great emphasis on careful plotting. Important Lawrence stories such as 'New Eve and Old Adam', 'The Blind Man', 'The Horse Dealer's Daughter', 'The Man Who Died', 'The Man Who Loved Islands' and 'The Woman Who Rode Away' betray a dependence on the traditional materials of short narrative, a dependence indicated by their fabulistic titles. Indeed, as Lawrence matured as a story writer, his work moved increasingly towards fable (away from the realism of his early stories)

and this trend underlines how his work in the genre is distinct from the modernist short story proper, with its clear rejection of stable plotting.

Having established the key features of the modernist story in the chapters on Joyce, Woolf and Mansfield, the book then goes on to acknowledge and examine a different, uncompromising tendency of the period, exemplified in the work of Wyndham Lewis. Chapter 5 – which deals with Wyndham Lewis's collection *The Wild Body* – thus contributes to a more comprehensive representation of modernism. Lewis's fiction is of a very different order to that of mainstream modernism, and symptomatic of its darker, elitist side; *The Wild Body* reveals a bleak view of individual personality, yet the presentation is typically modernist – in a technical sense – because it is bound up with Wyndham Lewis's use of the short story form. The stories are examined in terms of the Vorticist movement, as enactments of the Vorticist aesthetic: they deliberately cultivate an art/life dichotomy (following the Vorticist stance of detachment) and they adapt certain conventions regarding short story 'shape' in accordance with the Vorticist concept of dynamic form. These stories provide an alternative test for the analytical approach propounded in previous chapters: they cultivate, yet implicitly reject, a unified story form in their satirical portrayal of circumscribed human behaviour. Yet the rejection – a striking formal dissonance – is a limited gesture which fails to redeem an impression of personal failure and individual isolation.

Lowry's collection of stories *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* offers an important contrast with the work of Wyndham Lewis: Lowry's stories also examine individual experience, but the presentation is expansive and positive, and in this sense Lowry extends the central modernist preoccupation with individual identity and its social definition. The argument of this chapter is that although the short story is often seen as inevitably limited to a consideration of human isolation (another development of Poe's 'unity aesthetic'), it can be viewed differently. Lowry's stories, which apparently confirm the reductive isolation-thesis, are read, through an 'expanding circle' motif, as celebrations of broader, societal themes. This

structural principle exaggerates the kind of formal disruption detected in previous chapters: in his story 'The Forest Path to the Spring', for instance, Lowry effectively deconstructs the notion of sudden revelation through a dispersed, composite 'epiphany' which consists of three separate episodes. Another way in which the Lowryan story deliberately extends the formal parameters of the genre is through its use of symbolism: Lowry frequently overloads the capacity of the narrative circuit with an excess of symbolic significance, and this deliberate avoidance of a closed story form is at one with his continual attempt to link personal preoccupations with public themes. The chapter also offers a bridge between modernism and postmodernism: the literary self-consciousness of the modernists is pronounced in Lowry and anticipates the overt metafictional style of much postmodern fiction.

The concluding chapter indicates the continuing relevance of the issues discussed earlier, and speculates on the particular importance the short story may have as a means of portraying twentieth-century life, and the experience of modernity. The genre is often described – in an intuitive way – as having the capacity to encapsulate the fleeting and episodic nature of contemporary experience; this final chapter attempts to locate some preliminary landmarks for theorizing such intuitive descriptions. Discussion focuses on fictional closure, apocalypse, and on postmodernism and its social moment. The collection *Einstein's Monsters*, by Martin Amis, is considered (together with an exemplary postmodernist story by Donald Barthelme) to demonstrate how a crisis of social organization is replicated in the cultivated disruption (and sometimes the incoherence) of some representative recent short stories. The basic theoretical foundation of the book – the connection between literary form and social context, emphasized throughout – becomes particularly significant here, in a gesture designed to re-emphasize the *social* relevance of formal innovation. It is this kind of formal innovation – this energy – which gives the stories discussed here their enduring power and importance.

CHAPTER 4

Katherine Mansfield: the impersonal short story

Katherine Mansfield's modernism, like that of Joyce or Woolf, stems from an ambivalent attitude to the nature of personality; and this ambivalence is reflected in the structure and language of her stories. In her journal she once described her philosophy as 'the defeat of the personal', a phrase which has a particular relevance to her investigations into identity and personality.¹ The conflation between the problematic view of character and an ambiguous short story technique has already been demonstrated in relation to 'Bliss', in which an equivocal 'epiphany' emphasizes Bertha Young's personal confusion. The reading of this story made in the opening chapter suggests a dawning awareness on the protagonist's part of her latent homosexuality, a subtext partly suppressed by the social taboo it simultaneously criticizes. The suppression of sexuality results in confusion for Bertha and an imitative ambiguity in the story's form, and this makes it appear indeterminate, admitting the possibility of other readings. One such is that made by Saralyn Daly, who feels that Bertha, 'a treacherously fallible narrator', has her suspicions of the affair between Pearl Fulton and her husband, yet refuses to acknowledge it, and engages in an extended attempt at self-deception. Her sense of intimacy with Pearl can therefore be seen as a fanciful self-projection designed by Bertha 'to persuade herself that she feels "just what" the woman who is loved by her husband does'.² It may be that this does not fully account for Bertha's feeling of intimacy with Pearl, but the viability of the reading further complicates the portrayal of Bertha, who is confused in her sexuality and, consequently, hazy in her understanding of the actions and motives of others.

The example indicates the importance in Mansfield's work of disrupting simple patterns: the resulting ambiguity often reveals the point of her art. Very often the significant moment in Mansfield, like many of the epiphanies in *Dubliners*, is a point where different impulses converge and conflict. There is usually no simple 'solution' to the ambiguities of the characterization, but rather a denial of a solution. This is particularly clear in 'Miss Brill', a more straightforward story which is sometimes seen as flawed precisely because its conclusion suggests, but finally eschews, an epiphany of self-awareness. Miss Brill, a lonely spinster, enjoys her only human contact walking in a park on Sundays, observing the crowds, and imagining herself to be involved in some kind of drama: 'They were all on the stage. ... Even she had a part and came every Sunday' (376).³ Emblematic of Miss Brill's self-delusion and isolation is her sentimental, anthropomorphic attachment to her fur, which she treats almost like a pet: 'Little rogue biting its tail just by her left ear. She could have taken it off and laid it on her lap and stroked it' (374). The fur becomes the crucial instrument at the story's crisis point where Miss Brill, eavesdropping on a courting couple, is offered the brutal truth about herself:

Miss Brill prepared to listen.

'No, not now,' said the girl. 'Not here, I can't.'

'But why? Because of that stupid old thing at the end there?' asked the boy. 'Why does she come here at all - who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?'

'It's her fu-fur which is so funny,' giggled the girl. 'It's exactly like a fried whiting.' (377)

The story ends as Miss Brill returns home, in an apparent daze:

To-day she passed the baker's by, climbed the stairs, went into the little dark room - her room like a cupboard - and sat down on the red eiderdown. She sat there for a long time. The box that the fur came out of was on the bed. She unclasped the necklet quickly; quickly, without looking, laid it inside. But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying. (377)

This ending is sometimes objected to on the grounds of its sentimentality which obscures the revelation that has been offered to Miss Brill in the park.⁴ The narrative point of view, however, is consistently that of Miss Brill, and so any sen-

timentality can be seen as part of the characterization rather than indicative of an authorial lapse. Mansfield herself was satisfied that the narrative was entirely appropriate to the protagonist's perspective:

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.⁵

Since Miss Brill is the single focalizer, the closing anthropomorphic perception – the imagined crying of the fur – is clearly another example of the character's self-delusion, which persists, but in a state of crisis: a revelation of self-awareness has been offered, and now Miss Brill struggles to efface this insight. The conclusion comprises a complex, ambivalent 'epiphany' which emulates the character's own internal conflict between awareness and delusion, and this confusion is the essence of Miss Brill's condition. The story convention of the single point or discovery is here modified, made less determinate, as befits the characterization.

The complex moment in Mansfield often has important structural implications, especially in relation to peripeteia or reversal; an example of this is the suppressed reversal of 'Miss Brill': we have seen how Miss Brill's entrenched perspective denies the progression that her experience offers. A more startling use of reversal occurs in 'Millie' (1913).

The point of view of the character Millie is expressed through a vacillating, but consistently formulaic discourse. The story begins with Millie waving goodbye to her husband Sid who rides off on horseback 'with four of the boys to help hunt down the young fellow who'd murdered Mr Williamson' (134). Millie is left to reflect on the killing of the local farmer and to reiterate, uncritically, her husband's words:

My word! when they caught that young man! Well – you couldn't be sorry for a young fellow like that. As Sid said, if he wasn't strung up where would they all be? A man like that doesn't stop at one go. There was blood all over the barn. (134)

Millie repeats Sid's rhetorical question which implies the social necessity of eye-for-an-eye retribution, an extreme opinion which begs the question, if the youth *is* strung up where would they – the people doing the stringing – be? What is planned is a mob execution, conducted as if to satisfy the requirements of a civilized penal process, but which really will represent the consummation of the primordial 'hunt'. Millie's discourse reveals something of this irrational attempt at justification: the fact that 'there was blood all over the barn', as there might well be after a shooting, whether a murder or an accident, is used to imply the inevitable proliferation of the young man's violence, if unchecked.

