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Literature in Masks: Katherine Mansfield,
Eileen Chang and the Possibilities of
Creative Writing

Wen-Shan Shieh

PhD in Creative and Critical Writing

University of Sussex

August 2013

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree. This thesis is entirely the product of my own research, using works cited in the bibliography.

Wen-Shan Shieh

August 2013

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

WEN-SHAN SHIEH

PHD IN CREATIVE AND CRITICAL WRITING

LITERATURE IN MASKS: KATHERINE MANSFIELD,EILEEN CHANGAND THE POSSIBILITIES OF CREATIVE WRITINGSUMMARY

The thesis proposes that the figurative and extensive use of the ‘mask’—persona, masquerade, disguise, impersonation—provides a crucial literary device for the development and liberation of the expressive potential of Katherine Mansfield and Eileen Chang (1920-1995).

Chapter 1, ‘Introduction’, elucidates the relationship between mask and language with respect to the writings of Mansfield and Chang by revising John Keats’s idea of ‘the chameleon poet’, Robert Browning’s conception of dramatic monologue, Oscar Wilde’s insights into truth and masks, and Ezra Pound’s adoptions of ‘personae’ in his poetry. The affinities between Mansfield and Chang will be explored by looking at their critical writing as well as criticism on them, revealing their shared awareness of the masks of a person in daily life as well as in fiction and drama. Chapter 2, ‘Katherine Mansfield’s Art of Changing Masks’, explores how Mansfield’s characters switch between three types of masks—speech and the non-verbal, gender, animality—to respond to changes in their situations. Particularly important for this exploration are Joan Rivière’s ‘Womanliness as Masquerade’, Michael Goldman’s theory of masks in acting, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of ‘becoming-animal’. Chapter 3, ‘Prosopopoeia: Katherine Mansfield’s “special prose” ’, considers Mansfield’s

attempt ‘to bring the dead to life again’ in what she calls ‘*special prose*’ as a ‘prosopopoeia’, or in Cynthia Chase’s phrase, ‘giving a face to a name’. In this chapter I will also trace how Mansfield’s work was first translated into Chinese in 1923 by the Chinese poet, Zhimo Xu (1897-1931), which made her one of the most widely-read foreign writers in the Chinese-speaking world. More importantly, I suggest that Xu’s use of quotations from Keats and other nineteenth-century poets in portraying Mansfield in his memoir calls our attention to her decisive and still insufficiently examined relationship to poetry. Chapter 4, ‘“Hiding behind a foreign language”: Eileen Chang’s Self-Translation and Masquerade’, examines Chang’s penchant for translating her fiction and essays from Chinese into English or vice versa. Taking a cue from Pound’s view of translations as ‘elaborate masks’ and Deleuze’s idea of the writer being a ‘foreigner’ in their own language, I examine some of the ways in which that the mask of a foreigner / foreign language enables Chang, a bilingual fiction writer and essayist, to gain the emotional and spatial distance from which to reflect on Chinese culture and her personal life.

Being inspired by Mansfield and Chang’s courage to get away from the notion of writing as self-expression and Dionysus’ gift of crossing boundaries through the assistance of the mask, the creative component of the thesis, Chapter 5, consists of 4 short stories. I conclude the thesis with a poem entitled ‘Gifts (for Katherine Mansfield)’ and a quick fiction called ‘The Functions of Theory’, considering theory and literary terms as a variety of make-up that I apply to the face of my thesis. While critical chapters contain embedded fiction, the creative component demonstrates and tests how the interior space behind the mask allows me to liberate my creative energy. In these stories, I attempt to cross the boundaries between male and female, Chinese and non-Chinese, human and animal, creative and critical writing.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The thesis proposes that the figurative and extensive use of the ‘mask’—persona, masquerade, disguise, impersonation¹—provides a crucial literary device for the development and liberation of the expressive potential of Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) and the Chinese writer Eileen Chang (1920-1995). In the first section of the introductory chapter, I will look at the literal and figurative meanings of the mask and go on to elucidate the relationship between language and the mask with respect to the writings of Katherine Mansfield by revising John Keats’s idea of ‘the chameleon poet’, Robert Browning’s conception of dramatic monologue, and Ezra Pound’s adoptions of ‘personae’ in his poetry. The second section will explore affinity between Mansfield and Chang by looking at their short stories, literary criticism and biographical accounts, revealing their shared awareness of the masks of a person in daily life as well as in fiction and drama.

Literature in Masks

The mask is ‘an image of a face worn by an actor’ ‘intended both to identify the character represented and to amplify the voice’ in Classical Greek Theatre (see *Oxford English Dictionary*,² ‘mask’, n.1, sense b) or ‘a covering worn on or held in front of the face for disguise’, ‘worn at balls and masques’ (‘mask’, n.1, sense a). Figuratively, it refers to ‘a facial expression assumed deliberately to conceal an emotion or give a false impression’ or ‘an outward appearance which belies a person’s true nature’ (‘mask’,

¹ I will use these terms interchangeably in my thesis to refer to the figure and the concept of the mask.

² Unless otherwise indicated, all dictionary definitions are from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*), 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), in its latest online version at <<http://www.oed.com>>.

n.2). Obviously, both of the literal and figurative senses of the ‘mask’ defined by the *OED* indicate that the word is indivisible from the notion of disguise and concealment. A closer look at the etymology of ‘mask’ also shows that the word is connected to the French noun *masque*, ‘an entertainment in which masked participants dance; a masquerade, a masked ball’ (*masque*, n.2). Furthermore, ‘mask’ is also intimately bound up with the Latin word *persona*. As Hannah Arendt claims in *On Revolution*:

The profound meaningfulness inherent in the many political metaphors derived from the theatre is perhaps best illustrated by the history of the Latin word, *persona*. In its original meaning, it signified the mask ancient actors used to wear in a play. [...] The mask as such obviously had two functions: it had to hide, or rather to replace, the actor’s own face and countenance, but in a way that would make it possible for the voice to sound through. At any rate, it was in this twofold understanding of the mask through which a voice sounds that the word *persona* became a metaphor and was carried from the language of the theatre into legal terminology.³

This passage indicates the way the assumption of one’s public image in society is integral to the idea of wearing a mask. The purpose of the mask ‘for the voice to sound through’, however, brings to the fore the point that the mask is designed less to conceal its wearer’s face than to help him or her to act his or her part on the stage of the world,⁴ prefiguring René Descartes’ statement ‘Larvatus prodeo’ (‘Masked, I advance’).⁵ More recently, and along different lines, Hélène Cixous argues in her article titled ‘Unmasked!’ that a mask worn by an actor at the theatre is intended not so much to chase away the actor’s face as to ‘impose an alien image’ upon it:

³ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, intro. Jonathan Schell (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 96-7. Quoted in Norma Claire Moruzzi, *Speaking through the Mask: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Social Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2001), p. 36.

⁴ The phrase ‘the stage of the world’ is derived from what Jacques says in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*: ‘All the world’s a stage, / And all the men and women merely players. / They have their exits and their entrances, / And one man in his time plays many parts’. See *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene 7, lines 139-42 in Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan, eds, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, rev. edn (London: Methuen Drama, 2011), p. 173.

⁵ For analyses of the Cartesian’s subject as a *persona* indexed to a mask, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *Ego Sum* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), pp. 61-94.

[...] The mask is there to keep the self from getting its face back. [...] Behind the mask, for the moment, there's a panting absence. The interior space is free for the other. For the coming into being of Henry V, Desdemona or King Lear. Yes: one woman one man or the other, the space is ready to receive them without distinction as to sex, age, race.⁶

Cixous' remark on the function of the mask is especially appropriate in the case of Dionysus, known as 'the god of masks'.⁷ On the theatre stage of Euripides' *Bacchae*, an actor wears a tragic mask, masquerading as Dionysus, who is the protagonist of the play. The function of the mask is to make the character played by the actor recognisable to the audience, but Dionysus in Euripides' *Bacchae* is the god 'whose essential forms of manifestation are metamorphosis, disguise, and the mask'.⁸ First, he has 'changed from divine to human form' (5)⁹ by wearing the mask of a young man with a smiling face. Second, we hear of him from the chorus, to whom he is a source of delight, release and freedom, at the same time as he is a fearsome power to whom they pray for justice in their distress. Third, we see him as his opponent Pentheus does, as a 'foreigner' 'who looks like a girl' (352-3). The chorus does not recognise him as the god, but takes him as their 'comrade in the sacred dance' (547), and later as 'our great light in dancing to Bacchus' (608). Surprisingly, while Pentheus emerges in women's dress in scene 3, he sees Dionysus as 'a bull' (920). Dionysus makes a fourth appearance at the end, revealing himself as a god. Without a mask, Dionysus would lose his ability to blur the lines between divine and human, between Greek and foreign, between male and female, between civilised and savage.

⁶ Hélène Cixous, 'Unmasked!', trans. Keith Cohen, in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 180.

⁷ See Jean-Pierre Vernant and Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, 'Features of the Mask in Ancient Greece', in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 202.

⁸ See Vernant and Frontisi-Ducroux, 'Features of the Mask in Ancient Greece', p. 202.

⁹ I use Paul Woodruff's translation of Euripides' *Bacchae* (Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998).

It should be stressed that this thesis is not a study of features of the mask as an ancient artifact in its most archaic context, along the lines of what Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet have done in their *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*¹⁰. Nor is it a thematic analysis of the mask depicted in literature, such as Charles Segal's study of the masked Dionysus in Euripides' *Bacchae*.¹¹ Rather, I want to explore the idea that the figure and concept of the mask, an ancient artefact seemingly less relevant to contemporary culture and everyday life, remain a powerful means of reflecting on and creating literature in the twenty-first century. To put it more succinctly, my primary concern is not about the masks in literature, but literature in masks.

The adoption of the linguistic mask is most closely entangled with development of the modernist poetics. In describing the impact Robert Browning's dramatic monologue has upon the development of modernist poetry, Herbert F. Tucker observes that virtually every modernist poet in English 'became an important poet by learning to write otherwise and to exploit the internal otherness of the dramatic monologue.'¹² W. B. Yeats' conception of the mask, Ezra Pound's notion of personae, and T. S. Eliot's impersonal poetry all support Tucker's assertion. In 'A General Introduction for my Work' (1937), Yeats claims that a poet 'never speaks directly': 'he is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been reborn as an idea, something intended, complete'.¹³ Besides, he also expressed his dissatisfaction with 'the

¹⁰ Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

¹¹ Segal, Charles, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*, 2nd edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

¹² Herbert F. Tucker, 'Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyric', in *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, ed. Chaviva Hošek and Patricia Parker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 239. For a good discussion of the modernist poets' struggle to create an artificial equivalent for the self, see Carol T. Christ, *Victoria and Modern Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). See also Richard Ellmann's *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (New York: Norton, 1978).

¹³ W. B. Yeats, 'A General Introduction for my Work', in *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 509.

literature of the point of view',¹⁴ which motivated him to develop the concept of the mask, as he says in his autobiography:

My mind began drifting vaguely towards that doctrine of 'the mask' which has convinced me that every passionate man (I have nothing to do with mechanist, or philanthropist, or man whose eyes have no preference) is, as it were, linked with another age, historical or imaginary, where alone he finds images that rouse his energy.¹⁵

As this passage shows, the mask for Yeats not only enables him to escape the limitations of Romantic egoism, but also helps to, as Carol T. Christ puts it, 'release an energy inhibited by the present'.¹⁶ Following in the tradition of Yeats, Eliot and Pound consistently seek to dissociate the speaker of the poem from the personality of the poet. Modernist poetry is poetry in masks. As Tucker puts it: 'Every poem dramatised a speaker who was not the poet'.¹⁷ In his 'Tradition and Individual Talent', Eliot argues that 'poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality'.¹⁸ As Maud Ellmann writes in her *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound*, 'Eliot implies that the poet's reticence actually safeguards his identity, as if impersonality were the formaldehyde that preserves the self against dispersion through "effusion"'.¹⁹

Building on Arendt and Cixous' insights into masks in theatre and the modernist poet's conception of the mask, I will push them in a somewhat different direction by applying them to literary fiction and prose by Mansfield and Chang. Mansfield was developing a distinctive style for her short stories at the very time that Modernist poets, such as Eliot and Pound, were formulating a theory of what Maud Ellmann calls 'the

¹⁴ Yeats, 'A General Introduction for my Work', p. 511.

¹⁵ Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 102.

¹⁶ Carol T. Christ, 'Dramatic monologue, Mask and Persona', in *Victoria and Modern Poetics*, p. 35.

¹⁷ Tucker, 'Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyric', p. 239.

¹⁸ T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), pp. 48-9.

¹⁹ Maud Ellmann, 'Introduction', *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 7.

poetics of impersonality'²⁰. In a letter dated 12 May 1919, Mansfield writes to Virginia Woolf about her impatience with her contemporary modernist poets. Having confessed that she finds Eliot's poems 'unspeakably dreary', she continues: 'How one could write so absolutely without emotion—perhaps that's [*sic*] an achievement. [. . .] I don't think he is a poet—Prufrock is, after all a short story. I don't know—These dark young men—so proud of their plumes and their black and silver cloaks and ever so expensive pompes funebres—Ive [*sic*] no patience.'²¹

Compared to the aloof poems of Eliot, Mansfield's preference is for Emily Brontë's. She quotes an untitled poem of Brontë's in a letter (27 June 1919) to Ottoline Morrell, praising its 'exquisite simplicity':

I think the Beauty of it is contained in one's certainty that it is not Emily disguised—who writes—it is Emily. Nowadays one of the chief reasons for one's [*sic*] dissatisfaction with modern poetry is one can't be sure that it really does belong to the man who writes it. It is so tiring—isnt [*sic*] it—never to leave the Masked Ball—never—never—²²

Singling out the phrase 'the man who writes it', Ruth Parkin-Gounelas argues that 'the word *man* here, I think, needs to be read in a gender-specific way. [. . .] While Mansfield wanted to *leave* the masked ball, her male contemporaries were in the thick of the revels'.²³ In her book, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, Angela Smith points out that both Mansfield's and Woolf's 'awareness of otherness' in the company of their male counterparts might imply that 'they defined themselves as not-male'.²⁴ I want to argue, however, that Mansfield has never intended to leave the

²⁰ See note 19 above.

²¹ Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984-2008), vol. 2, p. 318. Hereafter referred to as *Letters*, followed by the volume number.

²² *Letters* 2, p. 334.

²³ Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, *Fictions of the Female Self* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 130. Quoted in Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave), p. 109.

²⁴ Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 61.

masked ball despite having found impersonation ‘tiring’. In other words, her hostility towards the way in which masks are adopted by male modernist poets in their poetry does not motivate her to identify herself as a female writer without masks. Nor does she favour female modernists over male ones from an essentialist position.

In the process of editing Mansfield’s letters, her husband John Middleton Murry notices that ‘she tended to assume a personality to please a correspondent’.²⁵ In his introduction to *Katherine Mansfield: Letters and Journals*, C. K. Stead considers ‘this easy adoption of different masks, different voices, is one of the principal skills on which her success as a fiction writer rests’.²⁶ Indeed, the pleasure she takes in assuming different personae runs parallel to her impulse to fiction writing, as she writes in a letter (24 April 1906) to her cousin Sylvia Payne: ‘Would you not like to try *all* sorts of lives—one is so very small—but that is the satisfaction of writing—one can impersonate so many people—’.²⁷ Stead goes on to compare Mansfield’s ‘chameleon quality’ in changing masks to the Romantic poet Keats’s notion of the ‘chameleon poet’.²⁸ In a letter to Richard Woodhouse dated 27 October 1818, Keats writes:

As to the poetical Character itself, (I mean that sort of which, if I am any thing, I am a Member; that sort distinguished from the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; [...]) it is not itself—it has no self—it is every thing and nothing—It has no character—[...] It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosop[h]er, delights the camelion Poet. [...] A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body [...].²⁹

²⁵ C. K. Stead, ‘Introduction’, in *The Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield: A Selection*, ed. Stead (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 16: ‘Working on Katherine Mansfield’s letters in 1950 Murry observed (in a letter to Violet Schiff preserved in the British Museum) “It’s indubitably true that she tended to assume a personality to please a correspondent. I suppose we all do it in some degree. But in her it was very pronounced.”’

²⁶ Stead, ‘Introduction’, p. 16.

²⁷ *Letters* 1, p. 19.

²⁸ Stead, ‘Introduction’, p. 17.

²⁹ ‘Chameleon’ was spelled as ‘camelion’ by Keats in the original text. See John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 157.

This ‘chameleon quality’ which she shared with one of her favourite poets is probably best illustrated in a letter to Murry dated 3 November 1920, in which she writes about how she had completed her story, ‘The Stranger’:

Ive [*sic*] *been* this man *been* this woman. Ive [*sic*] stood for hours on Auckland Wharf. Ive [*sic*] been out in the stream waiting to be berthed. Ive [*sic*] been a seagull hovering at the stern and a hotel porter whistling through his teeth. It isn’t as though one sits and watches the spectacle. That would be thrilling enough, God knows. But one IS the spectacle for the time. If one remained oneself all the time like some writers can it would be a bit less exhausting. Its [*sic*] a lightning change affair, tho [*sic*].³⁰

Referring to the phrase ‘one IS the spectacle’, Andrew Bennett aptly remarks that, ‘This sense of identification with the “spectacle”’, is ‘embedded within the texture of Mansfield’s very prose as a form of linguistic impersonation’.³¹ The passage reveals that, for Mansfield, writing fiction is a satisfactory yet exhausting business because she is not only content to observe ‘the spectacle’. Rather, she is continually, in Keats’s phrase, ‘filling some other body’³² in order to write in the voice of another.