The point of the story revolves around the repressed maternal capacity of the stern, childless Millie, whose cast of mind seems infused with masculine aggression. A different sort of response almost reveals itself when she assesses her wedding photograph. Having just expressed disapproval of a print on the bedroom wall entitled 'Garden Party at Windsor Castle' she extends her ostensibly objective visual appraisal to the photograph of herself and Sid on their wedding day: 'Nice picture that – if you *do* like' (134). This colloquially formulaic assertion of irrefutable value conceals the partisan perceptions of the nostalgic wife who subsequently reflects on the passing of time and her failure to conceive a child.

The scene is set for Millie's discovery of, and maternal solicitude over, Harrison, the fugitive her menfolk are hunting. The change of heart, however, is rendered in equally formulaic language: 'They won't ketch 'im. Not if I can 'elp it. Men is all beasts. I don't care wot 'e's done, or wot 'e 'asn't done. See 'im through, Millie Evans. 'E's nothink but a sick kid' (136–7). One set of prepackaged opinions have been exchanged for another, equally assertive and polarized. Millie now allows her altruistic response to be overlaid with notions of sexual stereotyping, especially ideas of female duty. This notion of duty inspires the self-exhortation: 'See 'im through, Millie Evans.' The superficiality of Millie's responses, inspired by stereotypical social pressures and indicated by a strident, irrational discourse, makes her final volte-face predictable. The sight of her menfolk

chasing Harrison excites her and draws her back into the masculine world of sanctioned violence: 'A-ah! Arter 'im, Sid! A-a-a-h! ketch 'im, Willie. Go it! Go it! A-ah, Sid! Shoot 'im down. Shoot 'im!' (137). A formal dissonance is discernible here where the traditional story reversal is short-circuited, and, in the process of this disruption, the story reveals the damaging ideology of polarized sexual roles. As in several of Joyce's stories, both 'Miss Brill' and 'Millie' derive their effects from a dissonance between a notional story structure of reversal or progression, and a delimited narrative perspective which indicates confusion or stasis.

A key aspect of the modernist short story is the presentation of character through narrative voice, and this is a seminal feature of Mansfield's technique. This kind of presentation, although straightforward in the two stories examined so far, is far more involved in longer pieces where the narrative combines the voices of a number of characters. Mansfield's quest to present inner consciousness directly through voice can be traced to her early stories, and the outline history of this quest is worth considering. An early story which explores different narrative possibilities is 'A Birthday' (1911) which combines thought sequences reported in the third person, and other sequences given directly in the first person. This method betrays a lack of sophistication in its clumsy use of quotation marks to demarcate direct thoughts. In other early stories like 'New Dresses' (1912) and 'The Swing of the Pendulum' (1911) Mansfield fumbles, not altogether unsuccessfully, with similar techniques, though again thought sequences are separated by quotation marks. 'Ole Underwood' (1913) represents an advance in the stories written before 1914 in presenting consciousness integrated with narrative and not awkwardly highlighted by speech marks.

'Ole Underwood' explores the pathological obsession of its eponymous protagonist. After a twenty-year prison sentence for murder – a crime of passion – Ole Underwood comes out 'cracked'. The story traces a sequence of psychological triggers that leave him on the brink of repeating his crime. Tension is created by a dual narrative which places us at times 'in' the character's head, and which at other times keeps us distanced.

This vacillation is necessary so that we can perceive the inner processes as they develop, while maintaining a sense of their abnormality. The punctuation which separates thought sequences from narrative in other stories is here dispensed with. The nature of the mind in question makes this smoothness of texture possible: no coherent thought processes are required – no precise verbal expression – merely words which reflect an unbalanced response to outer stimuli. Thus Ole Underwood is made distraught by the pounding of his heart, roused as he is to violent response:

Something inside Ole Underwood's breast beat like a hammer. One two – one two – never stopping, never changing. He couldn't do anything. It wasn't loud. No, it didn't make a noise – only a thud. One, two – one, two – like someone beating on an iron in a prison – someone in a secret place – bang – bang – bang – trying to get free. Do what he would, fumble at his coat, throw his arms about, spit, swear, he couldn't stop the noise. Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! (131)

The manic appeal for cessation is clearly located within the old man's head. Here, the subject lends itself to a smoother presentation of the psyche; Mansfield had not, in fact, overcome her predilection for 'quoted' thoughts. The later story 'Something Childish but Very Natural' (1914), to take an example, contains snatches of these. Eventually, however, the punctuation marks disappear altogether. In stories like 'Psychology' (1919) and 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1920) no disruption of narrative occurs for the rendering of direct thought. Throughout her *œuvre* one finds thought sequences juxtaposed with narrative, a fact which betrays Mansfield's continuing interest in rendering inner processes.

These investigations in the use of voice result in two sophisticated pieces – 'Je ne Parle pas Français' (1918) and the unfinished piece 'A Married Man's Story' (1921) – in which Mansfield makes her most extended treatments of a single inner voice. These first-person confessional pieces represent a key phase in the development of Mansfield's characterization.

'Je ne Parle pas Français' is an important landmark in the modernist short story, and its importance is largely due to its method of characterization through voice. Raoul Duquette, the

narrator of the story, is a sketch of the artist-as-parasite, a man who assesses his experiences purely in terms of their artistic usefulness. Duquette is a parody of the self-conscious artist and, in part, a self-parody by Mansfield. He frequently interrupts his story and draws attention to its self-conscious artifice, as when he describes 'a morsel of pink blotting-paper, incredibly soft and limp and almost moist, like the tongue of a little dead kitten, which I've never felt' (279). This artifice is extended to Duquette's relations with other people, since he believes that 'people are like portmanteaux' and imagines himself standing before them 'like a Customs official' seeing if they have 'anything to declare' (277). Accordingly, his attitude to Dick and Mouse is marked by a withdrawal of empathy, and this detachment, a satirical exaggeration of the writer's parasitism, has become habitual in Duquette. When he discovers that Dick and Mouse are suffering, he is elated: "'But you are suffering," I ventured softly, as though that was what I could not bear to see' (295). Innocent Mouse, deserted by Dick in Paris, becomes the subject of Duquette's predatory and soulless conjecturing: he contemplates her potential dependence on him, and, apparently, the possibility of becoming her pimp, but he has actually decided to abandon her.

The treatment of Duquette's self-consciousness represents an important parody: his spectator's attitude to life satirizes the art/life dichotomy that is often seen as a distinguishing mark of modernist writing. The manner in which the parodic element is expressed is illuminating, especially as it is achieved without overt omniscient commentary. John Middleton Murry found the effect of the story comparable to Dostoevsky, a comparison based on narrative point of view: Murry felt a compelling strangeness in Duquette, not 'because he has thought everything to a standstill, but because he is conscious of a piece out of him'.⁶ Murry was uncertain in his praise, but his identification of Duquette's 'conscious[ness] of a piece out of him' is suggestive of the dialogic nature of the narrative. Just as Bakhtin indicates a 'reckoning with an absent interlocutor' in Dostoevsky, 'the intense anticipation of another's words', Duquette is continually aware of an implied auditor's response and criticism of

his words, and it is this internal dialogue which presents adverse aspects of the characterization as it is established.⁷ The most prominent feature of this dialogical style is insistent affirmation which implies self-doubt and consciousness of criticism from 'an absent interlocutor'. When, for instance, Duquette compares his manner of evaluating people to the actions of a Customs official, he stridently affirms the thrill this involves for him: "Have you anything to declare? Any wines, spirits, cigars, perfumes, silks?" And the moment of hesitation as to whether I am going to be fooled ... and then the other moment of hesitation just after, as to whether I have been, are perhaps the two most thrilling instants in life. *Yes, they are, to me*' (277; my emphasis). Duquette anticipates a lack of empathy in the reception of this self-analysis, and this reaction admits a critical position. The descriptive work is also interrupted by self-consciousness, as is the case with this fanciful reflection in a café:

One would not have been surprised if the door had opened and the Virgin Mary had come in, riding upon an ass, her meek hands folded over her big belly...

That's rather nice, don't you think, that bit about the Virgin? It comes from the pen so gently; it has such a 'dying fall'. I thought so at the time and decided to make a note of it. One never knows when a little tag like that may come in useful to round off a paragraph. (279; original ellipsis)

The semi-apologetic tone here – one of sarcasm combined with self-deprecation – reveals a desire to forestall the criticism which it simultaneously invokes. This kind of interior dialogue, which displays a continual anticipation of a critical stance, pervades the narrative, and results in an insecure tone, indicated locally by recurring stylistic emphasis and assertion, particularly in the form of exclamation marks and rhetorical questions. The entire narrative is problematic and unreliable, as it replicates the egotism of Duquette. The egotism is a parodic representation of an art/life dichotomy that obtains in some branches of modernist art, but since the narrative *engages* (at a surface level) with this dichotomous perspective, the story has a powerful ambivalence. The satirical undermining of Duquette and his narrative is subtly achieved through the interior dialogue, but

there is no overt condemnation; the story's power lies in the tension between the narrative voice and its own self-doubts. A complex characterization is achieved in tandem with a disruption of narrative authority.

Mansfield's interest in characterization through voice – a dialogized style of writing most evident in 'Prelude' – is also evident in a series of experiments in dialogue and monologue. These are: 'The Festival of the Coronation' (1911), 'Stay Laces' (1915), and (all 1917), 'In Confidence', 'A Pic-Nic', 'Two Tuppenny Ones, Please', 'Late at Night', and 'The Black Cap'.⁸ With the exception of the last two in the list, these pieces are straightforward dialogue interspersed with 'stage directions' in parentheses; they are mini-plays, in effect. 'The Black Cap' incorporates another characteristic of dramatic art, the monologue, and 'Late at Night' is pure monologue, with a handful of stage directions. The importance of these experiments lies in the fact that they show an identification between dialogue and monologue, and a particular interest in these modes immediately prior to the revision of *The Aloe* into the multi-voiced 'Prelude'.