Moreover, I suggest that the phrase ‘one sits and watches the spectacle’ is closely linked to what she says about Virginia Woolf, who ‘is not *of* her subject—she hovers over, dips, skims, makes exquisite flights—sees the lovely reflections in water that a bird must see—but *not humanly*’, as Mansfield comments on Woolf’s ‘Kew Gardens’ in a letter (27 June 1919) to Ottoline Morrell.³³ Her view of Woolf’s work as ‘indifferent’ reminds us of her opinion that Eliot ‘writes absolutely without emotion’,³⁴ lending support to my contention that her dislike for the male modernists does not necessarily mean that she is in accord with other female modernists. On the other side, in a letter to

³⁰ *Letters* 4, p. 97.

³¹ Andrew Bennet, *Katherine Mansfield* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), pp. 19-20.

³² Keats, *The Letters of John Keats*, p. 157.

³³ *Letters* 2, p. 333-4.

³⁴ *Letters* 2, p. 318.

Vita Sackville-West eight years after Mansfield's death, Woolf confides that she 'gave up' reading Mansfield's stories

because of their cheap sharp sentimentality, which was all the worse, I thought, because she had, as you say, the zest and the resonance—I mean she could permeate one with her quality; and if one felt this cheap scent in it, it reeked in one's nostrils.³⁵

Woolf's judgement of her rival's stories may have been affected by her jealousy,³⁶ but it also seems to negatively confirm a zestful and sensuous quality Mansfield shares with Keats, a quality that effectively permeates and resonates with her readers.

Both modernist poets and Mansfield adopt masks in their work, but their intentions are different. For Mansfield, the main purpose of adopting masks is not to 'preserve "the self" against dispersion through "effusion" ',³⁷ as Eliot aims to achieve through impersonality. Instead, wearing masks enables her to overcome the difficulty in writing, as she confides to her friend Sylvia Lynd in a letter dated 12 February 1921: 'I find my great difficulty in writing is to learn to submit. Not that one ought to be without resistance—of course I dont [*sic*] mean that. But—when I am writing of "another" I want so to lose myself in the soul of the other that I am not . . .'³⁸ For example, Mansfield tells Murry's younger brother Richard in a letter (17 January 1921) how she struggles to impersonate 'Miss Brill' linguistically:

Its [*sic*] a very queer thing how *craft* comes into writing. I mean down to details. Par exemple. In Miss Brill I chose not only the length of every sentence, but even the sound of every sentence—I chose the rise and fall of every paragraph to fit her—and to fit her on that day at that very moment. After Id [*sic*] written it I read it aloud—numbers of times—just as one would *play over* a musical composition, trying to get it nearer and nearer to the expression of Miss Brill—until it fitted her.³⁹

³⁵ *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicholson, 6 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1975-80), vol. 2, p. 366.

³⁶ *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell, 5 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1977-84), vol. 2, pp. 226-7: 'And I was jealous of her writing—the only writing I have ever been jealous of.'

³⁷ Maud Ellmann, 'Introduction', *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound*, p. 7.

³⁸ *Letters* 4, p. 180.

³⁹ *Letters* 4, p. 165.

As this passage points out, the mask not only allows Mansfield to enter the life of another ‘without selfconsciousness [*sic*]’,⁴⁰ but also allows her to cultivate her craft of writing in the voice of her characters. As Bennett observes, the modernist poetics of impersonality is ‘complicated’ by Mansfield’s ‘impersonation that both articulates an evacuation of the self and produces a personal voice, produce a person.’⁴¹ I would like to take this argument further by suggesting that Mansfield’s poetics of impersonation comes closer to Robert Browning’s dramatic monologue than to Eliot’s impersonal poetry, which takes inspiration from Tennyson’s.⁴² Compared to Keats, Chekhov, and Oscar Wilde, whose influences on Mansfield have been widely acknowledged,⁴³ I would like to stress her less well-known connection to Robert Browning. The evidence regarding Mansfield’s admiration of Browning can be found in a letter she wrote to her elder sister Vera Beauchamp (? May or June 1908) when she was only nineteen years old: ‘I have had too, quite a mania for Walter Pater—and Nathaniel Hawthorne—and also Robert Browning—and Flaubert—Oh, many others—I have been spending days at the Library reading and writing a novel—’.⁴⁴ In her *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*, Sydney Janet Kaplan quotes the same letter and analyses how the ‘interiority’ of Pater’s ‘The Child in the House’ and Hawthorn’s ‘exquisite’

⁴⁰ ‘One must learn, one must practise to *forget* oneself. I can’t tell the truth about Aunt Anne unless I am free to enter into her life without selfconsciousness [*sic*].’ Margaret Scott, ed., *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, 2 vols (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), vol. 2, p. 296. Hereafter referred to as *KM Notebooks*, followed by the volume number.

⁴¹ Bennet, *Katherine Mansfield*, p. 19.

⁴² Carol T. Christ, *Victoria and Modern Poetics*, p. 47: ‘Although Eliot credited Browning with the invention of the dramatic monologue, his own monologues resemble Tennyson’s rather than Browning’s. [...] Like Tennyson, Eliot is less interested in creating particular historical characters than in using character to delimit a zone of consciousness. Gerontion and Tiresias are names with which Eliot associates perceptions which have not been sharply individuated.’

⁴³ Both Stead and Bennett notice that Mansfield’s chameleon quality echoes Keats’ notion of the chameleon poet. See Stead, p. 17; Bennett, p. 19. For a discussion of the Chekhov-Mansfield connection, see Gilbert Phelps, *The Russian Novel in English Fiction*, pp. 189-90; Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life*, pp. 261-72. For Wilde’s influence on Mansfield, see Sydney Janet Kaplan’s chapter, ‘The Problem of Oscar Wilde’, in her *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 19-35; Claire Hanson and Andrew Gurr, *Katherine Mansfield*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ *Letters* 1, p. 46.

feelings for flowers provide techniques that Mansfield would develop in her own writing, but little attention has been paid to Flaubert and Browning.⁴⁵ I will discuss Flaubert's short story 'A Simple Heart' (1877) alongside Mansfield's 'The Canary' (1922) in Chapter 3.

Browning, in his prefatory 'ADVERTISEMENT' to *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), provides one of his formal statements regarding the dramatic monologue:

Such Poems as the following come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of 'Dramatic Pieces;' being, though for the most part Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine. R. B.⁴⁶

A good example of Mansfield's indebtedness to Browning can be seen in her short story, 'Late at Night' (1917).⁴⁷ The opening paragraph in brackets reads like a stage direction: '(Virginia is seated by the fire. Her outdoor things are thrown on a chair; her boots are faintly steaming in the fender.)' (II, p. 24). The whole story takes the form of a dramatic monologue of a woman called Virginia, who falls in love with a man and gives him socks as a gift. But the man rejects her by writing her a letter. We are told: 'I don't know why, I feel inclined to cry to-night. Certainly not because of this letter; it isn't half important enough. But I keep wondering if things will ever change or if I shall go on like this until I am old—just wanting and wanting.' (II, p. 26). It is a story without a fully developed plot. We do not know what Virginia does in the daytime or what will happen in the future. But we can sense from her voice that she is a woman in her late

⁴⁵ See Kaplan, Chapter 4, '“The Strange Longing for the Artificial”', in *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*, pp. 53-63.

⁴⁶ Robert Browning, *Poetical Works, 1833-1964*, ed. Ian Jack (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 365.

⁴⁷ In this thesis, I use *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield*, vol. 1 (*The Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield, 1898-1915*) and vol. 2 (*The Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield, 1916-1922*), eds. Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012). Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from Mansfield's short stories are from this edition and only volume numbers and page references will be given parenthetically in the main body of the text.

prime who is anxious to get married. Towards the end of the story, however, she deceives us and herself by saying coldly: ‘And I don’t suppose he was a bit what I imagined. [. . .] Oh, well, don’t sentimentalise over it; burn it! . . .’ (II, p. 26).

The way that Virginia changes her persona towards the end of ‘Late at Night’ comports with Mansfield’s scepticism about a notion of a selfhood ‘which is continuous and permanent’, as she writes in a notebook entry: ‘True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many—well, really, that’s [sic] what it looks like coming to—hundreds of selves.’⁴⁸ In this regard, Mansfield shares not only Pater’s notion of ‘a quickened, multiplied consciousness’,⁴⁹ but also Pound’s sense that ‘every moment transfigured personality’, as he describes his use of the mask in his article on ‘Vorticism’ (1914):

In the ‘search for oneself’, in the search for ‘sincere self-expression’, one gropes, one finds some seeming verity. One says ‘I am’ this, that, or the other, and with the words scarcely uttered one ceases to be that thing. I began this search for the real in a book called *Personae*, casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem. I continued in long series of translations, which were but more elaborate masks.⁵⁰

The historical or literary persona enables Pound to protect the self against the flux of time and limitations of experience, however, as Carol T. Christ points out, the mask ‘exists in constant tension with an identity which is multiple, inchoate, constantly shifting’.⁵¹ Hence, Mansfield does not simply ‘produce a personal voice, produce a person’.⁵² Rather, each character in her stories is equipped with a multiplicity of masks—he, she, or it changes masks to meet every moment of the story. Pound’s conception of translations as masks also implies that a translator is not unlike a person

⁴⁸ *KM Notebooks* 2, p. 204.

⁴⁹ Walter Pater, ‘Conclusion’, in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (the 1893 text), ed. Donald L. Hill (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980), p. 190.

⁵⁰ Ezra Pound, ‘Vorticism’, in *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (Hessle: Marvell Press), p. 85.

⁵¹ Carol T. Christ, p. 44.

⁵² Bennett, *Katherine Mansfield*, p. 19.

who wears the mask of foreign language, writing in the language of another. Foreign language itself is a mask.

In Chapter 2, ‘Katherine Mansfield’s Art of Changing Masks’, I will explore how Mansfield’s characters switch between three types of masks—speech and the non-verbal, gender, animality—to respond to changes in their situations. My primary focus will be on one of Mansfield’s most experimental stories, ‘Je ne parle pas français’ (1918). Chapter 3, ‘Prosopopoeia: Katherine Mansfield’s “special prose”’, considers Mansfield’s attempt ‘to bring the dead to life again’⁵³ in what she calls ‘special prose’⁵⁴ as a ‘prosopopoeia’, or in Cynthia Chase’s phrase, ‘giving a face to a name’.⁵⁵ In this chapter I will also trace how Mansfield’s work was first translated into Chinese in 1923 by the Chinese poet, Zhimo Xu (1897-1931), which made her one of the most widely-read foreign writers in the Chinese-speaking world. More importantly, I suggest that Xu’s use of quotations from Keats and other nineteenth-century poets in portraying Mansfield in his memoir calls our attention to her decisive and still insufficiently examined relationship to poetry. Chapter 4, ‘“Hiding behind a foreign language”: Eileen Chang’s Self-Translation and Masquerade’, examines Chang’s penchant for translating her fiction and essays from Chinese into English or vice versa. Taking a cue from Pound’s view of translations as ‘elaborate masks’ and Gilles Deleuze’s idea of the writer being a ‘foreigner’ in their own language,⁵⁶ I examine some of the ways in which the mask of a foreigner / foreign language enables Chang, a bilingual fiction writer and

⁵³ *Letters* 4, p. 278.

⁵⁴ *KM Notebooks* 2, p. 32: ‘But especially I want to write a kind of long elegy to you [her younger brother Leslie Heron Beauchamp]—perhaps not in poetry. No, perhaps in Prose—almost certainly in a kind of special prose.’

⁵⁵ Cynthia Chase, ‘Giving a Face to a Name: De Man’s Figures’, in her *Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 82-3.

⁵⁶ See Deleuze, ‘He Stuttered’, in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998).

essayist, to gain the emotional and spatial distance from which to reflect on Chinese culture and her personal life.

Being inspired by Mansfield and Chang's courage to get away from the notion of writing as self-expression and Dionysus' gift of crossing boundaries through the assistance of the mask, the creative component of the thesis, Chapter 5, consists of 4 short stories. I conclude the thesis with a poem entitled 'Gifts (for Katherine Mansfield)' and a quick fiction called 'The Functions of Theory', considering theory and literary terms as a variety of make-up that I apply to the face of my thesis. While critical chapters contain embedded fiction, the creative component demonstrates and tests how the interior space behind the mask allows me to liberate my creative energy. In these stories, I attempt to cross the boundaries between male and female, Chinese and non-Chinese, human and animal, creative and critical writing.

Katherine Mansfield and Eileen Chang

Why have I chosen to discuss Katherine Mansfield and Eileen Chang together with respect to the mask? In the following pages I will establish an understanding of their affinities by tracing their life stories, the critical reception history of their work, and their auto-biographical and critical writings. At first glance the New Zealand writer and the Chinese writer seem an unlikely pair, but a juxtaposition of their life stories shows that they share an important border-crossing experience. Katherine Mansfield was born Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp into a prestigious family in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1888. Her father Harold Beauchamp was a powerful figure in Wellington and eventually became the director of the Bank of New Zealand. Kathleen and her two older sisters were sent to London in 1903 to attend Queen's College, an advanced institution

for the education of young women. She returned to Wellington three years later against her own will, now finding herself incompatible with her family and the provincial life style. As she notes: ‘Damn my family—O Heavens, what bores they are. I detest them all heartily.’⁵⁷ Right before her nineteenth birthday, Kathleen decided to spurn her father’s surname and adopt her beloved grandmother’s maiden name, Mansfield, which became part of her nom-de-plume ‘Katherine Mansfield’.⁵⁸ In 1908 Mansfield headed again to London to develop her career as a professional writer. Apart from her persona as ‘Katherine Mansfield’, she also published her stories under disparate pseudonyms such as Julian Mark, Lili Heron, Boris Petrovsky, Elizabeth Stanley, and Matilda Berry.⁵⁹ From 1918 she had moved constantly between England and Europe in search of a cure for her tuberculosis which she contracted during the First World War. She died in Gurdjieff’s Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at Fontainebleau in 1923.⁶⁰

Eileen Chang was born in Shanghai in 1920. Like Mansfield, Chang was brought up in a distinguished family. Her great-grandfather was Hongzhang Li (aka. Li Hung-Chang), the eminent late-Qing official. As well as having suppressed several rebellions, Li was known to Westerners as ‘the Superintendent of Trade—the chief architect of foreign policy in the late Qing. He was such a highly regarded figure that Queen Victoria made him a Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order’.⁶¹ Despite the pedigree, the family fortune had declined considerably by the time Chang was born. Like Mansfield, Chang’s name was altered. Eileen Chang was originally Ying Chang,

⁵⁷ *KM Notebooks* 1, p. 108.

⁵⁸ Antony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), p. 53.

⁵⁹ See Angela Smith’s introduction to Katherine Mansfield, *Selected Stories*, ed. by Angela Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. xv.

⁶⁰ Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield*, p. 53.

⁶¹ See Kam Louie, ‘Introduction’, in *Eileen Chang: Romancing Languages, Cultures and Genres*, ed. Kam Louie (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 3. For a more detailed biographical account of Li, see Samuel C. Chu and Kwang-Ching Liu, *Li Hung-Chang and China’s Early Modernization* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1994).

but her Europhile mother changed this to the English-sounding Eileen Chang when she was ten years old. As Karen Kingsbury remarks, ‘even Eileen Chang’s name speaks her dual heritage: a surname linked to the declining patriarchal world of the late imperial scholars and statesmen; and a maternally bequeathed, English-derived given name, with its associations of modern-style female assertiveness.’⁶² Indeed, her mother so admired things European that, when Eileen was only two, her mother left for the UK, and stayed there for five years. From a very early age, Chang had two personas, Chinese and English, which anticipates her bilingual writing practice. Chang arrived in Hong Kong from Shanghai in the summer of 1939 and enrolled in the University of Hong Kong as a student of English literature. She returned to Shanghai in 1942 without finishing her first degree, however, due to the outbreak of the Second World War, which forced the University of Hong Kong to shut down and the students to evacuate. Later she moved to the United States in 1955 and died in Los Angeles in 1995.

Aside from their trans-cultural journeys,⁶³ the reception of these expatriate writers’ work seems to have gone through very similar ups and downs over the decades. As Clare Hanson points out in her contribution to *The Gender of Modernism*, Mansfield is considered as a marginal modernist writer because of her disadvantaged status ‘as a woman writer and as a colonial’. Hanson suggests that there is a connection between her marginal position and the widespread assumption that the short story is a lesser form to the novel.⁶⁴ Her submissions to popular magazines such as Clement Shorter’s *The Spheres* also contribute to Wyndham Lewis’s dismissal of her as ‘the famous New

⁶² Karen S. Kingsbury, ‘Eileen Chang’s “equivocal contrast” and Eurasian Culture-Creation’ (in Chinese), in *Reading Eileen Chang: Collected Essays from the ‘International Conference on Eileen Chang Research’*, ed. Yang Ze (Taipei: Maitian, 1999), p. 311.