Mansfield's dialogic experimentation with the short story form reaches its peak in 'Prelude', the narrative of which combines a variety of opposing and alternative voices. The story's effects are generated by the juxtaposition and conflict of these voices, and these are genuine short story effects, in their variety and their denial of an authoritative narrative centre: 'Prelude' is the final result of Mansfield's most ambitious literary project, the revised version of the novella *The Aloe*, a work originally conceived as a novel. The meticulous editorial process involved in trimming *The Aloe* by a third demonstrates emphatically Mansfield's aesthetic principle of excising all omniscient explanation. The revised version relies on action, symbolism, and dialogization of the narrative to convey the characterization and the thematic concerns.⁹

Throughout the story Mansfield expresses her themes through a subtle combination of different voices. This is clearly the case in the development of the various family tensions. Mrs Burnell's lack of maternal response is expressed in the opening

paragraph, when her two youngest children are to be left behind: 'There was not an inch of room for Lottie and Kezia in the buggy. When Pat swung them on top of the luggage they wobbled; the grandmother's lap was full and Linda Burnell could not possibly have held a lump of a child on hers for any distance' (223). Linda Burnell's voice speaks here, and her scarcely concealed aversion to her own children inspires the unjustified assertion that she cannot entertain nursing one of them on her lap. Yet even in this sentence the familial pact to protect the unmaternal Linda Burnell from all maternal duties is implicit. The sentence, expressing the mother's concern, is offered as an irrefutable truism: 'Linda Burnell could not possibly have held a lump of a child'. As such, it could be expressed by the grandmother, by Beryl, or even by the children themselves. The ideology of presenting as normal the mother's 'unnatural' response finds a collective voice, and the assertiveness of this voice betrays an anticipation of dissent, that reckoning with an absent interlocutor which here reveals the domestic problem as well as the fact of its concealment.

The effect of the mother's dialogue on her children is also suggested in the opening lines, with typical economy. The buggy is loaded with 'absolute necessities' which Linda Burnell will not allow out of her sight. Consequently there is no room for Lottie and Kezia: 'Hand in hand, they stared with round solemn eyes first at the absolute necessities and then at their mother' (223). The children's world-view is here fashioned by the concept of 'absolute necessities', material things which take precedence in the mother's eyes and which the children are required to assess in the same way. The commodification implicit in the mother's phrase is aptly summarized in the solution to the problem: like the tables and chairs Lottie and Kezia must wait to be transported later in the day. This phrase 'absolute necessities' thus suggests not only the mother's attitude, but also the children's sense of their own lack of value; the sight of the necessities inspires solemnity because it highlights for the children their own lack of utility and the absence of an emotional value-system in their domestic lives.

This kind of technique informs Mansfield's preoccupation in

the story with personality and indoctrination. The most significant aspect of this preoccupation concerns the evocation of male sexual predacity and female victimization. By means of psychological identification with her mother, Kezia's heritage of sexual trauma is suggested. This association is strongly made by Kezia's nightmare fears of rushing animals whose 'heads swell e-normous' (228), an image which anticipates Linda Burnell's dream of the tiny bird which swells in her arms to be transformed into a huge baby with 'a gaping bird-mouth'. In this dream Linda's father has shown her the tiny fluffy bird and when her touch causes it to swell and transform, he breaks 'into a loud clattering laugh' (233). The imagery of sexual activity and reproduction is coloured by the cruel and knowing male figure who is presented as one playing a deceitful trick. There is a subtext here concerning the discrepancy between the idealism of romance and the burdensome reality of conception, a subtext which takes as its object of protest the misleading ideology of romance. It is precisely this ideology which dictates the action and aspirations of Beryl, as we shall see. The figure of the deceptive male also underpins Kezia's fear of aggressive animals, a fear which elicits a telling remark from the storeman. In response to her enquiry as to the difference between a sheep and a ram he explains: 'Well, a ram has horns and runs for you' (228). The sexually active male sheep confirms Kezia's incipient fears of male predacity, but it is the storeman's discourse which is revealing here. He offers a typical adult-to-child remark or semi-explanation in which the threat of being chased is tempered by ambiguity. 'Runs *for* you' is the ambiguous phrase which suggests the threat, but which also suggests the idea of a clockwork toy or a pet put in motion for a child's amusement.¹⁰ The condescending discourse obscures the more sinister implication. This point is reinforced by Isabel's later reaction to the killing of the duck: as the headless creature waddles away she exclaims: 'It's like a little engine. It's like a funny little railway engine' (249). The response is emblematic of the absorption of the adult ideology: the reality of the action – and the castration motif which it carries – is distorted and sanitized by its resemblance to less sinister cultural codes.

The children also absorb and use adult discourse not specifically designed for their own consumption, and this, again, raises the issue of ideological power and conditioning. When Mansfield has the children play at being adults a serious investigation along these lines lies beneath the humorous vignette of childish mores. The passage, which is not introduced, also involves a tactic of shock-recognition, since we do not recognize until the fifth or sixth sentence that these are children speaking:

‘Good morning, Mrs Jones.’

‘Oh, good morning, Mrs Smith. I’m so glad to see you. Have you brought your children?’

‘Yes, I’ve brought both my twins. I have had another baby since I saw you last, but she came so suddenly that I haven’t had time to make her any clothes, yet. So I left her. ... How is your husband?’

‘Oh, he is very well, thank you. At least he had a nawful cold but Queen Victoria – she’s my godmother, you know – sent him a case of pineapples and that cured it im-mediately. Is that your new servant?’

‘Yes, her name’s Gwen. I’ve only had her two days. Oh, Gwen, this is my friend, Mrs Smith.’

‘Good morning, Mrs Smith. Dinner won’t be ready for about ten minutes.’

‘I don’t think you ought to introduce me to the servant. I think I ought to just begin talking to her.’ (244–5; original ellipsis)

The obvious irony of Linda Burnell’s children glibly accruing members to their imaginary families provokes a wry smile, but it also uncovers the conditioning which distorts the issue here: no effort of endurance is required of these girls to add another doll to their nursery play, play that is socially acceptable and encouraged. The extract ends with an argument about the type of discourse applicable to a social inferior. Unquestioning but firm ideas are expressed about the language required to sustain a given hierarchical relationship. In this light the statement about Queen Victoria and the pineapples conveys a particular kind of indoctrination: the importance of being well connected is an attitude which the children have absorbed and the idea of social position and its concomitant wealth is linked in their minds with physical wellbeing. One might question the efficacy

of the cure, but the children clearly find compelling the idea that Queen Victoria should be able to send cases of exotic fruit for the treatment of sick friends.

The use of voice to convey the characterization is most overt in the case of Stanley. His assessment of his handyman Pat, for instance, clearly reveals his egocentricity and self-assertion:

‘I believe this man is a first-rate chap,’ thought Stanley. He liked the look of him sitting up there in his neat brown coat and brown bowler. He liked the way Pat had tucked him in, and he liked his eyes. There was nothing servile about him – and if there was one thing he hated more than another it was servility. And he looked as if he was pleased with his job – happy and contented already. (240–1)

Typically, Stanley interprets behaviour only in so far as it impinges on his own feelings. This superficial attitude enables him to be content with a particular ideological obfuscation in his dealings with Pat: servility is wanted in deed, but an apparently egalitarian attitude must be presented, thereby obscuring the real relationship and easing Stanley’s conscience. The meretricious nature of Stanley’s discourse, and the social power it represents, is summarized in his plans for establishing a high profile at church. He delights in the thought of the *sound* of his responses and in the social kudos the occasion might embody:

In fancy he heard himself intoning extremely well: ‘When thou did overcome the *Sharpness* of Death Thou didst open the *Kingdom* of Heaven to *all* Believers.’ And he saw the neat brass-edged card on the corner of the pew – Mr Stanley Burnell and family. (241)

The irony of a self-seeking attitude to worship scarcely needs mentioning, other than to point out that this kind of concealed hypocrisy pervades the story and the familial relationships. There is, that is to say, an implicit conflict of voices even though the centripetal forces of indoctrination are predominant.

In a similar, but more complex way, Beryl’s world-view is undermined by a conflict of discourses and influences. The language of romantic novels infuses her fantasy love intrigues: ‘There is a ball at Government house. . . . Who is that exquisite

creature in *eau de nil* satin? Beryl Fairfield' (231; original ellipsis). Kate Fullbrook, discussing 'The Tiredness of Rosabel', has summarized Mansfield's assessment of this type of discourse:

The young Katherine Mansfield recognized the *function* of trash romance for women (whose elements have not significantly changed), which invites dreams of being the perfect beneficiaries of the sexual system that in fact victimises them.¹¹

Beryl's fantasizing is a response to the social pressure to marry, a different discourse which dominates her letter to Nan Pym: 'I'll get to be a most awful frump in a year or two' (256). The conflict of voices and pressures has opened a schizophrenic rift in Beryl's personality, a rift which she recognizes in herself: 'It was her other self who had written that letter. It not only bored, it rather disgusted her real self' (256). The wretched Beryl is conscious of a 'despicable' duplicity in her nature, and her heart is rendered 'cold with rage' (258) in self-condemnation. Mansfield's interest here is with the social forces which insist on the need for a husband, but which also deny access to one for the dependent spinster. These forces, irrational and destructive in their effect on Beryl's personality, must be seen as doubly damaging in the context of Linda Burnell's fear of childbirth: marriage, far from being the promised state of fulfilment, is presented as destructive of the female.¹²

The exposure of Beryl's fantasy as delusion conforms to a pattern which recurs in Mansfield's work. The use of fantasy has a special significance for the short story, and is related to the notion of mystery, a common, but imprecise term in the theory of the genre. Both mystery and fantasy have a direct relevance to Mansfield's open-ended narratives. John Bayley has discussed the role of fantasy in the genre, although this discussion requires a degree of reformulation. Using Lawrence as an example Bayley makes an uncomplicated assessment of fantasy as a tool available to the short story writer for direct thematic development. Bayley claims that '[Lawrence] puts himself and his desires into the tale in exaggerated form', thereby sketching, with broad strokes, important themes and ideas. In 'The Fox', for example, the killing of Banford is intelligible only in terms of fantasy projection: 'The lack of a proper Lawrentian existence

in the frail and querulous Banford means that actual existence can be terminated as an act of the will by the hero on behalf of the author.¹³ I want to propose an adaptation of the role of fantasy, a partial reversal which is analogous to my appropriation of the mystery idea. Fantasy projection in the short story is a defence: it invariably conceals something, and so can be viewed as another formal restraint to be dismantled. (Beryl's fantasy-delusion in 'Prelude' is an obvious case in point.) There are clear affinities between the perceived compositional importance of fantasy and the short story's engagement with personal identity; and Katherine Mansfield's stories are particularly relevant here, as fantasy underpins much of her investigation into the nature of personality.¹⁴

The neglected story 'Honeymoon' is profitably approached with the overlapping concepts of mystery and fantasy in mind: the story concerns the fragmentation of personality through a subtext which undermines the fantasy idyll of the surface narrative.

By implication the story uncovers the seeds of destruction in the marriage of Fanny and George, clearly visible even on their Mediterranean honeymoon. The fact that the sojourn is a honeymoon is mentioned only in the title and not in the narrative itself, and this evokes a mystery of the most basic sort. A subtext is immediately installed concerning the reason for this concealment. The reason, actually, is suggested early in the narrative – which reproduces Fanny's restless impulsiveness – when a reluctance to mention the fact of her marriage manifests itself: 'These things seemed always to be happening to them ever since they – came abroad' (534). This ellipsis is repeated a few lines later. The marriage, and the physical consummation it traditionally facilitates, are difficult for her to face, it seems. Fanny, like most of Mansfield's wives, appears to find her sexual relationship a source of distress.

Fanny's discourse of enthusiasm obviously masks, in its stridency, an inner fear and vacuousness. It also demonstrates an impercipience regarding the pecuniary machinations of George's world, a self-deluding willingness to be impressed by the surface gratifications he can offer. This is clear in her reaction to the cab which he has surely secured by means of a

cash advance: 'when they came out of the lace shop there was their own driver and the cab they called their own cab waiting for them under a plane tree. What luck! Wasn't it luck?'. Yet even in her lack of comprehension about economic relations, and the hegemony they construct, Fanny exhibits an instinctive unease regarding George's brusque treatment of subordinates. This unease, however, is swept aside by her awe-induced subscription to George's world: 'Fanny sometimes felt a little uncomfortable about the way George summoned cabs, but the drivers didn't seem to mind, so it must have been all right' (534). The superficial reasoning obscures the real relation.

Fanny does, however, allow her misgivings to surface, misgivings which centre on the possibility of mental communion in the marriage and, by extension, on the knowability of personality:

'Do you feel,' she said, softly, 'that you really know me now? But really, really know *me*?'

It was too much for George. Know his Fanny? He gave a broad, childish grin. 'I should jolly well think I do,' he said, emphatically. 'Why, what's up?'

Fanny felt he hadn't quite understood. (536-7)

Fantasy, in the form of the honeymoon idyll, is a mask, a defence against the underlying loneliness and lack of base in the marriage. It is also an ideology of conformity, an ideology in the sense of a false consciousness which is self-regenerating: the kind of marital satisfaction which George offers depends upon the sustention of superficialities and the concomitant denial of psychological probing.

An important point concerning this story stems from its relatively unsophisticated use of symbolism, which, uncharacteristically, is both stable and transparent. At least, the story gives the *appearance* of such a lack of sophistication at first glance: its final effect involves a rejection of the formal stability it establishes at a surface level. A preliminary reading of 'Honeymoon' reveals that the undermining of the fantasy is conveyed, primarily, through images associated with the sea.¹⁵ Fanny's unease and George's imperviousness are both pre-

visioned by a mysterious sea wind which blows over them and exhibits a greater affinity for her: 'a wind, light, warm, came flowing over the boundless sea. It touched George, and Fanny it seemed to linger over while they gazed at the dazzling water' (534). When George spots a swimmer in the sea he resolves to go swimming the very next day, a resolution which causes Fanny to fret over the dangers he will face: 'It was an absolute death-trap. Beautiful, treacherous Mediterranean' (535). Again it is she who is alert to the reality the sea represents.

The ominous connotations of sea imagery are expanded when the couple retire to their favourite hotel restaurant to take tea. The manager greets them, a man 'like a fish in a frock coat' whose 'mouth opened and shut as though he were ready for another dive under the water' (535-6). Having taken the order this fish-man extends the following invitation: "'perhaps de lady might like to look at de live lobsters in de tank while de tea is coming?'" And he grimaced and smirked and flicked his serviette like a fin' (536). The couple's tête-à-tête (part of the romantic honeymoon fantasy) is disrupted by this distasteful intrusion and then by the 'funny-tasting' tea, tainted, claims George, by 'Lobster in the kettle' (537). At this point George's resolution to go swimming the next day is recalled, a resolution inspired by his glimpses of 'the reddened face' and 'the reddened arm' of a bather (534). The lobster-red imagery equates the bather with the lobsters for consumption in the restaurant. By implication George, who will bathe tomorrow, is identified as a victim to be devoured. (Both George and Fanny, of course, will be victims of the relationship that seems doomed to failure, but the focus is on her plight. This is because the story is mediated through her consciousness and, more importantly, because the force of destruction derives from George's attitude and her conditioned response to this.)

Other images suggest the superficiality and insubstantiality of the marriage. Initially we see the couple emerging from a lace shop. George's perception of Fanny is akin to an owner looking after a pet, a notion suggested when George implicitly compares her hand to a pet mouse he once kept: 'he caught hold of her hand, stuffed it into his pocket, pressed her fingers, and said, "I

used to keep a white mouse in my pocket when I was a kid” (534). The motif is recalled when Fanny’s mouse-like nose twitches in response to an aroma: ‘they were passing a high wall on the land side, covered with flowering heliotrope, and Fanny’s little nose lifted. “Oh George,” she breathed. “The smell!”’ (535). Significantly, it is her nose that especially appeals to George: ‘he was just going to tell her how much he liked her little nose, when the waiter arrived with the tea’ (537). This is George’s response to Fanny’s incipient fears about the lack of depth and understanding in their relationship, a response which confirms that she has genuine grounds for concern.

The death of the relationship is symbolized in the song they hear while they drink their tea in the hotel restaurant, itself ‘bone-white’ (535), a conjoining image of marine erosion and physical perishability. The fact that Fanny is moved (in a way she cannot fully fathom) by the song, while George, characteristically, is impervious (his desire is to escape the ‘squawking’) illustrates, again, their incompatibility. The song, which to Fanny’s ear conveys a resigned acceptance of its own denial (537), suggests the denial of Fanny’s own personality. At this point Fanny is almost shocked out of her acceptance of the honeymoon fantasy and into the vacuum which lies behind it:

Is life like this too? thought Fanny. There are people like this. There is suffering. And she looked at that gorgeous sea, lapping the land as though it loved it, and the sky, bright with the brightness before evening. Had she and George the right to be so happy? Wasn’t it cruel? There must be something else in life which made all these things possible. (537–8)

Wrestling with her vision, Fanny turns to George, her ideologue, apparently for guidance: her conditioned passivity disables her from following the vision through on her own. It is a vision beyond her blinkered husband, however. His lack of depth is emphasized by his reactions to the song and to the sea which are juxtaposed with Fanny’s:

But George had been feeling differently from Fanny. The poor old boy’s voice was funny in a way, but, God, how it made you realize what

a terrific thing it was to be at the beginning of everything, as they were, he and Fanny! George, too, gazed at the bright, breathing water, and his lips opened as if he could drink it. How fine it was! There was nothing like the sea for making a chap feel fit. (538)

George's sudden sensation of fitness carries with it a suggestion of lust: "I say," said George, rapidly, "let's go, shall we? Let's go back to the hotel. Come. Do, Fanny darling. Let's go now" (538). George whisks Fanny off to their hotel, presumably to exercise his newly conferred conjugal rights. The vacuousness of the failure to communicate is compounded by the misplaced lust which brings the story full circle and reminds us of Fanny's implied squeamishness and inability to face the physical side of marriage.