⁶³ ‘She was a restless traveller between continents and within Europe, and in her inner life there is always a sense of imminent danger but also of discovery, of being in-between’. See Smith, ‘Introduction’, in *Selected Stories*, p. ix.

⁶⁴ Clare Hanson, ‘Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923)’, in Bonnie Kime Scott, ed., *The Gender of Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 299-300.

Zealand Mag.-story writer'.⁶⁵ Questioning Lewis's dismissive characterization of Mansfield's stories, Jenny McDonnell claims:

Mansfield's prolonged association with the worlds of British periodical publishing in particular contributed to her growing realization that the categories of the 'literary' and the 'popular' need not be mutually exclusive, and she ultimately came to challenge such closed interpretative categories in her shrewd negotiation of a variety of sites of periodical publication and her practice of the short story form.⁶⁶

I would like to take McDonnell's argument further by suggesting that the mask of 'Mag.-story writer' enables Mansfield to reach a wider and larger readership in order to 'make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World'.⁶⁷ The same is true of Chang. During the spring of 1943, Chang emerged as a new literary talent in Shanghai, with the publication of her first short story, 'Aloeswood Incense: The First Brasier', in the popular journal *The Violet Monthly*. Chang was among the first of a stream of young women authors who were discovered by Shoujuan Zhou, the editor-in-chief of *The Violet Monthly*, but Chang soon 'went beyond the market of popular fiction' and became famous among critics and elites.⁶⁸ Her best works written in Chinese were published during a three-year period, and most of them were collected in two volumes: a collection of short stories and novellas entitled *Romances* (Chuanqi, 1944) and a book of essays entitled *Written on Water* (Liuyan, 1945). Chang speaks openly about fame, money, and other rewards of being a successful writer, which echoes Mansfield's ambition to 'make money & get known'.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Alpers, p. 372.

⁶⁶ Jenny McDonnell, '“The Famous New Zealand Mag.-Story Writer”': Katherine Mansfield, Periodical Publishing and the Short Story', in Janet Wilson, Susan Reid and Gerri Kimber, eds, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism* (London: Continuum International, 14 April, 2011), p. 43.

⁶⁷ McDonnell, p. 45.

⁶⁸ Nicole Huang, Chapter 4 'Written on Water: Eileen Chang and the Modern Essay', in her *Women, War, Domesticity: Shanghai Literature and Popular Culture of the 1940s* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 122.

⁶⁹ See note 67.

Over the past two decades, Mansfield's reputation as a canonical modernist writer has been enhanced by the publication of critical and editorial work on her life and stories: Sydney Janet Kaplan's *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction* (1991) argues for Mansfield's significance as a writer whose fiction and criticism influenced and advanced British modernism. Angela Smith's *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (1999) calls attention to Woolf's debt to Mansfield and, in a series of close readings of, for instance, 'Prelude' and *To the Lighthouse*, shows how 'the formal and thematic preoccupations of their fiction intersect'.⁷⁰ Andrew Bennett's *Katherine Mansfield* (2000) suggests that Mansfield's definitions of gender, sexuality and nationality are constantly being constructed and subverted in her work from a poststructuralist perspective. In the last few years, interest in Mansfield's work has received a further boost from the launch of the Katherine Mansfield Society in 2008⁷¹ and the landmark publication of two volumes of *The Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield*, edited by Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan, by Edinburgh University Press in 2012. This collection includes previously uncollected stories, as well as new fragments and variants.

That Mansfield's appeal has gone beyond the English-speaking world is evident from the publication of *A Fine Pen: The Chinese View of Katherine Mansfield* (2001),⁷² a collection of Chinese essays on Mansfield selected and translated by Shifen Gong, Joanne Wood's *Katerina: The Russian Worlds of Katherine Mansfield* (2001),⁷³ and

⁷⁰ See J. Lawrence Mitchell's introduction to Janet Wilson, Susan Reid and Gerri Kimber, eds, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism*, p. 2.

⁷¹ More information about the society can be found at its website: <<http://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/>>.

⁷² Gong, Shifen, *A Fine Pen: The Chinese View of Katherine Mansfield* (Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press, 2001).

⁷³ Joanne Wood, *Katerina: The Russian Worlds of Katherine Mansfield* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2001).

Gerri Kimber's *Katherine Mansfield: The View from France* (2008).⁷⁴ Since my first language is Mandarin Chinese, I will only discuss Shifen Gong's book in relation to my thesis in this chapter. Gong's book sketches the impact of Mansfield's work upon China in terms of reception and criticism. One can gain an impression of the significance of Katherine Mansfield for Chinese readers and critics by the company in which she is placed. In the Chinese-speaking world, Mansfield remains one of the most widely-read foreign writers. This is chiefly a result of her connection with Zhimo Xu (1888-1931), the Chinese poet who met her in London in 1922 and then proceeded to translate her stories and poems into Chinese.⁷⁵ The critic Jianing Chen names her along with 'Chekhov, Joyce, and [Sherwood] Anderson' because she, like these other 'masters of fiction in Western literature', turned away from 'the elaborately plotted story' and 'took direct pictures of real life'.⁷⁶ The critic Ping Fang compares Katherine Mansfield and Daiyu Lin, a fictional character from the classic eighteenth-century novel *A Dream of Red Mansions*. In the novel, Lin (like Mansfield) is a beautiful, talented yet melancholy young woman who is afflicted with ill-health and dies young. Had Mansfield lived in the time and the environment of the fictional Daiyu Lin, Fang suggests, she would have produced poems as fine as Lin's.⁷⁷ Gong herself has linked Mansfield with Lin by adopting the epithet 'a fine pen' from the poem cited by Fang Ping here. It is found in Chapter 38 of *A Dream of Red Mansions* in a scene featuring the poetry club which has been founded by Lin and her friends. Each member takes it upon him/herself to compose a poem in praise of chrysanthemums. Lin, the most talented of the group,

⁷⁴ Gerri Kimber, *Katherine Mansfield: The View from France* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008).

⁷⁵ I will discuss the connection between Mansfield and Xu further in Chapter 3.

⁷⁶ Jianing Chen, 'A few Points on the Poetic Style of Mansfield's Stories', in Gong, p. 53.

⁷⁷ Ping Fang, 'A Fine Pen Reveals a Fine Personality', Gong, p. 86.

produces a poem that contains the line ‘With the tip of the brush... [I] write fine lines’, which Gong distilled into the title of her book, ‘A Fine Pen’.⁷⁸

None of the Chinese commentators in Gong’s book, however, makes a comparison between Mansfield and Chang. As a bilingual writer, Chang’s Chinese language work has been more popular than her English work. Her literary achievement was assessed mainly on a handful of short stories and essays published during the 1940s while she was living in Shanghai. Following a brief moment of popularity during the war, Chang’s reputation waned significantly after 1945. Postwar cultural critics repeatedly scrutinized her connections with the key-figures in the Jingwei Wang collaboration regime, including those of her first husband, Lancheng Hu. It became increasingly difficult for her to continue pursuing a writing career, a situation only worsened after the Communist takeover in 1949.⁷⁹ Chang eventually left the mainland for Hong Kong in 1952 and emigrated three years later to the United States. However, her work has continued to generate general readers’ and critics’ interests in Taiwan, Hong Kong and, increasingly, mainland China.

Compared to Mansfield, whose short stories have been widely anthologised, Chang’s work has remained relatively unknown in the English-speaking world, despite her having published several English novels in the United States, including *The Rice-Sprout Song* (1955) and *The Rouge of the North* (1967). In the past decade, English translations of most of her short stories and essays have become available, the most substantial among them are *Love in a Fallen City* (2007), selected short stories

⁷⁸ Gong, p. 33.

⁷⁹ See Karen S. Kingsbury’s introduction to *Eileen Chang, Love in a Fallen City and Other Stories*, ed. and trans. Karen S. Kingsbury (London: Penguin, 2007). All stories from this collection are translated by Kingsbury except ‘The Golden Cangue’, which was translated by Chang herself in the 1950s. All quotations from Chang’s short stories are from this edition and only page references will be given in the text.

translated by Karen S. Kingsbury, as well as *Written on Water* (2005),⁸⁰ a book of essays translated by Andrew Jones. Western scholars' interest in Chang has been mostly a result of C. T. Hsia's pioneering study of modern Chinese literature in the West. In this authoritative 1961 book, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, Hsia writes:

[...] Eileen Chang is not only the best and most important writer in Chinese today; her short stories alone invite valid comparisons with, and in some respects claim superiority over, the work of serious modern women writers in English: Katherine Mansfield, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, and Carson McCullers.⁸¹

Mansfield is thus invoked as a yardstick for a writer characterised by Hsia as 'the best and most important writer in Chinese today'. In a letter to Vita Sackville-West dated 8 August 1931, Virginia Woolf praises Mansfield's writing skills: 'I mean, that she had a quality I adored, and needed; I think her sharpness and reality [. . .]'.⁸² Woolf's insight provides a fruitful frame of reference for my view of Chang's style. It is in Chang's 'sharpness and reality' that she most resembles Mansfield as a writer.

This shared 'sharpness and reality' is best illustrated in the tone and manner in which they describe a modern woman's appearance. Consider, for instance, the opening passage from Mansfield's 'A Cup of Tea' (1922):

Rosemary Fell was not exactly beautiful. No, you couldn't have called her beautiful. Pretty? Well, if you took her to pieces. . . . But why be so cruel as to take anyone to pieces? She was young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books, and her parties were the most delicious mixture of the really important people and . . . artists—quaint creatures, discoveries of hers, some of them too terrifying for words, but others quite presentable and amusing.

(II, p. 461)

⁸⁰ Eileen Chang, *Written on Water*, trans. by Andrew F. Jones (New York: Columbia University, 2005). All quotations from Chang's Chinese essays are from this edition and only page references will be given in the text.

⁸¹ C. T. Hsia, 'Eileen Chang', in *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 3rd edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 389.

⁸² See note 35 above.

And the following passages from Chang's Chinese short story, 'Sealed Off' (1943):

She wasn't bad-looking, but hers was an uncertain, unfocused, timid kind of beauty, always trying not to offend. Her whole face was bland, limp, undefined: even her own mother couldn't say for certain whether it was long or round. (p. 240)

When you considered her features in isolation, you had to admit she did have a certain charm. (p. 244)

The evidence regarding Chang's familiarity with Mansfield's work has yet to be found, but the sentences 'Pretty? [...] if you take her to pieces' from 'A Cup of Tea' and 'When you considered her features in isolation, you had to admit she did have a certain charm' from 'Sealed Off' are provokingly similar. The phrase 'pieces' and 'isolation' both imply that the image of a 'modern woman' in each of the stories is nothing more than a mask which the heroine struggles to keep up but which is constantly under threat of being torn apart.

In addition to this superficial similarity, both stories seem to demythologise the myth of female solidarity. In the opening passage of 'A Cup of Tea', Rosemary Fell is depicted as a sophisticated lady who enjoys intellectual endeavours, fashionable urban living and social gatherings. She picks up a beggar girl, Miss Smith, in Curzon Street in London and brings the girl home with her: 'She was going to prove to this girl that—wonderful things did happen in life, that—fairy godmothers were real, that—rich people had hearts, and that women *were* sisters.' (II, pp. 463-4). Rosemary's husband Philip tells her that her idea of looking after the beggar girl 'simply can't be done', but she turns a deaf ear to his advice. The 'not exactly beautiful' Rosemary changes her mind, however, when her husband comments that Miss Smith is 'astonishingly pretty' and 'absolutely lovely' (II, p. 466). In the end, Rosemary sends away the beggar girl with much less money than she had originally considered giving her. The story shows how

easily a woman's attempt at sisterly solidarity is undermined by 'sexual rivalry'⁸³ between women.

Cuiyuan Wu, the heroine of Chang's 'Sealed Off' (1943), is portrayed as a 'good student, a good daughter' who was brought up in a modern family:

The Wu household was a modern, model household, devout and serious. The family had pushed their daughter to study hard, to climb upward step by step, right to the very top . . . A girl in her twenties teaching at a university! It set a new record for women's professional achievement.

(p. 241)

While Mansfield might have stopped here, Chang breaks Miss Wu's mask of 'a modern woman' into pieces by adding a twist: 'But her parents were losing their enthusiasm; now they wished that she had slacked off a bit as a student and worked harder at getting them a wealthy son-in-law' (p. 241). In another of her well-known Chinese stories, 'Love in a Fallen City' (1944), Chang criticises 'the ways in which women restrict themselves by acquiescing in the dictates of patriarchy' (in Angela Smith's phrase)⁸⁴: 'No matter how amazing a woman is, she won't be respected by her own sex unless she's loved by a member of the opposite one. Women are petty this way.' (p. 127). Chang's awareness of female complicity with patriarchal values harks back to Mansfield's astute observation in 1908 that the chains imposed on women are in fact 'self fashioned': 'Talk of our enlightened days and our emancipated country—pure nonsense. We are firmly held in the self fashioned chains of slavery.'⁸⁵

⁸³ Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, *Katherine Mansfield* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 29: '“The Tiredness of Rosabel” is the earliest of her stories to have a place in the collected edition of her work. The theme is one to which she returned in a 1922 story, “A Cup of Tea”, turning on the rich girl / poor girl contrast and sexual rivalry.'

⁸⁴ Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life*, p. 40.

⁸⁵ *KM Notebooks* 1, p. 110.

The aim of this thesis is certainly not to argue for the superiority of Mansfield over Chang (or vice versa), but to explore their shared interest in adopting masks in personal life as well as in literary writing. Ida Baker, one of Mansfield's intimates, as Angela Smith suggests, 'is observant about a kind of chameleon quality in Mansfield's clothes and appearance in her memoir: "She was a born actress and mimic, and even in her ordinary everyday life took colour from the company she was in"'.⁸⁶ William Orton recalls that she was inspired to wear 'a patterned pink kimono' by a big Japanese exhibition she attended in Shepherd's Bush in 1910.⁸⁷ After her death, Virginia Woolf records in her diary that 'she had her look of a Japanese doll, with the fringe combed quite straight across her forehead'. The evidence regarding Mansfield's interest in Japanese Noh drama has yet to be found, but Leonardo Woolf's description of her 'masklike face' reminds us of the Japanese Noh mask: 'There was not the shadow of a gleam of smile on her mask of a face, and the extraordinary funniness of the story was increased by the flashes of her astringent wit.'⁸⁸ Her ability to tell stories is enhanced by the expressionless mask of her face in the same manner in which a Noh actor is able to lose his 'self-assertion' and perform 'something greater than himself' with the assistance of his Noh mask.⁸⁹ Her second husband, John Middleton Murry, nicely observes that 'there was something almost boyish about her. Perhaps it came from the little tailored coat, which hung straight from the shoulders.'⁹⁰ In addition, we find in *The Material Mansfield*, a permanent record of Mansfield's possessions, that she owns other exotic clothes and accessories, such as a black silk Ukrainian folk tunic, a magenta silk

⁸⁶ Ida Baker, *Katherine Mansfield, the Memories of L. M.* (New York: Taplinger, 1972), p. 233. Quoted in Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life*, pp. 47-8.

⁸⁷ Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield*, p. 188.

⁸⁸ Leonardo Woolf, *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918* (London: Hogarth, 1972), p. 204.

⁸⁹ For more information about the function of the Japanese Noh mask on the Noh stage, see Chapter 1, ' "The Mask Is Most Important Always" ', in William T. Vollmann, *Kissing the Mask: Beauty, Understatement and Femininity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), pp. 28-9.

⁹⁰ John Middleton Murry, *Between Two Worlds, an Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), p. 194.

Indian shawl, a black silk Chinese shawl with embroidery and a folding lacquered wood Japanese fan.⁹¹ Antony Alpers describes how her first husband, George Bowden, remembers how Mansfield looked on their second meeting:

[S]he was dressed ‘more or less Maori fashion,’ with some sort of scarf or kerchief over her shoulders, and there was ‘something almost eerie about it, as though of a psychic transformation rather than a mere impersonation.’ So much Mr. Bowden said in 1949, declining to elaborate. He has done so since: ‘She looked like Oscar Wilde.’⁹²

The identification with Wilde indicates that Mansfield shares Wilde’s ‘belief in the artist’s ability to create himself, to *become* his mask’.⁹³ According to the *OED*, ‘eerie’ means ‘fear-inspiring; gloomy, strange, weird’ (‘eerie’, adj. sense 2). The word ‘eerie’ in this passage shows how powerfully the Maori fashion can create a different persona for Mansfield.

Likewise, Chang is known for her ability to invent various personae by appearing in different clothes. Zijing Chang, her younger brother, recalls that she had a particular taste for ‘strange costume’.⁹⁴ In two photographic portraits she claims were taken by amateur photographer Shizhang Tong in 1944, Chang appears in the first image (Figure 1.1) dressed in an oversized Qing-style⁹⁵ padded gown, a family heirloom given to her by her uncle. As Chang notes in her English article, ‘Chinese Life and Fashions’ (1943), the ‘huge sleeves’ of the Qing-style gown ‘gave a feeling of statuesque repose.’⁹⁶ She does look tall and almost statuesque in this photograph. In the second image (Figure

⁹¹ Laurel Harris, Mary Morris and Joanne Woods, eds. *The Material Mansfield: Traces of a Writer’s Life* (Auckland: Random House, 2008), p. 14, p. 17, p. 24, p. 35. I am grateful to Sue Jamieson from the Katherine Mansfield Birthplace in Wellington for giving me this book as a gift.