As this reading of 'Honeymoon' suggests, the story lends itself to a straightforward interpretation, but there is another level to the piece which complicates its effects; the story is not simply an examination of gender roles, and its subversiveness also extends to its treatment of fictional form. Overall, the story has the air of an ironic send-up, and this means that the judgemental exposure of the honeymoon fantasy applies also to the story's mode of representation. Fanny's near-vision is so naive as to border on the farcical ('Is life like this too?'), and there is an obvious irony in her inability to perceive her real predicament, the ludicrous mismatch that is her marriage. But the narrative also reproduces the inadequacy of her perspective, and her struggle to recognize the palpably obvious is conveyed through the transparent symbolism, which is really superfluous. 'Honeymoon' is a deceptive text which, if taken at face value, provides material for a straightforward short story analysis, the 'rebuilding' method of exegesis which often focuses on symbolic detail to uncover oblique meanings. But it is precisely this kind of oblique expression – symbolic implication – which is satirized here as it embodies the naiveté of the central character; and this is an arresting formal dissonance in which the concept of a simple symbolic subtext is rejected. Beyond this there is a more serious point about ideological restriction. Fanny's predicament derives from a conditioned passivity, and is a state indicated by her intellectual inadequacy; since this inadequacy is reproduced

through the story's transparent style, a connection is established between the undeveloped Fanny and the unsophisticated story convention. The dismantling of the 'fantasy' turns out to be a formal project, the restrictions of the stable literary type corresponding to those of the character. Both failures or inadequacies are determined by contextual forces: Fanny is restricted by patriarchal domination, while the transparent story mode which Mansfield satirizes conforms to the kind of simplistic short story which the modernists in general came to regard as unsuitable for the portrayal of personal identity.

The subversive nature of 'Honeymoon' – which applies both to its examination of gender roles and to its use of fictional form – is typical of Mansfield's work. The subversive nature of her writing, however, has not been fully recognized. Her critique of male oppression and female suffering has been located and discussed by several critics, but the broader political implications of Mansfield's identification of oppressive hegemonic structures have not been fully defined within the feminist project.¹⁶ Mansfield's reputation as a 'delicate female stylist', engendered by her beguilingly homely or domestic choice of subject-matter, continues to obscure the radical nature of her political commentary.¹⁷ When the seriousness of her sexual politics has been noted, it has sometimes been viewed in an unnecessarily negative light. Elaine Showalter, for instance, writes: 'In the short stories of Katherine Mansfield, the moment of self-awareness is also the moment of self-betrayal. Typically, a woman in her fiction who steps across the threshold into a new understanding of womanhood is humiliated, or destroyed. Mansfield's fiction is cautionary and punitive; women are lured out onto the limbs of consciousness, which are then lopped off by the author.'¹⁸ Admittedly, the outcome of a Mansfield story often indicates defeat for a female character, but one can only consider this 'punitive' if one equates positive value only with a happy ending. An alternative way of evaluating the characteristic Mansfield outcome is suggested by the story 'Her First Ball', a piece which lays itself open, at first glance, to the description 'punitive', but in which a radical purpose is soon revealed.

'Her First Ball' is typically subversive, although its purport is potentially concealed by the subject. The events are straightforward: Leila, attending her first ball, is overcome by her excitement at the romantic event, especially when dancing with the young men. An older, unattractive man then dances with her and points out that she will soon be old, unattractive and unwanted at such events. Her consequent brief disenchantment is soon effaced when 'a young man with curly hair bowed before her' and they dance (431).

A superficial reading of the piece might characterize it as being about youthful enthusiasm for romance which, in its intensity, is able to disregard the unpalatable truth of transience and age. Indeed, the story's action makes a strong reference to this traditional theme, a theme which the story adopts as a kind of disguise. A close reading, however, soon reveals the inadequacy of the youth/age opposition: the story's deeper significance concerns a particular kind of social conditioning and the myopia it induces. The central point of comparison is that between male and female experience, rather than between youth and age. Leila's older, unattractive dancing-partner has been attending dances 'for the last thirty years', but points out that she 'can't hope to last anything like as long as that'. The physical deterioration that is no barrier for him will disqualify her from participating in this kind of social occasion (430). The *men* are also demarcated from the *girls*, not just in this adult/child terminological discrepancy, but also in the assertive/passive behaviour which the occasion requires from the two groups. Before the dancing the sexes stand separately, but the girls must await the collective move of the men who 'suddenly' come 'gliding over the parquet', seize the girls' programmes and write on them to claim their dances (428). This act of collective appropriation, with its suggestion of violation (the scribbling on the blank programmes), is a socially ordered gesture of oppression.

The hint of violation confers new meaning on Leila's position as newcomer to the social circuit. It is, of course, her impression of virginal innocence (which her older dancing-partner throws into sharp relief) that guarantees Leila's value on the dance-

floor-marketplace. It is this quality which distinguishes her from 'the poor old dears' on the stage, those mothers looking on with aching hearts at their daughters, having used up their own allotment of that vital female currency of youth and virginity (430).

The most radical aspect of this analysis of sexual politics lies in the way it locates the self-perpetuating impetus of the dominant ideology of oppression. The indoctrinating structure of the dance channels less indoctrinated feelings in a particular direction. Thus Leila's quite natural attraction to the young men is translated into a sense of helpless awe by the social occasion which casts her in the role of passive commodity. The ideology of female passivity, in other words, provides an outlet for, and yet is reinforced by, heterosexual female response. The story's conclusion represents, on reflection, a disruption of expectation which underscores the feminist message. The youth versus age theme is strongly suggested by Leila's delight in the dance and her ability to forget her earlier disquieting conversation with the fat man ('she didn't even recognize him again' (431)). Yet, as the story has shown, her behaviour is not simply an expression of youth, but, more importantly, an expression of indoctrination, and this more sinister implication jars with the story's apparent conclusion: as in 'Millie' and 'Miss Brill' Mansfield extends and complicates the story convention of a simple concluding reversal, and it is this formal dissonance which reveals the real point.

The theory of ideological channelling illustrated by Leila's plight involves analysing a dominant ideology as a structure which draws sustenance from those contrary impulses which it is able to defuse. This is an idea which Mansfield invokes, possibly inadvertently, in many of her stories. One obvious local example occurs in 'Prelude' when the serving-girl Alice reflects bitterly on her position of subservience: 'she had the most marvellous retorts ready for questions that she knew would never be put to her. The composing of them and the turning of them over and over in her mind comforted her just as much as if they'd been expressed' (250). Alice ameliorates her situation by supplying her own ideology of personal gratification, a

private system of satisfaction which effectively defuses her rebellious urge and facilitates her continuing conformity. The ideological restraints examined in the story as a whole are perpetuated by types of discourse which either obscure or make more palatable the nature of those restraints.

This aspect of a dominant social structure – its capacity to oppress those it simultaneously incites to rebellion – has been identified by Fredric Jameson as an integral part of dominant collective thought, the ‘ideological function’ of which can be ‘understood as a process whereby otherwise dangerous and protopolitical impulses are “managed” and defused, rechanneled and offered spurious objects’.¹⁹ An excellent example of this ideological function of collective thought is to be found in Mansfield’s story ‘The Garden Party’. A detailed reading of this piece clearly shows how Mansfield’s political commentary is bound up with her development of the short story form.

‘The Garden Party’ focuses on Laura Sheridan’s incipient growth towards an understanding of the disparate elements of experience, a growth which involves a move to reject the blinkers of her social conditioning. This conditioning is represented by the collective thought of the Sheridans, exemplified by the fragmented, classist and egocentric world-view of Laura’s mother, Mrs Sheridan.

Mansfield’s own comments on psychological presentation are revealing, not only in relation to ‘The Garden Party’, but also because of the affinity they show with the expressed opinions of other modernist writers. Just as Lawrence wanted to remove ‘the old stable *ego* of the character’ from his work, and Woolf complained against those literary ‘gig-lamps symmetrically arranged’,²⁰ Mansfield delivered her own iconoclastic blast against the inherent limitations of conventional fiction’s handling of the psyche:

I was only thinking last night people have hardly begun to write yet ... I mean prose. Take the very best of it. Aren’t they still cutting up sections rather than tackling the whole of a mind? I had a moment of absolute terror in the night. I suddenly thought of a *living mind* – a whole mind – with absolutely nothing left out. With *all* that one knows how much does one not know? I used to fancy one knew all but some

kind of mysterious core (or one could). But now I believe just the opposite. The unknown is far, far greater than the known. The known is only a mere shadow. This is a fearful thing and terribly hard to face. But it must be faced.²¹

'The Garden Party' deals with this perceived complexity of experience, and the author's summary of the story is instructive:

That is what I tried to convey in *The Garden Party*. The diversity of life and how we try to fit in everything, Death included. That is bewildering for a person of Laura's age. She feels things ought to happen differently. First one and then another. But life isn't like that. We haven't the ordering of it. Laura says, 'But all these things must not happen at once.' And Life answers, 'Why not? How are they divided from each other.' And they *do* all happen, it is inevitable. And it seems to me there is beauty in that inevitability.²²

The story, then, treats Laura's incipient psychological growth and rejection of social conditioning, typified by the compartmentalizing of Mrs Sheridan. Interestingly, there is a close analogy between the falsity of the Sheridan way of life and the falsity perceived by Mansfield in conventional modes of character portrayal: the garden party syndrome hinges upon a particular ideological manipulation of experience, a manipulation comparable with the mental 'cutting up [of] sections' to which Mansfield objected.