⁹² Antony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield*, p. 87.

⁹³ Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr remark upon Oscar Wilde’s influence on Mansfield’s fusion between life and its dramatization: ‘The Symbolist belief in the artists’s ability to create himself, to *become* his mask, sustained her throughout her career’. Hanson and Gurr, *Katherine Mansfield* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 11.

⁹⁴ Zijing Chang, *My Older Sister Eileen Chang* (Wode jiejie Chang Eileen) (Taipei: Shibao, 1996), p. 157.

⁹⁵ ‘Qing’ refers to the Qing Dynasty, the last imperial dynasty of China, ruling from 1644-1911.

⁹⁶ Chang, ‘Chinese Life and Fashions’, in *The XXth Century* (January 1943): 54.

1.2), she puts on a *yukata*, a casual style of Japanese kimono used as lounge wear or a bathrobe, displaying a more accessible persona.⁹⁷



Figure 1.1

Eileen Chang in an oversized Qing-style padded gown, Shanghai, 1944.

⁹⁷ Both images are scanned from Eileen Chang, *Mutual Reflections* (Duizhao ji), 2nd edn (Taipei: Crown Publishing, 2010), pp. 62-3.



Figure 1.2

Eileen Chang in a *yukata*, a casual style of kimono, Shanghai, 1944.

Mansfield and Chang's shared interest in using clothes to create personae in real life is extended to the world of fiction writing. As Valerie Shaw observes, Mansfield tends to 'denote a character's qualities by evoking dress or décor'⁹⁸: in 'The Garden Party' (1921), for instance, Laura's privileged social status is particularly marked by her 'black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon' (II, p. 409); in 'Feuille D'Album' (1917), the young girl's hard living conditions and her unromantic character have been defined by the clothes she wears and the way she does her hair: 'She never sang or unbraided her hair, or held out her arms to the moon as young girls are supposed to do. And she always wore the same dark pinafore and the pink handkerchief over her hair. . . .' (II, p. 96).

⁹⁸ Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Longman, 1983), p. 13.

In a letter to her elder sister Vera, Mansfield writes, '[...] Clothes ought to be a joy to the artistic eye—a silent reflex of the soul', which anticipates what Chang says about fashion in her Chinese essay, 'From the Mouths of Babes' (1943):

For people who are unable to speak, clothes are a kind of language, a 'pocket drama' they can carry wherever they go. Surrounded by this dramatic ambience of our own making, do we become 'people in cases'? (Chekhov's 'Man in a Case' always wears a raincoat and carries an umbrella in order to insulate himself completely from the outside world. Even his watch has a watch case. In fact, everything he owns has its own special case.)

(p.8)

Inspired by 'Man in a Case' (1898), a story by Mansfield's mentor Anton Chekhov, Chang makes an observation: clothes serve as 'a kind of language', enacting their silent own pocket dramas, transported by the people who wear them wherever they go. If we consider clothes as a kind of persona, and persona's original meaning—the mask ancient actors used to wear in a play',⁹⁹ then Chang's statement on fashion underscores the link between language and the mask. 'Unable to speak' is an intriguing phrase. Here it means not so much one's physical disability as one's inability to socialise properly. This could apply to Mansfield's 'Miss Brill' (1920). Eavesdropping on the conversation between a girl and a boy, Miss Brill hears them refer to herself as 'that stupid old thing' and her treasured fur as 'a fried whiting'. At the end of the story, she returns to her 'little dark room', without her usual stop at the baker's for a slice of honey-cake:

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.

(II, p. 254)

⁹⁹ See note 3 above.

The fur is Miss Brill's mask of happiness. When her happiness is ruined by the young couple's comments about her, however, she is too sad to express her feelings. Her fur cries out on her behalf.

The connection between writing and the mask is also evident in Mansfield's most famous remark on changing masks, as she writes to Middleton Murry in a letter dated late July 1917. Having told Murry that his article on Leon Bloy makes her feel that he is going to 'uncover' himself and 'quiver', Mansfield gives him a warning:

Even your style of writing changes then—little short sentences—a hand lifted above the waves—the toss of a curly head above the swirling tumble—Its [*sic*] a terrible thing to be alone—yes it is—it is—but don't [*sic*] lower your mask until you have another mask prepared beneath—As terrible as you like—but a *mask*.¹⁰⁰

In her view, the mask is a strategy to solve the problem of 'self-torture' or 'self-pity' that informed Middleton Murry's explicit writing style. Her warning nicely illustrates my argument that the mask resembles a kind of linguistic impersonation. More particularly, Mansfield's advice also calls attention to the fictive masking of a person in daily life as well as in fiction and drama. There is a nice discussion about the link between the mask and 'person' in the work of Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle:

According to *Chambers Dictionary*, 'person' signifies both 'a living soul or self-conscious being' and 'a character represented, as on the stage'. Indeed, 'person' goes back to the Latin word *persona*, the mask worn by an actor in a play on the classical stage. The English language uses the word 'persona' to signify a kind of mask or disguise, a pretended or assumed character. The word 'person', then, is bound up with questions of fictionality, disguise, representation and mask. To know a person, or to know who a person is, involves understanding a mask. In this respect, the notion of person is inseparable from the literary. This is not to say that 'real' people are actually fictional. Rather it is to suggest that there is a complex, destabilizing and perhaps finally undecidable interweaving of the 'real' and the 'fictional': our lives, our *real* lives, are governed and directed by the stories we read, write and tell ourselves.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ *Letters* 1, pp. 317-8.

¹⁰¹ Nicholas Royle and Andrew Bennett, Chapter 8, 'Character', in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 4th edn (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2009), p. 66.

Royle and Bennett's statement resonates well with Chang's insights into the theatrical manner in which people behave and talk in daily life, as she writes in the aforementioned essay, 'From the Mouths of Babes':

The transformation of life into drama is unhealthy. People who have grown up in the culture of the city always see pictures of the sea before they see the sea; they read of love in romance novels and only later do they know love. Our experience is quite often second-hand, borrowed from artificial theatricals, and as a result the line between life and its dramatization becomes difficult to draw.

There was a night, under the moon, when I strolled down a corridor in a school dormitory with a classmate. I was twelve and she was a couple of years older. She said: 'I'm very fond of you, but I don't know how you feel about me.' Because there was a moon, and because I had a fondness for fiction, I softly and solemnly said to her: 'I'm . . . besides my mother . . . you're the only one I have.' At the time, she was deeply moved by my words. And I had even managed to move myself.

(pp. 8-9)

The passage shows how people's lives and thinking patterns have been influenced and directed by the novels, theatre and art we have read and seen, harking back to Wilde's argument in 'The Decay of Lying' (1891), that 'Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life',¹⁰² and to Mansfield's belief that 'there is no separating Art & Life', as she writes in a letter to Murry's younger brother Richard (10 December 1920).¹⁰³ The link between persona and mask provides a highly effective way of thinking about characters in Mansfield and Chang's work. Both Mansfield and Chang describe their characters as actors and actresses. Miss Brill in Mansfield's story thinks people who were watching the band performing in the park 'weren't only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting. Even she had a part and came every Sunday.' Another example can be found in Chang's most acclaimed story, 'The Golden Cangue' (1943), which she translated into English herself in the 1950s. 'The Golden Cangue' traces the

¹⁰² Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: W. H. Allen, 1970), p. 311.

¹⁰³ *Letters* 4, p. 148.

life of Chi-chiao, a woman whose family owns a cooking-oil store, and who has been married to the paralytic second son of a wealthy official family. In her unhappy marriage she fancies herself to be in love with the third son of the family, Chi-tse, but is rejected by him. Ten years later, with the death of her mother-in-law and husband, Chi-chiao is finally in a position to enjoy the reward of the division of the property. Her brother-in-law, Chi-tse, who has squandered most of his fortune, now pays Chi-chiao a visit and declares his unspoken love for her:

Could he be lying to her? He wanted her money—the money she had sold her life for? The very idea enraged her. Even if she had him wrong there, could he have suffered as much for her as she did for him? Now that she had finally given up all thoughts of love he was here again to provoke her. She hated him. He was still looking at her. His eyes—after ten years he was still the same person. Even if he was lying to her, wouldn't it be better to find out a little later? Even if she knew very well it was lies, he was such a good actor, wouldn't it be almost real?

(pp. 201-2)

Like the speaker of Shakespeare's Sonnet 138,¹⁰⁴ Chi-chiao finds Chi-tse's masquerade of love so real that she 'bowed her head, basking in glory' even though she knows very well that he lies. However, she goes on to discuss the money matter with Chi-tse and detects that he is lying. She shows him the door but regrets unmasking him afterwards: 'Why had she exposed him? Isn't life just like this and no more like this? In the end, what is real what is false?' (p. 204). The demarcation line between falsehood and truth, masked and the unmasked, here cannot be identified with ease.

¹⁰⁴ Shakespeare, 'Sonnet 138', in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2005), p. 391: 'When my love swears that she is made of truth, / I do believe her, though I know she lies'.

To conclude, in this chapter I have explored affinities between Mansfield and Chang regarding their conceptions of the masks of a person in daily life as well as the masks of a character in fiction and drama. It would be one-dimensional to simply label Mansfield as a *female* modernist or a New Zealand writer if we consider her chameleon skills in assuming multiple identities in life and impersonating different voices in her letters and fiction. Mansfield distinguishes herself from the modernist poetics of impersonality through her poetics of impersonation that both eschews the authorial personality and creates multiple masks for her characters. In a similar vein, ‘female writer’ or ‘Chinese writer’ are only two of Chang’s masks. Insofar as mimetic realism was the canonical form of modern Chinese literature,¹⁰⁵ the way in which Chang rewrites existing work in different languages (from English to Chinese and vice versa) and genres (from autobiographical essays to fiction) calls attention to the chameleon nature of representational language. The figure and the concept of the mask enable Mansfield and Chang to reach a wider readership in the guise of a popular journal writer, demythologise the myth of female solidarity, and cross the boundary between life and its dramatisation. Their work is literature in masks.

¹⁰⁵ C. T. Hsia points out that ‘a realistic tradition’ ‘has remained the only fruitful tradition in modern Chinese fiction.’ See Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, p. 56.

Chapter 2

Katherine Mansfield's Art of Changing Masks

In Chapter 1 I argued that Katherine Mansfield takes Robert Browning's poetics of dramatic lyric a step further by applying it to short stories. In other words, adopting masks enables Mansfield to write in the voice of her characters instead of her own as Browning aims to achieve in his poetry. Furthermore, each character is equipped with a multiplicity of masks—he, she, or non-human animals change masks to meet every moment of the story. In this chapter, I want to explore Mansfield's art of changing masks with reference to one of her most experimental short stories, 'Je ne parle pas français' (1918).¹⁰⁶ The plot of the story is not complicated: the I-narrator, a Parisian man, Raoul Duquette, meets an Englishman, Dick Harmon, in Paris. To Raoul's dismay, Dick soon leaves Paris but then later returns with an Englishwoman who is not his wife, and who is called 'Mouse' without being properly named. Dick deserts Mouse without having stayed in the hotel rooms he has asked Raoul to book for them, because he feels their elopement would upset his mother. The narrator promises to return to the hotel to lend the abandoned Englishwoman a helping hand, but does not do so.

¹⁰⁶ 'Je ne parle pas français' was written in 1918. It was first handset and printed as a little booklet in 1919 by Murry's younger brother, Richard, through his private press at Hampstead, Heron Press. One year later, when Constables were about to publish the collected volume, *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920), that included the story, Constable's editor, Michael Sadleir 'insisted that what he took to be dubious sexual references be deleted. Mainly for financial reasons—£40 immediately available once the changes were made and the volume went to press—KM agreed, but later regretted her decision. "I wish I hadn't. I was wrong—very wrong" (6 December 1920, *CLKM*, 4, p. 137). The result was that KM's original version was not generally available until the Heron Press text was restored in Alpers.' Quoted from Kimber and O'Sullivan's note on the story in *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield*, vol. 2, p. 136. For an account of the story's composition and its bowdlerising, see Antony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). In addition, I am indebted to Gerri Kimber for information on the publication history of the story.

In this chapter, I use the Heron Press edition of the story, which can be found in *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield*, vol. 2, pp. 112-36.

I have chosen the story as my focus, however, because it encapsulates the full range of masks Mansfield creates for her characters, which I categorise into three types: speech and the non-verbal, gender, and animality. As Sydney Janet Kaplan interprets it:

Katherine Mansfield's aesthetics are grounded in a precocious recognition of the self as many selves—male / female being only one of several possible polarities. She had a very early experience of *multiplicity* (and I want to stress the use of this term rather than *fragmentation*, which suggests the end of a process, the breaking apart of something that was once whole [. . .]).¹⁰⁷

Indeed, gender is only one of the masks that Mansfield adopts in building her fictional characters. 'Je ne parle pas français', 'The Young Girl' (1920), and 'A Married Man's Story' (1921) are examples of her writing in the form of impersonating a first person male narrator. In addition to gender, her awareness of '*multiplicity*' is extended in her interest in writing about non-human animals. She names her characters Mouse, Herr Rat, Mr. Reginald Peacock and the Trout boys; she wrote stories entitled 'Mr. and Mrs. Dove' (1921), 'The Fly' (1922) and 'The Canary' (1922). She tells Garnet Trowell about her ambition to impersonate 'a variety of tone' in a letter dated 2 November 1908: '*Tone* should be my secret—each word a variety of tone—[...] this is in my power because I know I possess the power of holding people.'¹⁰⁸ The letter indicates that a mask of a character is not only created by speech but also by the non-verbal. In 'A Dill Pickle' (1917), for instance, the male character's 'dreamy vagueness and indecisions' are demonstrated not only by his speech but also by the tone of his voice: '“I wish,” he said, in a low, troubled voice, “I wish that I had taken poison and were about to die—here now!”' (II, p. 99). The female character Vera's mask is invented by her speech and voice rather than her physical appearance, as the male character says: '“Ah, ah.

¹⁰⁷ Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*, p. 169.

¹⁰⁸ *Letters* 1, p. 84.

You still say the same things. And there is another thing about you that is not changed at all—your beautiful voice—your beautiful way of speaking.”’ (II, p. 98).

In the following pages I aim to explore how characters change these three types of masks—speech and the non-verbal, gender, and animality—to respond to changes in their situations and in the characters around them by drawing on Joan Rivière’s insights into gender in her article, ‘Womanliness as Masquerade’¹⁰⁹, Michael Goldman’s theory of masks in acting in his *The Actor’s Freedom: Toward a Theory of Drama*¹¹⁰ and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of ‘becoming-animal’ in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*.¹¹¹ In my investigation of different types of masks in ‘Je ne parle pas français’, I will also discuss other stories by Mansfield where appropriate.

‘The fastest-changing masks of all’: Speech and the Non-Verbal

In ‘Je ne parle pas français’, the narrator’s descriptions of Mouse which occur in brackets, for instance, remind us of stage directions, such as ‘(Soft music. Mouse gets up, walks the stage for a moment or so before she returns to her chair [...])’ (II, p. 130), or ‘But she shrank away. (False move.)’ (II, p. 132). Taking the story as a piece of theatre, Michael Goldman’s theory of the use of masks in acting helps to illuminate an understanding of Mouse’s art of changing masks. In his *The Actor’s Freedom*, Goldman contends that ‘in the work of any competent playwright or actor, disguise is constantly

¹⁰⁹ Joan Rivière, ‘Womanliness as Masquerade’ in Victor Burgin *et al*, eds, *Formations of Fantasy* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 35-44.

¹¹⁰ See Michael Goldman, *The Actor’s Freedom: Toward a Theory of Drama* (New York: Viking Press, 1975).

¹¹¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

being assumed and stripped away, constantly growing and transforming'.¹¹² He goes on to emphasise the effectiveness of speech in acting:

Speech in particular, because of its mobility, its density of impressions, should always be thought of as a disguise—a disguise that slips, reveals, changes, strains to be adequate, strains even to be true or transparent to what it describes, breaks away, breaks down, stiffens, must be bolstered up. It is the fastest-changing mask of all.¹¹³

Keeping Goldman's insights in mind, let us observe how Mouse changes her masks to respond to changes in her situation and in the characters around her:

She wept so strangely. With her eyes shut, with her face quite calm except for the quivering eyelids. The tears pearly down her cheeks and she let them fall.

But feeling my glance upon her she opened her eyes and saw me holding the letter.

'You've read it?'

Her voice was quite calm, but it was not her voice anymore. It was the voice you might imagine coming out of a tiny, cold, sea-shell swept high and dry at last by the salt-tide. . . .

[. . .]

'I knew all along, of course,' said the cold, salty little voice. 'From the very moment that we started. I felt it all through me, but I still went on hoping—' and here she took the handkerchief down and gave me a final glimmer—'as one so stupidly does, you know.'

'As one does.'

Silence.

'But what will you do? You'll go back? You'll see him?'

That made her sit right up and stare across at me.