The story is mediated through Laura's consciousness, but her discourse is tempered by a different discourse which expresses the ideology of Mrs Sheridan. It is this dialogized nature of the narrative which stages the ideological struggle. The apparently innocuous opening paragraph reveals the extent of Laura's indoctrination:

And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. . . . As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night. (487)

Laura's perceptions here are limited to a monomadic anthropomorphism: outer stimuli are interpreted in terms of her

anticipated happiness as her apprehensive excitement for the party burgeons. Behind this discourse lies the dominant influence of Mrs Sheridan, the co-ordinator of the garden party syndrome. The world she represents promulgates the ideology that pecuniary power can create worthwhile and enjoyable social interaction in the shape of a successful party. This voice speaks through Laura here who reflects that a better day for the party could not have been *ordered*. The roses, too, are seen as understanding their utility value in cosmetic social terms.

Laura's conditioned response to the roses provides a link with the delivery of a tray of lilies. Her reaction to these flowers intimates, by way of contrast, her potential for growth beyond the closed Sheridan world. Ordered by Mrs Sheridan for the party, the lilies are intended to contribute to the day's atmosphere just as Laura imagines the roses will. *Potted* plants, however, would seem to be a stage too far for Laura:

There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies – canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

'O-oh, Sadie!' said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

'It's some mistake,' she said faintly. 'Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother.'

But at that moment Mrs Sheridan joined them.

'It's quite right,' she said calmly. 'Yes, I ordered them. Aren't they lovely?' She pressed Laura's arm. (490)

Until the appearance of her mother, Laura is conscious of excess, and struggles with some unformed moral decision. Like the rest of the party's extravagant preparations the lilies, crammed together in pots, represent a distortion of experience: in their artificial proximity they are 'almost frighteningly alive'. Laura's unease is expressed in her sense of the lilies 'growing in her breast', a sensation indicative of a worrying conscience making itself felt. At this point Mrs Sheridan manages to stifle the independent analysis: pressing her daughter's arm she persuades her to toe the Sheridan line.

With the death of Mr Scott, the carter, Laura's tendency to mediate experience through her party mood is interrupted: 'we can't possibly have a garden party with a man dead just outside the front gate', she exclaims (493). External experience impinges, but Laura has not enlarged her understanding of life's diversity: one obsession is temporarily displaced by another. Mrs Sheridan is able to rechannel Laura's tunnel vision by means of strategic flattery: she places one of her own hats on her daughter's head and announces, 'the hat is yours. It's made for you' (494). Laura's vanity defeats her scruples. The passing-down of the hat signifies the heritage that Mrs Sheridan offers her daughter, and Laura is afforded a new glimpse of herself as a replica of her mother: 'Never had she imagined she could look like that' (495). Earlier, when on the phone to her friend Kitty, Laura has already shown herself her mother's daughter on points of style:

Mrs Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. 'Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday.'

'Mother says you're to wear that *sweet* hat you had on last Sunday.'
(489)

Rather than merely parroting the parental opinion, Laura is happy to appropriate it, as indicated by her own emphasis on 'sweet'. The hat motif is here installed as a symbol of the transference of discourse, and continuing ideological control.

Mrs Sheridan's role as ideologue is developed through her 'brilliant idea' of sending Laura with a basket of scraps from the party to the grieving Scott family (496). Laura's preoccupation with the event outside her ken, and her submerged sympathy for a less privileged social stratum, is channelled into a pre-determined gesture of patronage. In this way an outlet is provided for Laura's incipient social non-conformity at the same time that this impulse is effectively undermined.

It is here that Jameson's characterization of ideology 'as a process whereby otherwise dangerous and protopolitical impulses are "managed" and defused, rechannelled and offered spurious objects' is particularly relevant. The Sheridan children's upbringing has been governed by just this sort of management: their youthful urge to explore and discover has

been disarmed of its rebelliousness, while being falsely sated. As children, Laura and her brother Laurie were forbidden to set foot in the Scotts' neighbourhood 'because of the revolting language and of what they might catch' (the narrative here being fully dialogized with Sheridanese) (493). Their subsequent forays into the social unknown of the Scotts' neighbourhood are conditioned by this prejudice: 'since they were grown up, Laura and Laurie on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still one must go everywhere; one must see everything. So through they went' (493-4). This conditioned snobbishness restricts the need for contact to an easily satisfied dilettantism. 'One must go everywhere; one must see everything' insists the formulaic Sheridan discourse, even though the conclusion - 'disgusting and sordid' - has been predetermined by indoctrination. Laura and Laurie have their illusion of exploration and contact, even when the nett result is a confirmation of class division and impercipience.

Yet the potential for experiential growth remains present, a fact which Mrs Sheridan is conscious of, as is clear when Laura is on the point of departing for the Scotts'. There remains the potential danger of the encounter with vital experience in the form of death:

'Only the basket, then. And, Laura!' - her mother followed her out of the marquee - 'don't on any account -'

'What, mother?'

No, better not put such ideas into the child's head! 'Nothing! Run along.' (497)

Mrs Sheridan has realized that Laura may be asked, or may ask, to see the dead man laid out. Her unfinished admonishment expresses her desire that such an encounter be prevented, and this convincing expression of parental concern is subtly infused with the classist attitude: death, the great leveller, threatens to provide tangible proof of universal human frailty and, by extension, powerful evidence of the superficiality of class distinctions.

Laura does see the dead man, more by accident than design, and the incident triggers a confused moment of revelation in

which a more complex concept of experience than her upbringing has admitted impinges on her consciousness:

His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. (498-9)

The 'epiphany' is compromised. It embodies a dawning awareness of the disparate elements of life and their random simultaneity and, consequently, a partial progression beyond rigid class distinctions. But the experience is mediated through the (still persisting) Sheridan discourse, indicated here by a certain wondering aestheticism. This recalls Laura's earlier anthropomorphic reception of outer stimuli, conditioned by a particular emotion. Here a different emotion arouses the same aesthetic. Laura has arrived at the brink of a vision, but her Sheridanese is inadequate for rendering the experience. When she attempts to explain the revelation she finds her sentence unfinishable: "Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life -" But what life was she couldn't explain' (499).

The epiphany is complex because it gathers positive and negative forces around a single fulcrum. In one sense the very nature of the near-vision - its revelation of the totality and diversity of life, and the discrediting of class distinctions - renders it unfit for *précis*. But it is only a partial vision, mediated and compromised by a restricted language.

This ambiguity is superbly conveyed by the hat motif, which makes its most significant contribution when Laura, still wearing her party hat, views the body:

He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy... happy... All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

'Forgive my hat,' she said. (498-9; original ellipsis)

The hat, as we have seen, is emblematic of the Sheridan world. Here Laura considers it a solecism to her new, emerging conception of the world, and, in recognizing the need to apologize for it, she seems implicitly to be rejecting it and the world it represents. At the same time, however, the hat symbolizes the fallen Sheridan discourse, a notion confirmed here by Laura's concern at the impropriety of her headgear: the voice of Mrs Sheridan is heard once more making an irrelevant and superficial response. Even over the question of propriety, however, the ambiguity persists, since the party hat, being black, suggests funeral garb: it is half appropriate to the experience, as is fitting in relation to Laura's partial advancement. Laura's confused discourse encapsulates the ideological conflict, and the ambiguity of her apology indicates a limited, but important, debunking of the Sheridan voice. This ending also illuminates the issue of the 'paradoxical' and 'mysterious' nature of the short story form perceived by many commentators. Here the mysterious aura surrounding the death clearly emulates Laura's qualified enlightenment, a 'mystery' which the reader is required to see beyond. Laura, 'the artistic one' of the family (487), exemplifies the dual relationship to ideology which I have been tracing in other stories: just as literature can reveal the ideological restraints under which it labours, so does Laura's artistic capacity, for Mansfield, enable her to question and make a preliminary break with the restrictive context which still binds her.

It is important to note that there is a close relationship between the ideological restraints which Mansfield takes as her target and the restrictive fictional practices which she simultaneously disrupts. The symbolic hat, rather than connoting a single, fixed idea, reveals the ambiguity of Laura's situation: the literary device of a stable symbolism is rejected together with the false imposition of a social hierarchy. This coincidence of disruptive form and content clearly relates to the whole composition of a story, particularly in challenging the notion of unified development. The significant moment in Mansfield is an opening out of possibilities rather than a narrowing down, or a particular revelation. Yet the limiting conventions are played

off against the radical gesture, as at the end of 'The Garden Party' where the scene is set for a clear dawning of awareness which does not come, Mansfield's point being that the anticipated epiphany would be reductive and simplistic. The conclusion of 'Bliss' uses the expectation of the conventional love-triangle to order a supposed moment of shock for Bertha Young, yet the discovery of her husband's adultery is really not the issue, and neither is there any sudden revelation: Bertha's homosexual tendencies, implicit throughout the narrative, are merely allowed to surface, in the process throwing her world into chaos. The ambiguity of the ending, and its symbolism, summarizes her impossible social position: the pressures of conformity, which deny her true feelings, are mirrored in the fictional expectations which Mansfield flouts. Mansfield's characters invariably experience a complex of external voices shaping their attitudes and behaviour, and this is what her cultivation of an impersonal style – her defeat of the personal – connotes: an insistence that individual behaviour is not a purely autonomous or straightforward phenomenon, to be rendered in a transparent story form, but rather a focus of confusion and conflict, requiring a polyphonous presentation.