'What an extraordinary idea!' she said, more coldly than ever. 'Of course I shall not dream of seeing him. As for going back—that is quite out of the question. I can't go back.' 'But. . . .'

(II , p. 132)

As the passage reveals, Mouse's mask of calmness slips when she breaks down. The phrase 'pearled down', however, seems to hint at a kind of craftsmanship involved in

¹¹² Goldman, *The Actor's Freedom*, p. 92.

¹¹³ Goldman, p. 93.

weeping ‘so strangely’, which provokes us to wonder if her tears account for another mask she has prepared underneath the one that has slipped. In other words, one of the reasons which motivates Mouse to cry is, in Eileen Chang’s phrase, ‘the realization that scenes such as these called for tears’.¹¹⁴ Soon after crying, however, she mocks her own stupidity and then coldly rejects Raoul’s suggestion of following Dick back to England, as if she no longer wants to see him.

At this juncture of my argument, I would like to propose that the non-verbal—facial and vocal expression—constitutes an additional form of mask in Mansfield’s stories. Aside from Mouse’s tears in the passage, a smile worn by Raoul is another mask. ‘Every word matters’, as Mansfield tells Murry in a letter dated 2 February 1920. Instead of saying simply ‘he smiled charmingly’, the narrator tells us that Dick ‘flashed the brightest, most charming smile at his little hostess [Mouse]’ (II, p. 129). Mansfield’s use of the word ‘smile’ as a verb *and* a noun in her descriptions of her characters’ smiles foregrounds the sense of smile as a mask. Different smiles constitute different masks in each story. In ‘Bliss’ (1918), Bertha sees her husband Harry and her favourite guest Pearl Fulton flirt through non-verbal communication in the hall of their house: ‘His lips said: “I adore you,” and Miss Fulton laid her moonbeam fingers on his cheeks and smiled her sleepy smile.’ (II, p. 151). In ‘The Doll’s House’ (1921), Lil, the daughter of ‘a sly, hard-working little washerwoman’ gives her ‘silly shamefaced smile’ when other ‘little girls turned around and sneered’ (II, p. 417). Again, Lil ‘only gave her silly shamefaced smile’ in response to the spiteful question posed by her snobbish classmate Lena, keeping up the masquerade that ‘she didn’t seem to mind the

¹¹⁴ Eileen Chang describes crying as a self-conscious performance required by custom on certain social occasions: ‘Not long after, my mother decided to move to France. I was then at a boarding school. When she came to say good-bye, I expressed no regret at her departure, and she seemed quite cheerful as well. [...] But I gradually came to the realization that scenes such as these called for tears, and so the tears came. I began to sob loudly in the cold wind just so that I could see myself cry.’ See Eileen Chang, ‘Whispers’, in *Written on Water*, p. 155.

question at all' (II, p. 418). In 'A Cup of Tea' (1922), Rosemary Fell encounters a beggar girl, Miss Smith, in Curzon Street in London. To fulfil her own fantasy of being a 'fairy godmother' in a fairytale, she brings Miss Smith home with her. Her husband Philip 'smiled his charming smile' (II, p. 466) at Miss Smith. Eventually, Rosemary ends her 'game of sisterly solidarity' (in Andrew Bennett's phrase),¹¹⁵ when Philip comments that Miss Smith is 'astonishingly pretty' and 'absolutely lovely' (II, p. 466).

In other stories, even the seemingly unmasked expressions such as blushing, angeriness and rudeness can also be used as masks. In 'Bliss',¹¹⁶ Bertha's husband, Harry's purported rudeness to his wife's friend, Pearl Fulton, is, according to the contemporary British novelist Salley Vickers, 'a cover for his own amorous attachment'.¹¹⁷ In 'Feuille d'Album' (1917), another short story set in Paris, the expatriate young artist Ian French plays his 'trick of blushing' (II, p. 93) to avoid social interaction with waiters and mature women he encounters in the café. At the end of the story, Ian finally gets a chance to speak to the girl he adores: 'Blushing more crimson than ever, but looking at her severely he said, almost angrily: "Excuse me, Mademoiselle, you dropped this."' (II, p. 97). The mask of 'blushing' no longer works for him on this occasion. Instead, he tries to look at her 'severely' and speaks 'almost angrily' in order to mask his 'blushing'.

¹¹⁵ Bennett, *Katherine Mansfield*, p. 48.

¹¹⁶ 'Bliss' in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, pp. 91-105.

¹¹⁷ Salley Vickers, 'My Debt to Katherine Mansfield', in *The Katherine Mansfield Society Annual Birthday Lecture*, no. 3 (Bath: Katherine Mansfield Society Publications, 2012), p. 13.

Mansfield's method of holding readers' attention is to 'express in the voice and face and atmosphere all that you say',¹¹⁸ that is, to equip her characters with 'the fastest-changing masks of all': speech and the non-verbal.

Gender as Masquerade

Many critics have written about the indeterminate gender and sexuality of Raoul Duquette, the narrator of 'Je ne parle pas français'. His description of himself is, as Pamela Dunbar puts it, 'laced with indications of femininity'.¹¹⁹ He is 'light and little' and has 'black eyes with long eyelashes, black silky hair cut short, tiny square teeth'; he is 'almost like a girl, with smooth shoulders' and 'supple and small' hands. Andrew Bennett also points out that Raoul seems to experience 'a certain homoerotic fascination towards Harmon [Dick]'.¹²⁰ When he receives the letter from Dick, he thinks of himself as Madame Butterfly, hearing of the arrival of Lieutenant Pinkerton:¹²¹

I read it [the letter from Dick] in front of (the unpaid for) wardrobe mirror. It was early morning. I wore a blue kimono embroidered with white birds and my hair was still wet; it lay on my forehead, wet and gleaming.

'Portrait of Madame Butterfly,' said I, 'on hearing of the arrival of *ce cher Pinkerton*.'

(II , p. 122)

This self-portrait of Raoul intimates the extent to which, for Mansfield, womanliness is a mask, an impersonation, or what the psychoanalyst Joan Rivière—a contemporary of

¹¹⁸ See note 108 above.

¹¹⁹ Pamela Dunbar, *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), p. 81.

¹²⁰ See Andrew Bennett's discussion of Mansfield's sense of gender and sexuality in *Katherine Mansfield*, pp. 50-3.

¹²¹ Giacomo Puccini, *Madame Butterfly* (1904), an opera based on the love of a Japanese geisha, Ciociosan (nicknamed Butterfly), for Pinkerton, an American naval officer. See Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan's note on 'Je ne parle pas français', p.136. For a more detailed introduction to the opera, see Charles Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Puccini: A Critical Guide* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1981), pp. 145-171.

Mansfield—calls a ‘masquerade’.¹²² In her famous essay, ‘Womanliness as Masquerade’ (1929), Rivière opens with a reference to Sándor Ferenczi’s argument that ‘homosexual men exaggerated their heterosexuality as a “defence” against their homosexuality’.¹²³ She goes on to claim that ‘women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men’. Commenting on Rivière’s notion of womanliness as a masquerade, Stephen Heath points out that there is a similar male term for the woman’s masquerade—‘male display’ or, in Lacan’s term, ‘*parade*’.¹²⁴ Ferenczi’s view of heterosexuality as a defense implies that manliness is a kind of masquerade, too. Correspondingly, Dick’s Parisian friend, Raoul, masquerades as a chivalrous man who offers to return to the hotel the next day to lend the deserted Englishwoman a hand:

[...] She had been so tame, so confiding, letting me, at any rate spiritually speaking, hold her tiny, quivering body in one hand and stroke her furry head—and now, I’d thrown her away. Oh, I could have kicked myself.

She stood up. ‘I have no plans. But—it’s very late. You must go now, please.’

How could I get her back? I wanted her back. I swear I was not acting then.

‘Do feel that I am your friend,’ I cried. ‘You will let me come tomorrow, early? You will let me look after you a little—take care of you a little? You’ll use me just as you think fit?’

(II, p. 133)

We are not convinced by Raoul’s display of chivalry because of a hint of self-dramatisation in the voice when he swears that he is ‘not acting’. A few sentences later we have learned that he also abandons Mouse by failing to return to the hotel as he promises: ‘*Je ne parle pas français*. That was her swan song for me’ (II, p. 133).

¹²² Joan Rivière, ‘Womanliness as Masquerade’, pp. 35-44.

¹²³ S. Ferenczi, ‘The Nosology of Male Homosexuality’ (Homo-Eroticism), in *First Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Ernest Jones (London: Hogarth, 1952), pp. 296-318. Quoted in Joan Rivière, ‘Womanliness as Masquerade’, p. 35.

¹²⁴ Stephen Heath, ‘Joan Riviere and the Masquerade’, in *Formations of Fantasy*, pp. 55-6.

‘Unlike most of Mansfield’s complex, many-sided female characters’, as Sydney Janet Kaplan puts it, ‘Mouse is simply woman as victim’.¹²⁵ There is no doubt that Mouse is a victim of broken promises, but the clichéd and rather theatrical manner in which Raoul describes Mouse throughout the story puts Kaplan’s claim that the character of Mouse is ‘one-dimensional’¹²⁶ into doubt. A rereading of the key passage devoted to Mouse, I suggest, sheds more light on this ‘complex, many-sided’ yet insufficiently tackled character:

[. . .] They showed her, sitting up very straight, her lovely little face more like a drawing than a real face—every line so full of meaning and so sharp cut against the swimming dark.

For Mouse was beautiful. She was exquisite, but so fragile and fine that each time I looked at her it was as if for the first time. She came upon you with the same kind of shock that you feel when you have been drinking tea out of a thin innocent cup and suddenly, at the bottom, you see a tiny creature, half butterfly, half woman, bowing to you with her hands in her sleeves.

As far as I could make out she had dark hair and blue or black eyes. Her long lashes and the two little feathers traced above were most important.

She wore a long dark cloak such as one sees in old-fashioned pictures of Englishwomen abroad. Where her arms came out of it there was fur—fur round her neck, too, and her close-fitting cap was furry.

‘Carrying out the mouse idea,’ I decided.

Ah, but how intriguing it was—how intriguing! Their excitement came nearer and nearer to me, while I ran out to meet it, bathed in it, flung myself far out of my depth, until at last I was as hard put to it to keep control as they.

(II , p. 126)

Mouse, in this passage, emerges in a variety of complex and subtle ways. First, I would like to pick up on the word that has been stressed twice by the narrator in this passage: ‘intriguing’. According to the *OED*, ‘Intriguing’ is an adjective, a verb and also a noun. As an adjective it means ‘forming secret plots or schemes; fascinating’; as a noun ‘intriguing’ refers to ‘the action of the verb intrigue’; as a verb it means ‘To carry on a

¹²⁵ Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*, p. 44.

¹²⁶ See note 125 above.

secret amour or illicit intimacy; to have a liaison' ('intrigue', v. sense 3) or 'To excite the curiosity or interest of; to interest so as to puzzle or fascinate' ('intrigue', v. sense 5). As a verb it can also mean 'To trick, deceive, cheat; to embarrass, puzzle, perplex' ('intrigue', v. sense 3). Bearing these meanings in mind, let us try to unmask what intrigues the narrator. Obviously, Raoul is curious about the secret liaison between Mouse and Dick and fascinated by Mouse's beauty. The resemblance between Raoul's self-description and that of Mouse, however, suggests another reading. She, too, has 'dark hair' and black eyes with 'long lashes'. He sees Mouse as 'a tiny creature, half butterfly, half woman, bowing with her hands in her kimono sleeves'; a few paragraphs earlier, he portrays *himself* as Madame Butterfly. Seen in this light, Raoul sees Mouse not so much as a love interest as, in the phrase of C. A. Hankin, 'the woman who he might have been',¹²⁷ or a love rival who vies with him for Dick's attention. His awareness of Mouse's skill at disguise is implied by his seemingly complimentary remarks about her mask-like face contours: 'her lovely little face more like a drawing than a real face'. In fact, he has already found out that there is actually something 'boyish' about the unnamed woman: when they are first introduced, he notices that 'she held out her hand in that strange boyish way Englishwomen do, and standing very straight in front of' him 'with her chin raised' (II, p. 125). In light of these observations, I suggest that the word 'intriguing' uttered by Raoul seems to acquire something of the further possible resonance of the word, namely, 'to trick, deceive, cheat; to embarrass, puzzle, perplex', which echoes one of the figurative sense of 'mask' as a noun: 'A pretence, a front, an outward show intended to deceive'. The connotations of 'intriguing'

¹²⁷ C. A. Hankin claims that there is a sense in which Mouse is the woman Raoul might have been; 'and thus she represents his alternate self, or double'. See C. A. Hankin, *Katherine Mansfield and Her Confessional Stories*, p. 160.

and ‘mask’ invite us to ponder if wearing fur is a way for Mouse to deceive and perplex the male characters in the story.

To answer this question, I shall begin by teasing out the association between womanliness and mouseness, which can be traced back to the Elizabethan era, when mouse was a common term of endearment, especially between husband and wife. In a letter dated 2nd May 1593, Edward Alleyn addresses his wife Joan as ‘My good sweetheart and loving mouse’.¹²⁸ Other examples can be found in the plays of one of Mansfield favourite writers, Shakespeare: In Act I, Scene 5 of *Twelfth Night*, Clown calls Olivia ‘my mouse of virtue’;¹²⁹ in Act IV, Scene 4 of *Romeo and Juliet*, Lady Capulet tells her husband that he has ‘been a mouse-hunt’ [pursuer of women] in his time;¹³⁰ in Act III, Scene 4 of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Hamlet’s reactions have become so bitter towards the marriage of his mother, Queen Gertrude, and King Claudius that he decides to describe the sexual encounters between them more in detail:

Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed,
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damn’d fingers, (III, iv, 170-174).¹³¹

King Claudius, by Hamlet’s reckoning, turns Queen Gertrude into a sexual object by calling her his mouse. In light of these observations, we can see that the very idea of nicknaming a woman ‘mouse’ is a way of conferring a mask of womanliness onto her. In other words, the name ‘mouse’ is a mask of womanliness. Similarly, throughout ‘Je ne parle pas français’, Dick calls the unnamed woman Mouse. For instance, he speaks

¹²⁸ Teresa D. Kemp, *Women in the Age of Shakespeare* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2009), p. 210.

¹²⁹ See *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Scene 5, lines 59-60 in Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan, eds, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, rev. edn (London: Methuen Drama, 2011), p. 1196.

¹³⁰ See *Romeo and Juliet*, Act IV, Scene 4, line 11 in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, p. 1033.

¹³¹ Mouse was formerly ‘a term of endearment to a woman’. See Harold Jenkin’s note on Act 3, Scene 4, line 185 in *Hamlet (The Arden Shakespeare)*, ed. Harold Jenkin (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 330.

tenderly to her: ‘You must be tired, Mouse. Sit down.’ (p. 128). Receiving the nickname given by Dick, Mouse is masked as an object of his affection by his speech. In her book, *Glamour: Women, History, Feminism*, Carol Dyhouse underscores the link between fur and femininity:

In the 1920s, advertisements in *Vogue* for the upmarket French fur house *Révilleon Frères* promised that women would literally weep with gratitude to men who indulged them with furs (‘A *Révilleon* fur is a gift to win tears of thanksgiving from the most pampered of her sex.’).¹³²

As Dyhouse’s example indicates, wearing fur not only increases a woman’s charm but also reassures her that she is a woman who is ‘pampered’ by her lover. The function of clothes in Mansfield’s stories, as Angela Smith claims, is ‘to manipulate others, or to create a protective façade’: ‘Laura’s mother controls Laura’s rebellion in “Garden Party” by dropping an elegant black hat on her daughter’s head, and Miss Brill’s fur is a source of comfort, and then humiliation’.¹³³ Here ‘a protective façade’ indicates that clothes can function as a form of defense and disguise. In ‘Je ne parle pas français’, fur is what Rivière calls ‘a mask of womanliness’ that Mouse wears ‘to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men’.¹³⁴ Mouse wears a fur muff to *mask* her boyish hands, effectively using what Freud calls ‘fur as a fetish’¹³⁵ to manipulate men. At the train station, Mouse hails Dick ‘with her minute muff’ (II, p. 125). The erotic overtone of

¹³² Carol Dyhouse, *Glamour: Women, History, Feminism* (London: Zed Books, 2010), pp. 21-8. The image of the advertisement was scanned from p. 27 of Dyhouse’s book.

¹³³ Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life*, p. 48.

¹³⁴ Rivière, p. 35.

¹³⁵ Sigmund Freud suggests that ‘the part played by fur as a fetish owes its origin to an association of the hair of the *mons Veneris*’. See Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1962), p. 21; ‘Most of those animals which are utilised as genital symbols in mythology and folklore play this part also in dreams: the fish, the snail, the cat, the mouse (on account of the hairiness of the genitals)’, says Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill (Ware: Wordsworth Editions), p. 236.

Mouse's gesture would be stronger if we take the vulgar sense of 'muff'¹³⁶ and 'Dick' into consideration.¹³⁷ At the hotel, Mouse successfully pushes the *garçon* to serve her tea quickly by masquerading as a helpless woman who needs to be saved by a cup of tea: 'And suddenly she raised her muff as though her hands were clasped inside it, and she was telling the pale, sweaty *garçon* by that action that she was at the end of her resources, that she cried out to him to save her with "Tea. Immediately!"' (II, p. 128). After a while, Dick asks Mouse: 'Won't you take off your coat, Mouse?' But she insists on wearing her fur-trimmed coat indoors: 'No thanks. Not just now.' (II, p. 128). Responding to the nickname given by her lover, Mouse hopes to keep up the masquerade of being his beloved by wrapping herself in fur.

The Becoming-Mouse

Being called her lover's Mouse, however, also means being patronized and literally belittled, as shown in the letter Dick leaves to Mouse:

'Mouse, my little Mouse,

[...] All I've got to do is—just to tell you this and go. I couldn't have gone off without telling you. You'd have been frightened. And you must not be frightened. You won't—will you? I can't bear—but no more of that. And don't write. I should not have the courage to answer your letters and the sight of your spidery handwriting— [...]

(II, pp. 131-2)

As the letter indicates, Dick calls the woman 'my little Mouse' in order to alleviate his guilt over deserting her: Mouse is unimportant since she is little, and she is at his mercy because she belongs to him. At the same time, Dick's fear of what may hide behind her

¹³⁶ 'muff' (noun, sense 1) means 'the female pudendum, outwardly: late C. 17-20; by 1920, low'. See *The Concise New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, ed. by Eric Partridge (London: Routledge 2007), p. 763.

¹³⁷ 'dick' (noun, sense 4) means 'The penis: military, from ca. 1880'. *The Concise New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, p. 304.

‘drawing’-like, ‘lovely little face’ (II, p. 126), is further intimated by the arachnophobic mention of her ‘spidery handwriting’ (II, p. 132).

Murry, the first reader of the story, told Mansfield that he was ‘so passionately fond of the Mouse’ that he got upset by what happened to her and Dick. In a letter dated 23 February 1918, he writes:

My disappointment as a child was my satisfaction as an artist [...] ‘Sun & Moon’ were really tinies. His tragedy would be put right. But Mouse & Dick, they were too much like us. If they had been exactly like it wouldn’t have upset me because I know we’re alright. But they were different, our brothers & sisters spiritually.¹³⁸

As the letter reveals, Mouse and Dick are at least, in part, masks for Mansfield and Murry respectively. As Kaplan argues, Dick is partially modelled on Murry, as suggested by an unfinished sentence in her letter (dated 3 and 4 February 1918) to Murry about the story’s origin: ‘The African laundress I had a bone of—but only a bone—Dick Harmon of course is partly is [sic]’.¹³⁹ Two month after she finished ‘Je ne parle pas français’,¹⁴⁰ she refers to herself as ‘your tiny timid loving Mouse’ in a letter to Murry (9 April 1918).¹⁴¹ Two later letters to Murry dated 21 and 23 October 1920 are both autographed ‘Souris [Mouse]’.¹⁴² These examples embody Mansfield’s Wildean belief¹⁴³ that ‘there is no separating Art & Life’, as she writes in a letter to

¹³⁸ John Middleton Murry, *The Letters of John Middleton Murry to Katherine Mansfield*, ed. C. A. Hankin (London: Constable, 1983), p. 127. Quoted in Sydney Janet Kaplan, ‘“A Furious Bliss”: Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry 1916-1918’, in Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson, eds, *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 52.

¹³⁹ *Letters* 2, p. 56.

¹⁴⁰ Mansfield began writing ‘Je ne parle pas français’ on 29 January, 1918. See Kaplan, ‘“A Furious Bliss”: Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry 1916-1918’, p. 45.

¹⁴¹ *Letters* 2, p. 159.

¹⁴² *Letters* 4, p. 78, p. 81.

¹⁴³ I have discussed Oscar Wilde’s influence on Mansfield more fully in Chapter 1.

Murry's younger brother Richard (10 December 1920).¹⁴⁴ In addition to mice in 'Je ne parle pas français' and 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1920)¹⁴⁵, numerous other tiny creatures appear in her short stories.¹⁴⁶

Mansfield also has a mask in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920). If we accept that Gudrun Brangwen is a mask for Mansfield, Lawrence recognises her fascination with diminutive animality in a question posed by Ursula Brangwen to Hermione:

'Isn't it queer that she [Gudrun] always likes little things? She must always work small things, that one can put between one's hands, birds and tiny animals. She likes to look through the wrong end of the opera glasses, and see the world that way—why is it, do you think?'¹⁴⁷

Why does Mansfield like to write about small animals? In 'Katherine Mansfield's Menagerie', Melinda Harvey links Mansfield's interest in two-winged animals with her illness: first, 'mosquitoes, flies and the like were associated, especially in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century, with the spread of disease like tuberculosis',¹⁴⁸ Toby Silverman Zinman's suggests that birds in Mansfield's stories represent 'the victim: small, frail and equipped with the means of escape, yet ultimately and inevitably defeated'.¹⁴⁹ Certainly, as Vincent O'Sullivan suggests, Mansfield did use the dying fly and the entrapped canary as analogies for herself, as seen in the letters, notebook entries

¹⁴⁴ *Letters* 4, p. 148.

¹⁴⁵ 'Silence again. There came a little rustle, a scurry, a hop. "A mouse," said Constantia.' Quoted from 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', vol. 2, p. 267.

¹⁴⁶ In addition to 'The Fly' (1922) and 'The Canary' (1922), we can find other small animals such as ducks in 'Prelude' (1917), sparrows in 'A Suburban Fairytale' (1919), and doves in 'Mr. and Mrs. Dove' (1921).

¹⁴⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 88. Quoted in Melinda Harvey, 'Katherine Mansfield's Menagerie' in Janet Wilson, Susan Reid and Gerri Kimber, eds, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism* (London: Continuum, 14 April 2011), p. 208.

¹⁴⁸ Melinda Harvey, 'Katherine Mansfield's Menagerie', pp. 202-10.

¹⁴⁹ T. S. Zinman, 'The snail under the leaf: Katherine Mansfield's imagery', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 24.3 (1978 Autumn): 461. Quoted in Harvey, 'Katherine Mansfield's Menagerie', p. 208.

and the stories she composed in her last year.¹⁵⁰ Unlike Harvey, Zinman and O’Sullivan—who all emphasise the frailty embodied in the smallness of insects and birds—I want to highlight the advantage of becoming a small mouse in Mansfield’s ‘Je ne parle pas français’ by drawing a comparison with the writings of her contemporary, Franz Kafka.

Mansfield makes multiple statements about the importance of ‘the defeat of the personal’¹⁵¹ in the act of writing in order to enter into and take possession of her subjects, including non-human animals. In a letter to the painter Dorothy Brett dated 11 October 1917, she relates her ‘thrilling’ experience of writing about animals:

When I write about ducks I swear that I am a white duck with a round eye, floating in a pond fringed with yellow blobs and taking an occasional dart at the other duck with the round eye, which floats upside down beneath me. In fact this whole process of becoming the duck [...] is so thrilling that I can hardly breathe, only to think about it.¹⁵²

The phrase ‘becoming the duck’ evokes what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘the becoming-animal’, in their book, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*: ‘To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out a path of escape in all its possibility’.¹⁵³

The metamorphosis is a sort of conjunction of two deterritorializations, that which the human imposes on the animal by forcing it to flee or to serve the human, but also that which the animal proposes to the human by indicating ways-out or means of escape that the human would never have thought of by himself.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ See Vincent O’Sullivan, ‘Signing Off: Katherine Mansfield’s Last Year’, in Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson, eds, *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 13-27.

¹⁵¹ ‘At the back of my mind I am so wretched,’ Mansfield notes in one journal entry, ‘but all the while I am thinking over my philosophy—the defeat of the personal’. *KM Notebook 2*, p. 190.

¹⁵² *Letters 1*, p. 330.

¹⁵³ Deleuze and Guattari, p. 13.

¹⁵⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, p. 35.

The evidence regarding Mansfield's familiarity with the German-language writer's work has yet to be discovered, but their shared interest in writing about small animals cannot be overlooked. As J. Lawrence Mitchell observes, the miniature in Mansfield's stories—such as a doll's house, 'a tiny-creature, half butterfly, half woman,' a caged canary—is privileged, while the 'movement towards the gigantic'—a growing bird, a swelling aloe, a poppy that comes alive—is 'implicitly threatening'.¹⁵⁵ Like Mansfield, Kafka is, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, 'fascinated by everything that is small. If he doesn't like children that is because they are caught in an irreversible becoming-big; the animal kingdom, in contrast, involves smallness and imperceptibility.'¹⁵⁶ In a similar vein, 'the gigantic' in Kafka's stories, such as the 'gigantic insect' in 'The Metamorphosis'¹⁵⁷ or the 'giant mole' in 'The Village Schoolmaster [The Giant Mole]',¹⁵⁸ is disturbing.

In light of the resemblance between the two writers, Mansfield's fascination with mice could be interpreted in relation to Elias Canetti's comments on Kafka's penchant for self-diminishment. In his *Kafka's Other Trial: The Letters to Felice*, Canetti remarks that Kafka would typically respond to a show of force by withdrawing power from himself or by transforming into something small:

Since he [Kafka] abominated violence, but did not credit himself with the strength to combat it, he enlarged the distance between the stronger entity and himself by becoming smaller and smaller in relation to it. Through this shrinkage he gained two advantages: he evaded the threat by becoming too diminutive for it, and he freed himself from all

¹⁵⁵ J. Lawrence Mitchell, 'Katherine Mansfield and the Aesthetic Object', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 22 (2004), 34. In this article, Mitchell uses Susan Stewart's terms, 'the miniature' and 'the gigantic'. See Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993).

¹⁵⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, p. 37.

¹⁵⁷ Kafka, 'The Metamorphosis', in Franz Kafka, *The Complete Short Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (London: Vintage, 2005), pp. 89-139.

¹⁵⁸ Kafka, 'The Village Schoolmaster [The Giant Mole]', in *The Complete Short Stories*, pp. 168-82.

exceptionable means of violence; the small animals into which he liked to transform himself were harmless ones.¹⁵⁹

In Kafka's 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse folk' (1924), the mouse singer's piping, we are told, 'comes almost like a message from the whole people to each individual; Josephine's thin piping amidst grave decisions is almost like our people's precarious existence amidst the tumult of a hostile world'.¹⁶⁰ As Mansfield wrote to Murry from Bandol, the south of France, on 3 February 1918, it was 'an *extremely* deep sense of hopelessness', '*a cry against corruption*', 'Not a protest', which inspired 'Je ne parle pas français'.¹⁶¹ It is hard to imagine a creature more ideally suited to voice '*a cry against corruption*', 'Not a protest', than a squeaking mouse. Unlike the mouse singer in Kafka's 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse folk', who 'stamps her feet' and bites 'in most unmaidenly fashion' whenever her requests are refused,¹⁶² Mouse in Mansfield's 'Je ne parle pas français' smiles at her grief; as the narrator describes it, 'she took the handkerchief down and gave me a final glimmer'. Knowing all along that Dick was going to desert her, Mouse appears to be defensively silent in his presence:

'[...] We've taken years to come. Haven't we?' To her. But she [Mouse] did not answer. She bent her head and began stroking her grey muff; she walked beside us stroking her grey muff all the way.

[...]

'You must come!' said Dick to the little fox-terrier [Raoul]. And again he [Dick] made that big awkward turn towards her.

'Get in, Mouse.'

And Mouse got in the black hole and sat stroking Mouse II and not saying a word.

(II, pp. 125-6)

¹⁵⁹ Elias Canetti, *Kafka's Other Trial: The Letters to Felice*, trans. Christopher Middleton (London: Calder and Boyars, 1974), pp. 89-90. Quoted in Chris Danta, 'Kafka's Mousetrap: The Fable of the Dying Voice', *SubStance*, 37.3 (2008): 162.

¹⁶⁰ Kafka, 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse folk', in *The Complete Short Stories*, p. 367.

¹⁶¹ *Letters* 2, p. 54.

¹⁶² Kafka, 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse folk', p. 364.

As the last line of this quotation intimates, Mouse is becoming a mouse, as suggested by ‘the black hole’ (which is a substitute for the black taxi Raoul calls for them), and ‘Mouse II’ (her grey muff made of animal fur, presumably). Mouse II shows Mouse, in Deleuze and Guattari’s phrase, ‘ways-out or means of escape that the human would never have thought of by himself’. Becoming is, as Deleuze puts it in his *The Logic of Sense*, a simultaneity

whose characteristic is to elude the present. Insofar as it eludes the present, becoming does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once.¹⁶³

Mouse is unable to make her way out of an unofficial and insecure relationship with Dick, however, she finds a means of ‘eluding the present’ by becoming a mouse and stroking Mouse II, as if communicating with a fellow mouse in the ultrasonic range, beyond human hearings.¹⁶⁴ Likewise, in ‘A Suburban Fairy Tale’ (1919), Little B saw the sparrows on the grass outside the window of their house changing into tiny little boys. He tells his parents Mr. and Mrs. B. that the sparrows are little boys but ‘nobody noticed his nonsense’. When his parents finally went over to the window and saw Little B playing with other little boys with wing-like thin arms, they opened the window and asked Little B to come into the house. ‘But it was too late. The little boys were changed into sparrows again, and away they flew—out of sight—out of call.’ (II, pp. 172-3).

¹⁶³ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University, 1990), p. 1. Quoted in Gerald L. Bruns, ‘Becoming-Animal (Some Simple Ways)’, *New Literary History*, 38.4 (Autumn 2007): 704.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Mice make a variety of sounds, although to humans they simply sound like high-pitched squeaks’. Mice communicate in ‘the ultrasonic range’, ‘beyond human hearing’. See Sharon Vanderlip, *Mice: A Complete Pet Owner’s Manual* (New York: Barron’s, 2001), p. 30.

Becoming a little sparrow is for Little B a means of escaping ‘the present’, a life which is ‘too big and too violent’ (II, p. 170).

To conclude, in this chapter I have discussed Mansfield’s art of changing masks by looking at how speech and the non-verbal, gender, and animality are adopted as masks for Mouse to meet every moment in ‘Je ne parle pas français’. If Mouse, the Englishwoman, is a heroine who resembles Mansfield, ‘a New Zealander who often felt alienated by life in London’¹⁶⁵ and a ‘born actress and mimic’ who ‘took colour from the company she was in’,¹⁶⁶ as Ida Baker observes, she must know how to survive in Paris thanks to the art of changing masks. In addition to saying, paradoxically, *in French*, that she does not speak French (‘Je ne parle pas français’), ‘not saying a word’ is a speechless speech, one of the masks used by Mouse to express ‘an *extremely* deep sense of hopelessness’.

In her English article, ‘Chinese Life and Fashions’ (1944), Eileen Chang claims:

Quick alterations in style do not necessarily denote mental fluidity or readiness to adopt new ideas. Quite the contrary. It may show general inactivity, frustration in other fields of action so that all the intellectual and artistic energy is forced to flow into the channel of clothes. In an age of political disorder, people were powerless to modify existing conditions closer to their ideal. All they could do was to create their own atmosphere, with clothes, which constitute for most men and all women their immediate environments. We live in our clothes.¹⁶⁷

Chang’s idea of living in one’s clothes echoes what Mansfield tells Baker in a letter dated 29 August 1921: ‘Id [*sic*] rather have nothing than these ugly dull stuffs. I am a

¹⁶⁵ Angela Smith, ‘Mansfield and Dickens: “I am not reading Dickens *idly*”’, in Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson, eds, *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays*, p. 194.

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter 1, note 86.

¹⁶⁷ Eileen Chang, ‘Chinese Life and Fashions’, in *The XXth Century* (January 1943): 60.

VERY modern woman. I like Life in my clothes'.¹⁶⁸ Mansfield could not change the fact that she had to travel constantly between England and Europe in search for the cure for her tuberculosis, but she was able to use clothes as 'a protective façade' (in Smith's term).¹⁶⁹ In a letter dated 1 Jan. 1931, Woolf tells Vita Sackville-West that the novelist Stella Benson's dressing style reminds her of that of Mansfield: 'Anderson [Stella Benson] seems to me extremely good—puts a line round herself completely, as Katherine Mansfield used to wish to do, when she bought a tailor made coat'.¹⁷⁰ Correspondingly, living in a time and space of estrangement, Mouse is powerless to improve the external conditions governing her life. But she can influence her immediate environment above all by means of her masks—namely, womanliness and animality: Mouse finds her way back into her burrow in a foreign city by wearing a mouse-disguise, which consists of a fur muff, a cloak with fur trim and a fur cap. She lives inside her fur like living inside her burrow, 'where she could hide and keep herself to herself and stay as long as she liked, not disturbing anybody, and nobody worrying her'.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ *Letters* 4, p. 272.

¹⁶⁹ See note 133 above.

¹⁷⁰ Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 4, p. 271.

¹⁷¹ Mansfield, 'Life of Ma Parker', vol. 2, p. 297: 'Oh, wasn't there anywhere where she [Ma Parker] could hide and keep herself to herself and stay as long as she liked, not disturbing anybody, and nobody worrying her? Wasn't there anywhere in the world where she could have her cry out—at last?'