Notes

I THE SHORT STORY: THEORIES AND DEFINITIONS

- 1 The notion of a new genre is sometimes opposed: Warren S. Walker, for instance, challenges the idea of the modern short story as a new genre by arguing that its roots lie in the oral tale. See 'From Raconteur to Writer: Oral Roots and Printed Leaves of Short Fiction', in *The Teller and the Tale: Aspects of the Short Story*, edited by Wendell M. Aycock (Lubbock, Texas, 1982), pp. 13–26. For discussions of the modern short story as a new phenomenon see note 6 below.
- 2 L. P. Hartley, 'In Defence of the Short Story', in *The Novelist's Responsibility* (London, 1967), pp. 157–9 (p. 157).
- 3 Susan Lohafer, *Coming to Terms with the Short Story* (Baton Rouge, 1983), p. 159.
- 4 The term 'genre', it should be said, is used in this survey to connote generic *forms* (novel, short story, novella), rather than generic *styles* (romance, thriller, metafiction), which cross the boundaries of form.
- 5 Lohafer, *Coming to Terms with the Short Story*, p. 103.
- 6 Mary Louise Pratt dates the emergence of the modern short story between 1835 and 1855 in 'The Short Story: The Long and the Short of It', *Poetics*, 10 (1981), 175–94 (182). H. E. Bates considers 1809, the year in which both Gogol and Poe were born, to be the key date. See *The Modern Short Story* (1941; rep. London, 1988). Ian Reid discusses the form's nineteenth-century origins in chapter two of *The Short Story* (London, 1977). Commentators on the modern short story in England have frequently taken 1880 as the starting-point for their survey: see Clare Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions: 1880–1980* (London and Basingstoke, 1985); Suzanne Carol Ferguson, 'Formal Developments in the English Short Story: 1880–1910', unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford

- University, 1967; Joseph M. Flora, ed., *The English Short Story: 1880-1945* (Boston, Mass., 1985). One useful way of indicating new developments in short fiction is to trace the growth of the genre in the literary magazines of the 1880s and 1890s, particularly in *The Yellow Book*. Some of the historical surveys contain speculation on this issue. See particularly Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions*, pp. 11-19.
- 7 Pratt, 'The Short Story: The Long and the Short of It', 180-1.
 - 8 E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927; rep. Harmondsworth, 1981), p. 25.
 - 9 Norman Friedman, 'What Makes a Short Story Short?', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 4 (1958), 103-17, in *Short Story Theories*, edited by Charles E. May (Ohio, 1976), pp. 131-46 (p. 133).
 - 10 Anthony Burgess, 'On the Short Story', *Les Cahiers de la Nouvelle: Journal of the Short Story in English*, 2 (1984), 31-47 (38).
 - 11 Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Faber Book of Modern Short Stories', in *Short Story Theories*, ed. May, pp. 152-8 (p. 153).
 - 12 G. B. Stern, *Long Story Short* (London, 1939).
 - 13 Bernard Fonlon, 'The Philosophy, the Science and the Art of the Short Story', *Abbia: Revue Culturelle Camerounaise*, 34-7 (1979), 427-38 (431).
 - 14 Pratt, 'The Short Story: The Long and the Short of It', 183.
 - 15 See, for instance, Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions*, p. 55.
 - 16 This term has also incurred difficulties: Joseph Gibaldi disputes the common use of 'novella' and suggests that 'short novel' or 'novelette' would be preferable. 'Novella', he argues, is 'the term for a definite period genre, specifically that tradition of short prose fiction that flourished between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, for which Boccaccio's *Decameron* served as the supreme model.' See 'Towards a Definition of the Novella', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 12 (1975), 91-7 (92).
 - 17 Judith Leibowitz, *Narrative Purpose in the Novella* (The Hague, 1974), pp. 12, 16.
 - 18 *Ibid.* See, especially, pp. 12-17.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 64.
 - 20 The task of definition has been further complicated by the growth of the very short story - the 'minimal fiction' or the 'short-short story', as it is variously defined. See, for instance, the anthology *Sudden Fiction: American Short-Short Stories*, edited by Robert Shapard and James Thomas (1986; rep., Harmondsworth, 1988). The 'Afterwords' (pp. 227-58) by well-known writers attempt to define the short-short story, but often only serve to confuse the generic issue, as when Paul Theroux comments that 'in most cases it contains a novel' (p. 228).

- 21 Michael Chapman, 'The Fiction Maker: The Short Story in Literary Education', *CRUX: A Journal on the Teaching of English*, 18 (1984), 3–20 (4).
- 22 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 23 Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York, 1983), pp. 134, 135.
- 24 Edgar Allan Poe, 'Review of *Twice-Told Tales*', *Graham's Magazine*, May 1842, reprinted in *Short Story Theories*, ed. May, pp. 45–51 (p. 48).
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- 26 Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction*, p. 13.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 15.
- 28 A picture, of course, cannot always be taken in all at once, and may also employ foregrounding devices – pattern, juxtaposition of colours – which invite a particular order of perception. But in a painting there can be no fixed, temporal order of assimilation as there always must be in a sequence of words.
- 29 Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 14–15.
- 30 Other analogies between painting and the short story are made by William Peden, 'Realism and Anti-Realism in the Modern Short Story', in *The Teller and the Tale*, ed. Aycock, pp. 47–62 (p. 49), and John Bayley, *The Short Story: Henry James to Elizabeth Bowen* (Brighton, 1988), p. 43. One textbook on the short story stresses the supposed affinity by opening each chapter with a famous picture in order to 'illustrate' different aspects of the short story. (See *Four Elements: A Creative Approach to the Short Story*, edited by Anne Sherrill and Paula Robertson-Rose (New York, 1975).) The final chapter, on 'The Organic Whole' of the short story, is prefaced by a reproduction of Edvard Munch's litho 'The Scream' which, it is said, derives its force from 'a total impression' just as the story writer 'creates an *organic whole*, in which parts are dependent on one another' (p. 117).
- 31 Avrom Fleishman, 'Forms of the Woolfian Short Story', in *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity*, edited by Ralph Freedman (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1980), pp. 44–70.
- 32 Johannes Hedberg, 'What is a "Short Story"? And What is an "Essay"?', *Moderna Språk*, 74 (1980), 113–20 (119).
- 33 Rüdiger Imhof, 'Minimal Fiction, or the Question of Scale', *Anglistik & Englischunterricht*, 23 (1984), 159–68 (167). 'Frame Tale' is from John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* (Harmondsworth, 1972).
- 34 John Wain, 'Remarks on the Short Story', *Les Cahiers de la Nouvelle: Journal of the Short Story in English*, 2 (1984), 49–66 (51).

- 35 'Katherine Anne Porter: An Interview', *Paris Review*, 29 (1963), 101.
- 36 *The Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield*, edited by C. K. Stead (Harmondsworth, 1981), p. 247.
- 37 A. E. Coppard, *It's Me, O Lord!* (London, 1957), p. 33.
- 38 Cay Dollerup, 'Concepts of "Tension", "Intensity" and "Suspense" in Short-Story Theory', *Orbis Litterarum: International Review of Literary Studies*, 25 (1970), 314-37.
- 39 Reid, *The Short Story*, pp. 6, 8.
- 40 Eileen Baldeshwiler, 'The Lyric Short Story: The Sketch of a History', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 6 (1969), 443-53, reprinted in *Short Story Theories*, ed. May, pp. 202-13 (p. 208).
- 41 John Gerlach, *Toward the End: Closure and Structure in the American Short Story* (Alabama, 1985), p. 6.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- 43 A. L. Bader, 'The Structure of the Modern Short Story', *College English*, 7 (1945), 86-92, reprinted in *Short Story Theories*, ed. May, pp. 107-15 (p. 110).
- 44 Lohafer, *Coming to Terms with the Short Story*, p. 26.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- 46 Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions*, pp. 83, 120, 127.
- 47 Kafka makes this objection in a letter of 25 October 1915. See Franz Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (London, 1978), pp. 114-15 (p. 115).
- 48 Kafka, *The Trial*, translated by Willa and Edwin Muir (1935; rep. Harmondsworth, 1981), pp. 235-7.
- 49 Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), p. 28.
- 50 Ferguson, 'Formal Developments in the English Short Story', pp. 4, 5.
- 51 Baldeshwiler, 'The Lyric Short Story', p. 202.
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions*, pp. 55-81.
- 54 See *The Story: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Mark Schorer (New York, 1950), p. 433. Quoted and discussed by Thomas A. Gullason in 'Revelation and Evolution: A Neglected Dimension of the Short Story', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 10 (1973), 347-56 (347).
- 55 Elizabeth Bowen, *After-Thought: Pieces About Writing* (London, 1962), p. 79.
- 56 See, for instance, *Introduction to the Short Story*, edited by Robert W. Boynton and Maynard Mack (1965; second edition, New Jersey, 1972); *Studies in the Short Story*, edited by Virgil Scott and David Madden (1968; fourth edition, New York, 1976); *The Shape of*