Chapter 3

Prosopopoeia: Katherine Mansfield's 'special prose'

In her Journal entry of 22 January 1916, Mansfield tells her plans as a writer to her dead brother, Leslie Heron Beauchamp (1894-1915), who was killed in the Great War.¹⁷² She wants to write 'recollections' of her own country, New Zealand, where she and her brother were born. Furthermore, she whispers to her brother:

Then I want to write poetry. I feel always trembling on the brink of poetry. The almond tree, the birds, the little wood where you are, the flowers you do not see, the open window out of which I lean & dream that you are against my shoulder, & the times that your photograph 'looks sad'. But especially I want to write a kind of long elegy to you—perhaps not in poetry. No, perhaps in Prose—almost certainly in a kind of special *prose*.¹⁷³

Elsewhere, in a letter to Dorothy Brett dated 12 September 1921, Mansfield also describes her recollections of her grandmother and uncle in her New Zealand story, 'At the Bay', in terms of 'bring [ing] the dead to life again':

It is so strange to bring the dead to life again. Theres [*sic*] my grandmother, back in her chair with her pink knitting, there stalks my uncle over the grass. I feel as I write 'you are not dead, my darlings. All is remembered. I bow down to you. I efface myself so that you may live again through me in your richness and beauty.'¹⁷⁴

In the preceding chapter, I discussed different types of masks that Mansfield's characters adopt in her stories. In this chapter I will discuss Mansfield's 'special prose' in light of a mask-related rhetorical figure, 'prosopopoeia'. The *OED* defines

¹⁷² On 7 October 1915, 'at Ploegsteert Wood, near Armentières, he [Leslie Beauchamp] was showing his men how to lob the hand-grenade. The one he used was faulty; it blew up in his hand, and killed his sergeant also'. From Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield*, p. 183.

¹⁷³ *KM Notebook s 2*, p. 32.

¹⁷⁴ *Letters 4*, p. 278.

‘prosopopoeia’ as ‘a rhetorical device by which an imaginary, absent, or dead person is represented as speaking or acting; the introduction of a pretended speaker’, and it gives the derivation from the Greek as ‘*prosopon*-face, person, and *poiein*-make.’ Here I adopt Paul de Man’s definition of ‘prosopopoeia’ as conferring ‘a mask or a face (*prosopon*)’ and ‘the power of speech’ upon ‘an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity’, as he explains in his famous essay ‘Autobiography as De-facement’ (1979).¹⁷⁵ As Cynthia Chase points out, de Man’s ‘translating *prosopon* as “face” or “mask,” and not as “person,” is to imply that a face is the condition—not the equivalent—of the existence of a person.’¹⁷⁶ Hence, Mansfield’s attempt ‘to bring the dead to life again’ in what she calls ‘special *prose*’ can be considered as a ‘prosopopoeia’, or in Chase’s phrase, ‘giving a face to a name’.¹⁷⁷

In the first section of this chapter, I propose to explore Mansfield’s ‘special *prose*’ by examining the two issues raised in her journal entry quoted above: first, the phrase ‘perhaps not in poetry. No, perhaps in Prose’ shows that Mansfield plans to experiment with a kind of poetic prose, or in her own words—‘special *prose*’. The profound affinity between the ‘special *prose*’ and the notion of elegy, ‘a mournful poem for the dead’ (*OED*, ‘elegy’, n. sense 1), calls attention to her work’s decisive but still insufficiently examined relationship to poetry and her preoccupation with mortality. Second, the ellipsis in the journal entry indicates that the mortal fragility she writes about in her ‘special *prose*’ is closely bound up with verbal fragility, as embodied, for example, in the form of an ellipsis mark. These two issues will be discussed by looking at ‘The Canary’ (1922), the last story she completed before her death. The middle section

¹⁷⁵ Paul de Man, ‘Autobiography as De-facement’, in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 67-81.

¹⁷⁶ Cynthia Chase, Chapter 2, ‘Giving a Face to a Name: De Man’s Figures’, in *Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 83.

¹⁷⁷ Chase, ‘Giving a Face to a Name: De Man’s Figures’, p. 82.

‘Elegy for Mansfield’ traces how Mansfield’s work was first translated into Chinese in 1923 by the Chinese poet, Zhimo Xu (1897-1931), who also wrote an elegy for her as well as a ‘special *prose*’ commemorating their once-in-a-lifetime meeting in London. Inspired by the accounts of Mansfield in the final year of her life by Xu and her other contemporaries, the last section features my own attempt at a piece of ‘special *prose*’, ‘An Eternal Twenty Minutes’, which confers masks and gives voices to Mansfield and Xu, who are no longer present.

Unheard Melodies

Before becoming successful as a short story writer, Mansfield had already written several ‘vignettes’; prose poems characterised by symbolic descriptions of sound, colour and atmosphere rather than event. They were published in the Australian *Native Companion* on 1 October 1907. Mansfield’s use of the rhetoric of English decadence—illustrated by such words as ‘strange’, ‘exquisite’ and ‘passionate’¹⁷⁸—made the editor E. J. Brady remark that they owed rather too much to the fin-de-siècle miniatures of Oscar Wilde. Mansfield, however, denied that she had ‘cribbed’ from her precursor: ‘This style of work absorbs me, at present—but—well—it *cannot* be said that anything you have of mine is “cribbed”’.¹⁷⁹ In his introduction to *Poems of Katherine Mansfield*, Vincent O’Sullivan places her poetry in relation to her prose writing:

They [the vignettes] first proposed to her a freedom that already moved towards the stories she would later write, easing emotion away from the need to account for it fully, allowing an adjectival assault on the notion that one needed to be either consistent or explanatory. They were excursions into that dimly defined territory between the expectations of prose and the freer emotional contours of verse.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ See Lawrence Dawson, ‘Wilde as critic and theorist’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, ed. Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 84.

¹⁷⁹ *Letters* 1, p. 26.

¹⁸⁰ See O’Sullivan’s introduction to *Poems of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Vincent O’Sullivan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. x-xi.

O'Sullivan's statement provides a good way of clarifying Mansfield's notion of 'special prose'—an attempt to explore 'that dimly defined territory between the expectations of prose and the freer emotional contours of the verse'. Considering prose 'a hidden country still' in her letter of 26 July 1919 to Ottoline Morrell¹⁸¹ and 'an almost undiscovered medium' in her review of F. Brett Young's *The Young Physicians* published later in the same year,¹⁸² Mansfield was aware of the potential that lay in the fusion of poetry and prose. Having confessed that she finds Eliot's poems 'unspeakably dreary' in her letter of 12 May 1919 to Woolf, however, she also notices a link between poetry and the short story, commenting on Eliot's poem, 'Prufrock is, after all, a short story'.¹⁸³ Indeed, the elements of a narrative can be discerned in lines 30-36 of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock':

Time for you and time for me,
 And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
 And for a hundred visions and revisions,
 Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
 Talking about Michelangelo.¹⁸⁴

The 'you' and 'me' of line 30 are divided parts of Prufrock's own nature, for he is experiencing internal conflict: Does he or does he not make a declaration of love to some lady in the afternoon tearoom?

¹⁸¹ *Letters* 2, p. 343.

¹⁸² Mansfield, *Novels and Novelist*, ed. John Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1930), p. 92.

¹⁸³ *Letters* 2, p. 318. I discussed this letter more fully in Chapter 1.

¹⁸⁴ T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 14.

As a modernist short story writer herself, however, Mansfield regards a great deal of modernist poetry as ‘ever so expensive pompes funebres’.¹⁸⁵ As O’Sullivan points out, ‘Mansfield’s own preferences in poetry were firmly traditional. For years she carried about with her Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch’s *Oxford Book of English Verse*’.¹⁸⁶ Her letters, journals and short stories allude particularly to Shakespeare, but also to the early Romantic poets, as she writes from Bandol to Murry in a letter dated 20 and 21 February 1918: ‘Shelley and Keats I get more and more *attached* to. Nay, to all ‘poetry’. I have such a passion for it and I feel such an understanding of it. Its [*sic*] a great part of my life.’¹⁸⁷ In a notebook entry from 1921, she remarks on the difficulty of ‘the defeat of the personal’: ‘One must learn, one must practise to *forget* oneself. I can’t tell the truth about Aunt Anne unless I am free to enter into her life without selfconsciousness [*sic*]. [...] Perhaps poetry will help.’¹⁸⁸ As I discussed in Chapter 1, Keats’s notion of the ‘chameleon poet’ assists Mansfield in defeating ‘the personal’ and impersonating her characters without self-consciousness. In this chapter I suggest that Mansfield’s poetics of ‘special *prose*’ can also be helpfully illuminated by considering Keats’s concept of ‘Negative Capability’, as outlined in Keats’s letter of 21, 27 (?) December 1817 to his brothers, George and John Keats:

[. . .] several things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason—¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ *Letters* 2, p. 318.

¹⁸⁶ O’Sullivan, ‘Introduction’, in *Poems of Katherine Mansfield*, p. xiii.

¹⁸⁷ *Letters* 2, p. 83.

¹⁸⁸ *KM Notebooks* 2, p. 296.

¹⁸⁹ Keats, *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings, p. 43.

Keats's poetics of 'Negative Capability' is well illustrated in lines 41-45 from his 'Ode to a Nightingale' (May 1819):

I *cannot* see what flowers are at my feet,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 But, in embalmed darkness, *guess* each sweet
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild.¹⁹⁰

Consider, also, lines 11-12 from his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (May 1819): 'Heard melodies are sweet, but those *unheard* / Are sweeter'.¹⁹¹ The Keatsian rhetoric of 'uncertainties' and 'doubts' finds a kindred spirit one hundred years later in Mansfield's writing. Here we may consider, for example, her letter dated 24 June 1922 to an aspiring novelist Arnold Gibbons, advising him on the five stories that he has sent her for her advice. She tells Gibbons that 'the idea in all the five stories is awfully good' but that they don't 'quite come off' because, she writes, 'you used more words than were necessary. There's a kind of diffuseness of expression which isn't natural to the English way of thinking. [...] I realise its [*sic*] all very easy to say these things—', she continues,

but how are we going to convey these overtones, half tones, quarter tones, these hesitations, doubts, beginnings, if we go at them *directly*? It is mostly devilishly difficult, but I do believe that there is a way of doing it and that's [*sic*] by trying to get as near to the *exact truth* as possible.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale', in *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. Jack Stillinger (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1978), pp. 370-1. Italicisations mine.

¹⁹¹ Keats, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', in *The Poems of John Keats*, p. 372. Italicisations mine.

¹⁹² *Letters* 5, pp. 213-4.

In her poem ‘The Gulf’ (1916?), Mansfield demonstrates an awareness of the possibility of bridging the gulf between people by what we might call—in Virginia Woolf’s phrase—‘inarticulate words’:¹⁹³

A gulf of silence separates us from each other
 I stand at one side of the gulf—you at the other
 I cannot see you or hear you—yet know that you are there—
 Often I call you by your childish name
 And pretend that the echo to my crying is your voice.
 How can we bridge the gulf—never by speech or touch
 Once I thought we might fill it quite up with our tears
 Now I want to shatter it with our laughter.¹⁹⁴

The subject, tone and the phrase, ‘your childish name’, places this poem as an elegy for her brother after his death, as suggested by Vincent O’Sullivan.¹⁹⁵ But I would like to suggest that the ‘you’ might extend to a character in Mansfield’s story, or a reader, considering this poem as an allegory of a character or an author searching for a way of expressing ‘the truth’ of ‘hesitations, doubts, beginnings’.

Seen in this light, no device is better able to express ‘laughter’ and ‘tears’, in other words, bliss and sadness, than the typographical ellipsis, which is extensively used throughout Mansfield’s work. As Sarah Sandley puts it: ‘Mansfield’s use of punctuation, particularly of three- and four-dot suspensions, is frequently acknowledged as a skillful style marker; it conveys characters’ strategies of mental evasion and deferral.’¹⁹⁶ In

¹⁹³ ‘I begin to long for some little languages such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words, like the shuffling of feet on the pavement.’ Quoted from Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (London: Hogarth, 1963), p. 169.

¹⁹⁴ *Poems of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Vincent O’Sullivan, p. 59.

¹⁹⁵ See O’Sullivan’s notes on ‘The Gulf’ in *Poems of Katherine Mansfield*, p. 90.

¹⁹⁶ Sarah Sandley, ‘The Middle of the Note: Mansfield’s “Glimpses”’, in *Katherine Mansfield: In From*

other words, Mansfield's distinctive or singular (in Derrida's phrase)¹⁹⁷ practice of 'special *prose*' is characterised by her frequent use of ellipsis mark, which is an example of what Raymond Carver calls 'the writer's particular and unmistakable signature on everything he [or she] writes'.¹⁹⁸ In Mansfield's stories, the ellipsis mark plays the role of inviting the reader to 'acknowledge' 'the secret self'¹⁹⁹ of a character. The second paragraph of her most praised and anthologised story, 'Bliss' (1918), for example, goes like this:

What can you do if you are thirty and, turning the corner of your own street, you are overcome, suddenly, by a feeling of bliss—absolutely bliss!—as though you'd suddenly swallowed a bright piece of that late afternoon sun and it burned in your bosom, sending out a little shower of sparks into every particle, into every finger and toe? . . .

(II, p. 142)

The ellipsis mark at the end of this passage hints at two things: first, like Keats in 'Ode to a Nightingale' (1819), Bertha is 'too happy'²⁰⁰ to put her 'feeling of bliss' into words. On the other hand, as Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle comment, 'there is a suggestion that pleasure can be painful at the same time: the burning bosom here might be compared with the "aching pleasure" evoked in Keats's "Ode on Melancholy"'.²⁰¹

the Margin, ed. Roger Robinson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), p. 79.

¹⁹⁷ For the discussion of the notion of the singular in Derrida's work, see Nicholas Royle, Chapter 10, 'Secret Life', in *Jacques Derrida* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 119-26; Timothy Clark, Chapter 5, 'Derrida: a pragmatics of singularity', in *The Poetics of Singularity: The Counter-Culturalist Turn in Heidegger, Derrida, Blanchot and the later Gadamer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 124-57.

¹⁹⁸ 'Every great or even every very good writer makes the world over according to his own specifications. It's akin to style, what I'm talking about, but it isn't style alone. It is the writer's particular and unmistakable signature on everything he writes. It is his world and no other. This is one of the things that distinguishes one writer from another. Not talent. There's plenty of that around. But a writer who has some special way of looking at things and who gives artistic expression to that way of looking: that writer may be around for a time.' Quoted from Raymond Carver, 'On Writing', in *Fires: Essays, Poems, Stories* (New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1989), p. 22.

¹⁹⁹ Mansfield describes her writing in terms of wandering about 'all sorts of places' in a letter to Dorothy Brett dated 12 September 1921: '[...] And then the place where it all happens. I have tried to make it as familiar to "you" as it is to me. [...] And, too, one tries to go deep—to speak to the secret self we all have—to acknowledge that.' From *Letters* 4, p. 278.

²⁰⁰ 'But being too happy in thine happiness'. Line 6 of 'Ode to a Nightingale', in *The Poems of John Keats*, p. 369. ' "I am too happy—too happy!" she murmured.' From 'Bliss', vol. 2, p. 145.

²⁰¹ See Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle's analysis of 'Bliss' in Chapter 32, 'Pleasure', in *An*

Another conjunction of ‘pleasant pain’ with ellipsis can be found in ‘The Daughters of the Late Colonel’ when Constantia looks at a statue of Buddha:

And the stone and gilt image, whose smile always gave her such a queer feeling, almost a pain and yet a pleasant pain, seemed to-day to be more smiling. He knew something; he had a secret. ‘I know something that you don’t know,’ said her Buddha. Oh, what was it, what could it be? And yet she had always felt there was . . . something.

(II, pp. 280-1)

Angela Smith suggests that ‘the ellipsis indicates [Constantia’s] tentative groping for something beyond her experience’, that is, ‘something close to sexual arousal’, as implied by the phrase ‘a pleasant pain’.²⁰² In ‘Bliss’, the ‘aching pleasure’ or the ‘pleasant pain’ is entangled with Bertha’s sexual awakening, too. In the middle of the story, she is disconcerted by a grey cat and a black cat which are evidently intent on sexual activity.

[...] A grey cat, dragging its belly, crept across the lawn, and a black one, its shadow, trailed after. The sight of them, so intent and so quick, gave Bertha a curious shiver.

‘What creepy things cats are!’ she stammered, and she turned away from the window and began walking up and down. . . .

(II, p. 145)

The four dots imply that Bertha is unconsciously worried about her sexual frigidity in her marriage to Harry. Towards the end of the story, her secret self whispers: ‘“Soon these people will go. The house will be quiet—quiet. The lights will be out. And you and he will be alone together in the dark room—the warm bed. . . .”’ (II, p. 150). The

Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory, 4th edn, pp. 289-98, p. 291.

²⁰² Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, p. 221.

ellipsis mark here gestures towards Bertha's awakened desire towards her husband. In light of these observations, the use of ellipsis mark epitomises what Mansfield's 'special *prose*' aims for—a kind of prose which is free from the need to account for feelings fully and 'the notion that one needed to be either consistent or explanatory' (in O'Sullivan's phrase).