- Fiction: British and American Short Stories*, edited by Leo Hamalian and Frederick R. Karl (1967; second edition, New York, 1978).
- 57 The phrase is from *Stephen Hero* (1944; reprinted, London, 1969), p. 216.
- 58 Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions*, p. 55.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 60 *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 81.
- 61 See Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (second edition, Chicago and London, 1983).
- 62 Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 136, 137, 193–4.
- 63 Julio Cortázar, 'On the Short Story and its Environs', translated by Naomi Lindstrom, *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 3 (1983), 34–37 (34, 37).
- 64 János Szávai, 'Towards a Theory of the Short Story', *Acta Litteraria Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 24 (1982), 203–24 (204, 205).
- 65 William B. Warde (Jr.), 'The Short Story: Structure of a New Genre', *South Central Bulletin*, 36 (1976), 155–7 (156).
- 66 John Gerlach, *Toward the End*, p. 111.
- 67 Bayley, *The Short Story*, pp. 15, 31.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 69 Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (1976; reprinted, London, 1986), p. 184. Eagleton is here employing Marxian terms from *The Eighteenth Brumaire*.
- 70 Bayley, *The Short Story*, p. 26.
- 71 Eudora Welty, 'The Reading and Writing of Short Stories', *The Atlantic Monthly*, 183 (February and March 1949), 54–8 and 46–9, reprinted in *Short Story Theories*, ed. May, pp. 159–77 (p. 164).
- 72 Reid, *The Short Story*, p. 65.
- 73 Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions*, p. 36.
- 74 *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, edited by Antony Alpers (Auckland, Melbourne, Oxford, 1984), p. 307.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 315.
- 76 Walter E. Anderson, 'The Hidden Love Triangle in Mansfield's "Bliss"', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 28 (1982), 397–404.
- 77 Marvin Magalaner's reading of the story in *The Fiction of Katherine Mansfield* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1971), pp. 78–9, contrasts with Anderson's. Magalaner finds the symbolism 'confusing' (79) precisely because it appears to represent the shifting feelings of different characters (this is its strength, in my view).
- 78 *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, p. 308.
- 79 *Ibid.*, p. 315.
- 80 For details of magazine publication of *Jude* see Richard Little

- Purdy, *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study* (1954; reprinted, Oxford, 1979), pp. 87–8.
- 81 John Goode, *Thomas Hardy: The Offensive Truth* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 139, 140. These brief references to Goode's book, it should be noted, do not do full justice to the sophistication of his argument at this point.
- 82 Michael Sprinker, *Imaginary Relations: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Theory of Historical Materialism* (London, 1987), p. 269. See pp. 178n, 179n for a summary of the political interpretations of Althusser.
- 83 'A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre', in Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London, 1984), pp. 173–9 (pp. 173–4). For a critical view of the passage quoted see Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology*, p. 84.
- 84 Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, p. 178.
- 85 Gregory Elliott, *The Detour of Theory* (London and New York, 1987), p. 177.
- 86 Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, translated by Ben Brewster (1970; reprinted, London, 1986), p. 28.
- 87 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981; reprinted, London, 1986), p. 81.
- 88 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 89 Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, 'On Literature as an Ideological Form', *Oxford Literary Review*, 3 (1978), 4–12, reprinted in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited by Robert Young (1981; reprinted, London, 1987), pp. 79–99 (p. 87).
- 90 C. A. Hankin, *Katherine Mansfield and Her Confessional Stories* (1983; reprinted, London and Basingstoke, 1988), p. 66.
- 91 Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology*, p. 177.
- 92 See the 'Ideology of Modernism' in Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, translated by John and Necke Mander (London, 1963), pp. 17–46.
- 93 The continuing lack of sophistication in short story theory is surprising. In this connection mention should be made of a collection of brief essays, *Re-reading the Short Story*, edited by Clare Hanson (London and Basingstoke, 1989), which appeared after this work was originally drafted. The collection includes preliminary attempts to discuss the genre in terms of feminism (Mary Eagleton), psychoanalysis (Clare Hanson), and reader-response theory (David Miall). One would like to see the ideas broached in these short pieces extended in longer, more rigorous works.

in that they are functions of a matrix of forces'. Consequently, 'heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide' (428).

- 20 Ibid., p. 298.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid., p. 284.
- 23 Virginia Woolf, *Books and Portraits*, edited by Mary Lyon (1977; reprinted, St Albans, 1979), p. 139.
- 24 *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, edited by Andrew McNeillie (London, 1986–), volume II, p. 167.
- 25 Virginia Woolf, *Books and Portraits*, p. 142.
- 26 Ibid., p. 143.
- 27 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited and translated by Caryl Emerson (Manchester, 1984), pp. 212, 215.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 212, 213.
- 29 Ibid., pp. 217, 226, 227.
- 30 Susan Dick conjectures that the story was originally drafted in 1918. See *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, p. 298.
- 31 Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 118.
- 32 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 272.
- 33 *Collected Essays*, II, p. 106.
- 34 See Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject* (Brighton, 1987), p. 25.
- 35 *Collected Essays*, II, p. 106.
- 36 Avrom Fleishman, 'Forms of the Woolfian Short Story', in *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity*, ed. Freedman, p. 64.
- 37 *Collected Essays*, II, p. 106.
- 38 'The Sphinx Without a Secret', in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (1966; reprinted, London and Glasgow, 1977), pp. 215–18 (p. 218).
- 39 *Collected Essays*, I, pp. 327–8.
- 40 Ibid., p. 328.

4 KATHERINE MANSFIELD: THE IMPERSONAL SHORT STORY

- 1 *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, definitive edition, edited by John Middleton Murry (1954; reprinted, London, 1984), p. 195.
- 2 Saralyn R. Daly, *Katherine Mansfield* (Boston, 1965), pp. 82, 85.
- 3 Page references given in the text are to *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Alpers. Proclaimed 'Definitive Edition' on the dustjacket, this is the nearest thing to a scholarly edition of the stories yet published. One should be aware, however, of the criticism it has provoked. See particularly Sophie Tomlinson's

- review, 'Mans-Field in Bookform', *Landfall*, 39 (1985), 465-89. For the dating of the stories I have followed the bibliographical account given in the 'Commentary' in the Alpers edition, pp. 543-78. (Some of the dates are conjectural.)
- 4 David Daiches makes this objection in *New Literary Values: Studies in Modern Literature* (Edinburgh and London, 1936), p. 93.
 - 5 *The Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Stead, p. 213.
 - 6 See *The Letters of John Middleton Murry to Katherine Mansfield*, edited by C. A. Hankin (London, 1983), pp. 114-15 (115).
 - 7 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 205.
 - 8 Some early experiments in dialogue are also to be found in 'Katherine Mansfield's Juvenilia', edited by Margaret Scott, *Adam International Review*, 370-5 (1973), 42-72. The story 'Pictures' (1919-20) was also originally written in dialogue form as 'The Common Round', *New Age* (31 May 1917).
 - 9 Sylvia Berkman's discussion of the revision of *The Aloe* is particularly valuable. See *Katherine Mansfield: A Critical Study* (London, 1952), pp. 84-98.
 - 10 The same ambiguity is evident in *The Aloe*, where the phrase is 'goes for you'. See *The Aloe*, edited by Vincent O'Sullivan (London, 1985), p. 13.
 - 11 Kate Fullbrook, *Katherine Mansfield* (Brighton, 1986), p. 38.
 - 12 Sex and childbirth as predation and oppression in Mansfield is examined by Fullbrook, *ibid.* Sylvia Berkman's early study introduced this line of critical thought: see *Katherine Mansfield: A Critical Study*.
 - 13 Bayley, *The Short Story*, pp. 123, 125.
 - 14 Mansfield's use of fantasy is discussed intermittently in C. A. Hankin, *Katherine Mansfield and Her Confessional Stories*, and Fullbrook, *Katherine Mansfield*.
 - 15 The importance of sea imagery in other Mansfield stories, often as representative of the harsh reality of experience, has been examined by Marvin Magalaner, especially in relation to 'At the Bay'. See *The Fiction of Katherine Mansfield*, pp. 40-3.
 - 16 For an account of Mansfield's subversive feminist content see Fullbrook, *Katherine Mansfield*.
 - 17 This is Fullbrook's apt summary of a prevailing critical view. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
 - 18 Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessing* (revised edition, 1982; reprinted, London, 1988), p. 246.
 - 19 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 287.
 - 20 D. H. Lawrence, letter to Edward Garnett, 5 June 1914, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, volume II, edited by George Zytarok

and James Boulton (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 183; Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', in *Collected Essays*, II, pp. 103–10 (106).

21 *Letters and Journals*, p. 213.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 259.

5 WYNDHAM LEWIS: THE VORTICIST SHORT STORY

- 1 Richard Cork makes large claims for the importance of Vorticism in the development of abstract art in *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, (London, 1976). For a challenge to this account see Reed Way Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting* (Baltimore and London, 1985), especially pp. 61–5. See also Michael Durman and Alan Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis and the Nature of Vorticism' in *Wyndham Lewis: Letteratura/Pittura*, edited by Giovanni Cianci (Palermo, 1982), pp. 101–18.
- 2 Recent historical surveys that omit discussion of Lewis include Walter Allen's *The Short Story in English* (Oxford, 1981), Clare Hanson's *Short Stories and Short Fictions*, and *The English Short Story*, ed. Flora.
- 3 See Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, for an excellent account of the gradual infiltration of Lewis's Vorticist painting aesthetic into his literary work. Dasenbrock shows how this aesthetic is involved in Lewis's literary output right through to the 1950s.
- 4 Richard Cork argues for this narrow definition. See particularly *Vorticism and Abstract Art*, pp. 508–57.
- 5 The edition used is *The Complete Wild Body*, edited by Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara, 1982). In addition to the 1927 versions of the stories this edition also contains early drafts and other relevant primary material, together with publication details. Page references here are given subsequently in the text. See also Lafourcade's essay on the evolution of the stories, 'The Taming of the Wild Body', in *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation*, edited by Jeffrey Meyers (London, 1980), pp. 68–84.
- 6 *Tarr* (revised edition, 1928; reprinted, Harmondsworth, 1982), p. 312.
- 7 See Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art*, p. 246.
- 8 See Walter Michel, *Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings* (London, 1971), p. 58, for an explanation of the dating of *Workshop*; *The Vorticist* and *Le Penseur* are reproduced in plate 10.