If bliss is inexpressible, so is sadness. In her journal entry of 19 February 1918, Mansfield records her sadness triggered by her first experience of spitting 'bright red blood':

I woke up early this morning and when I opened the shutters the full round sun was just risen. I began to repeat that verse of Shakespeare's: 'Lo here the gentle lark weary of rest' and bounded back into bed. The bound made me cough. I spat—it tasted strange—it was bright red blood. Since then Ive [*sic*] gone on spitting each time I cough a little more. Oh, yes, of course I am frightened. But for two reasons only. I don't want to be ill, I mean 'seriously' away from Jack [Murry]. Jack is the 1st thought. 2nd I don't want to find this is real consumption, perhaps its [*sic*] going to gallop—who knows?—and I shan't have my work written. *Thats* [*sic*] *what matters*. How unbearable it would be to die, leave 'scraps', 'bits', nothing real finished.²⁰³

This entry indicates that Mansfield's mortal fragility is closely bound up with verbal fragility, as epitomised by the words 'scraps', 'bits', and the typographical ellipsis. Around the same time she suffered from her first haemorrhage, she had been reading Keats, who also died of tuberculosis, and 'she knew that Keats', as Angela Smith points out, 'in the same situation, recognized it as his death warrant'.²⁰⁴ In a letter dated 3 and 4 February 1918, she tells Murry that she is excited by her work ('Je ne parle pas français') and copies a great deal of it in the letter 'in case any misfortune should

²⁰³ *KM Notebooks* 2, p. 125.

²⁰⁴ Smith, 'Mansfield and Dickens: "I am not reading Dickens *idly*"', p. 195.

happen to me. Cheerful! But there is a great black bird flying over me and I am so frightened he'll settle'.²⁰⁵

In addition to the black bird, the canary's function as an animal sentinel to detect gas in a coal mine²⁰⁶ makes it a perfect medium to register Mansfield's meditation on mortal fragility. Her last story, 'The Canary' (July 1922), is told by a first person narrator who uses prosopopoeia as a rhetorical device to bring her dead canary back to life. The narrator of the story is a boarding house keeper who lacks human companionship and is socially disregarded by her lodgers as 'the Scarecrow'. Before the arrival of the canary the objects of her affections were the flowers in her garden ('Flowers respond wonderfully, but they don't sympathise') and 'the evening star' ('it seemed to be shining for me alone') (II, p. 512).

Once the canary enters her life, however, it is he who becomes the centre of the narrator's life. She finds in the canary not only a 'professional singer' but also 'perfect company', who can understand and even interact with her:

. . . It surprises even me now to remember how he and I shared each other's lives. The moment I came down in the morning and took the cloth off his cage he greeted me with a drowsy little note. I knew it meant 'Missus! Missus!' [...] I spread a newspaper over a corner of the table and when I put the cage on it he used to beat with his wings, despairingly, as if he didn't know what was coming. 'You're a regular little actor,' I used to scold him. I scraped the tray, dusted it with fresh sand, filled his seed and water tins, tucked a piece of chickweed and half a chilli between the bars. And I am perfectly certain he understood and appreciated every item of this little performance.

(II, p. 512)

²⁰⁵ *Letters 2*, p. 55.

²⁰⁶ 'There are countless examples of environmental effects on animals that later manifested in humans. The classic example is the "canary in the coal mine". Well into the 20th century, coal miners brought canaries into coal mines as an early-warning signal for toxic gases, primarily carbon monoxide. The birds, being more sensitive, would become sick before the miners, who would then have a chance to escape or put on protective respirators.' Quoted from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_sentinels>.

In her *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories*, Pamela Dunbar calls our attention to 'the subversive' which is often masked by the 'surface lyricism'²⁰⁷ of Mansfield's short stories. Using 'The Canary' as an example, Dunbar identifies the irony of the narrator's representation: 'Romantic in her emotional reach and in her association with a songbird, the Narrator is disqualified by her sex and lack of social status from the exalted status of the Romantic poet'.²⁰⁸ Indeed, 'the drowsy little note' in the passage quoted above harks back to Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale'.²⁰⁹ The words of the theatre such as 'actor' and 'performance', however, intimate that both the canary and the narrator are masquerading as something they are *not*. Perhaps the narrator shares more in common with the heroine of 'A Simple Heart' (1877), a story penned by another writer Mansfield greatly admires, Gustave Flaubert.²¹⁰ Like Félicité in 'A Simple Heart',²¹¹ who finds great fulfilment in meaningless babble with her parrot, the narrator tells us that the little 'Sweet! Sweet!' sound made by her canary 'was so beautiful comforting' that she 'nearly cried'.

²⁰⁷ See Pamela Dunbar's preface to *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories*, p. ix: 'These two aspects of Mansfield's writing, the lyrical and the subversive, are in some of the best-known stories presented in a layered or contrapuntal manner, with the surface lyricism serving as a cloak for more subversive themes and attitudes. Mansfield adopts this method, in part because of the dangerous nature of the material—much of it autobiographical—with which she was dealing; in part in order to reflect the doubleness of the way in which according to her, society and indeed the human mind itself are organised.'

²⁰⁸ Dunbar, *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories*, p. 72.

²⁰⁹ 'My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk'. Lines 1-2 from Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale', in *The Poems of John Keats*, p. 370.

²¹⁰ In a letter (? May or June 1908) to her elder sister Vera Beauchamp, Mansfield tells her that she admires Flaubert's work. I discussed this letter more fully in Chapter 1.

²¹¹ Gustave Flaubert, 'A Simple Heart', in *Three Tales*, trans. Roger Whitehouse (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 3-40. The evidence of Mansfield's familiarity with the story can be found in a letter dated 12 November 1922, in which she writes to Murry about the dancing she saw at Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man: 'I must say the dancing here has given me quite a different approach to writing. I mean some of the very ancient Oriental dance. There is one which takes about 7 minutes & it contains the whole life of woman—but everything! Nothing is left out. It taught me, it gave me more of woman's life than any book or poem. There was even room for Flaubert's *Cœur Simple* ['A Simple Heart'] in it [...]. From *Letters* 5, p. 322.

After the canary has died, the narrator tells us that her ‘heart felt hollow, as if it was his cage’, and she puzzles about what the bird’s song may have meant in the last paragraph:

. . . All the same, without being morbid, or giving way to—to memories and so on, I must confess that there does seem to me something sad in life. It is hard to say what it is. I don’t mean the sorrow that we all know, like illness and poverty and death. No, it is something different. It is there, deep down, deep down, part of one, like one’s breathing. However hard I work and tire myself I have only to stop to know it is there, waiting. I often wonder if everybody feels the same. One can never know. But isn’t it extraordinary that under his sweet, joyful little singing it was just this—sadness?—Ah, what is it?—that I heard.

(II, p. 514)

As Jonathan Culler puts it in *Flaubert: The Uses of Uncertainty*, the parrot’s repeated, meaningless set phrases in Flaubert’s ‘A Simple Heart’ can be seen as ‘arbitrary signs’ which ‘make no pretence of accurately conveying human feelings’, and yet, ‘seem to be, for that very reason, the forms which contain the greatest depths’.²¹² This also provides a way to consider the canary’s singing in Mansfield’s story. The ‘Negative Capability’ of the canary’s singing, nicely inscribed in the ellipsis mark that opens each paragraph of the story (except the third), points to the inarticulate origins of ‘special *prose*’ in poetry. Hence, to adapt the Keatsian formulation, heard melodies are sad, but those *unheard* are sadder.

That ‘The Canary’ is Mansfield’s last completed story invites us to consider it as more than a lament for the death of the canary. As Dunbar argues, ‘“The Canary” is Mansfield’s own literary epitaph’.²¹³ In a letter dated December 31 1922, less than a month before she died, Mansfield tells her cousin Elizabeth Russell that ‘I am tired of

²¹² Jonathan Culler, *Flaubert: The Uses of Uncertainty* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), pp. 208-9.

²¹³ Dunbar, *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield’s Short Stories*, p. 72.

my little stories like birds bred in cages'.²¹⁴ Seen in this light, the canary is the mask for Mansfield as a writer. The ellipses in the story not only express the uncertainty of the bird singing but also the difficulty of Mansfield's breathing as well as writing. In the next section, I will discuss how Zhimo Xu 'confers a mask' and 'the power of speech' on the dead Mansfield through his own 'special *prose*' and elegy for her.

'Elegy for Mansfield' (1923) by Zhimo Xu

In addition to English poetry, Mansfield also expressed admiration for Arthur Waley's translations of Chinese poetry. In a letter dated 5 June 1918, she tells Murry how much she enjoys reading Arthur Waley's translation of Chinese poetry: 'Oh how lovely these Chinese poems are. I shall carry them about with me as a sort of wavy branch all day—to hide behind—a fan—'.²¹⁵ Her comparison of classical Chinese poems to a wavy branch which she can use as a fan to *mask* herself conveys her tendency to assume identities and change masks in real life as well as in fictional and letter writing. Furthermore, a reader who is familiar with classical Chinese literature will be struck by how aptly Mansfield incorporates the typical images of classical Chinese poetry (branch, fan, etc.) into her prose writing in English. It also reminds us of classical Chinese poets' choices of concrete images over abstractions and rhetorical excesses, which inspired Ezra Pound's imagist tenets, such as 'direct treatment of the "thing"'.²¹⁶

As far as the English-speaking world is concerned, there has been little interest in Mansfield's relation to the Chinese poet, Zhimo Xu. She met him briefly in Hampstead,

²¹⁴ *Letters* 5, p. 346.

²¹⁵ *Letters* 2, p. 220.

²¹⁶ In 'A Retrospect', Pound outlined three imagist tenets: '1. Direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective. 2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation. 3. A regarding rhyme: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.' See Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. and intro. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 3. I am going to discuss Pound's translations of Chinese poetry in regard to Eileen Chang's bilingual writings in Chapter 4.

London, six months before her death. Like Mansfield, whose father was Chairman of the Bank of New Zealand, Xu was a descendant of a successful Chinese banker.²¹⁷ However, they both abandoned a privileged lifestyle in pursuit of a literary career. In 1920, Xu went to England to study English literature at King's College, Cambridge, where he was dubbed 'the Chinese Shelley' by his classmates and had the opportunity to meet many of the English writers and literary intellectuals of the time, including H. G. Wells, Arthur Waley, G. L. Dickinson, Roger Fry, I. A. Richards, Bertrand Russell and John Middleton Murry.²¹⁸

In 1922, while Mansfield was staying in London, Xu was invited by Murry to visit her at their lodgings in Hampstead. Because of her failing health, the meeting lasted only twenty minutes. Leo Ou-fan Lee has characterised the hospitable reception of their Chinese guest as 'nothing more than the decency and good manners of a highly educated couple',²¹⁹ but in the eyes of the ardent young poet at the time, 'those twenty minutes are immortal', as he states in the elegy for Mansfield he wrote later. Having been granted the honour, by Mansfield, of the right to translate her work, Xu lost no time in introducing her to Chinese readers once he was back in China.

In 1923, he wrote not only 'Elegy for Mansfield' but also an article recounting his meeting with Mansfield, which he published under the title 'Mansfield' (Man shu fei er) in *The Short Story Magazine* (Xiao shuo yue bao). In spite of two errors made by Xu in

²¹⁷ Zhimo Xu was the only son of Shenru Xu, a successful banker and industrialist in Zhejiang, China. See Chapter 7, 'Hsu Chih-mo [Zhimo Xu]: A Life of Emotions', in Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 125.

²¹⁸ See Chapter 3, 'East-West Literary Conversations', in Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 126-37.

²¹⁹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Chinese Literature*, p. 166.

remembering the address and the dates,²²⁰ this memoir provides us with a precious account of Mansfield's appearance, voice and speech six months before her death.

I have discussed in Chapter 2 Mansfield's art of masquerade in real life as well as in her stories. Likewise, Xu notes a chameleon quality in Mansfield's appearance:

I suspected that she was intentionally imitating the Chinese style for her hair was pitch black and straight, and cut in a neat fringe at the front. It was extraordinarily well-combed. Though I could not do it justice in words, I felt that hers was the most beautiful I had ever seen.²²¹

To substantiate his observation, Xu also quotes H. M. Tomlinson's description of Mansfield at length:

She has been called a beautiful woman. That is hardly the word. Beauty, as we commonly understand it, is attractive. Katherine Mansfield's beauty was attractive, but it was also unearthly and a little chilling, like the remoteness of Alpine snow. [...] Her pallor was of ivory, and there was something of exquisite Chinese refinement in the delicacy of her features, her broad face, her dark eyes, the straight thick fringe, and her air of quiet solicitude.²²²

Xu lavished praise on Mansfield's features and voice with sensuous language and evocative imagery at the risk of appearing a practitioner of what Mary Ellmann calls 'phallic criticism',²²³ but in so doing, he successfully attracted Chinese readers' attention to a foreign writer. For instance, Hu Wen, a correspondent for the *The Short Story Magazine*, wrote in 1923:

²²⁰ See Zhimo Xu, 'Mansfield', trans. by Shifen Gong, in Shifen Gong, *A Fine Pen: The Chinese View of Katherine Mansfield*, pp. 117-28.

²²¹ Gong, *A Fine Pen: The Chinese View of Katherine Mansfield*, pp. 123-4.

²²² This is a quotation from H. M. Tomlinson's article, 'Katherine Mansfield', published in the *Nation and Athenaeum*, 32 (20 January 1923) less than two weeks after Mansfield's death. Quoted in Gong, p. 124.

²²³ Mary Ellmann, *Thinking About Women* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), p. 29.

The portrait of Mansfield, with her fine voice and features, is so attractive that we seem to have been baptised by her in our dreams or previous lives, in her room upstairs at No. 10 Pond Street.²²⁴

On the other hand, Mansfield also told Xu warmly about her increasing admiration for Chinese culture and literature, influenced by Arthur Waley and Bertrand Russell. The appeal of Mansfield to Xu, however, lay not only in her open attitude to Chinese culture and literature. The photographs (Figures 3.1 and 3.2) of Xu taken during his stay in England reveal that he shares a chameleon quality with Mansfield: if Mansfield was impersonating a Japanese doll or a Chinese lady by her hairstyle and kimono, Xu was masquerading as a British gentleman by wearing suits, hats, ties, leather shoes and gold-rimmed eye glasses.²²⁵



Figure 3.1 Zhimo Xu in England, 1921-22.

²²⁴ Hu Wen, 'Mr. Zhimo Xu's "Mansfield"', in *The Short Story Magazine* (Xiao Shuo Yue Bao), 14.8 (August 1923). Quoted in Gong, p. 129. The actual address of Mansfield's lodgings was No. 6 Pond Street, not No. 10 Pond Street.

²²⁵ Both photos were taken during the period 1921-22, when Zhimo Xu was studying at King's College, Cambridge. Both images were scanned from Shiqiu Liang, ed., *The Collected Works of Zhimo Xu* (Xu Zhimo quan ji), vol. 1, 2nd edn (Taipei: Biographical Literature, 1980), pp. 37-8.



Figure 3.2 Zhimo Xu in England, 1921-22.

Besides fashion sense, what has provided the major source for Xu's poetic imagination and intellectual orientation can be found not in ancient China, but in late eighteenth, early nineteenth-century England. Xu's article on Mansfield, for example, is packed with quotations from English poets such as William Blake, Lord Byron and John Keats. Xu eulogises Mansfield's voice, likening it to 'a miracle':

As if in a hypnotic trance, I stared into her mystical eyes, letting her sword-like gaze penetrate my being, while the music of her voice washed over me and flooded into the depths of my soul. Whatever consciousness I had left resembled Keats's:

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains

My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

[...]

‘Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness...²²⁶

As this passage suggests, Xu is masquerading as the Romantic poet, conferring a mask and the voice of a suffering nightingale onto Mansfield, whose art of singing he attempts to emulate. Xu’s use of quotation from Keats and other nineteenth-century poets in portraying Mansfield calls attention, once again, to the importance of poetry in her work. In this way, he anticipates what John Middleton Murry claims in his introduction to *Journal of Katherine Mansfield* (1927): ‘Her affinities are rather with the English poets than the English prose-writers. There is no English prose writer to whom she can be related’.²²⁷

In May 1923, Xu published his first translation of Mansfield, ‘An Ideal Family’, which inaugurated the tradition of Mansfield translation in China. Over the following years he proceeded to translate more of Mansfield’s stories, including ‘The Garden Party’, ‘Poison’, ‘Life of Ma Parker’, ‘A Cup of Tea’, ‘Late at Night’, ‘Bliss’, ‘The Wind Blows’ and ‘The Canary’. It is noteworthy that Xu chose to translate a minor work, ‘Late at Night’,²²⁸ alongside her canonical works. I suggest that it is this story’s form, dramatic monologue, which ignites the poet’s interest. As a poet, Xu also paid attention to Mansfield’s verse, translating three of her poems into Chinese: ‘The Meeting’, ‘The Gulf’ and ‘Sleeping Together’.²²⁹

²²⁶ Taken from the first stanza of Keats’s ‘Ode to a Nightingale’. The quotation was in English in Xu’s original Chinese article. Gong, p. 125.

²²⁷ See John Middleton Murry’s introduction to *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, p. xiii.

²²⁸ This story is neither included in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* published by Penguin nor *The Selected Stories* published by Oxford University Press. It can be found in *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield*, vol. 2, published in 2012.

²²⁹ These poems are available in *Poems of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. Vincent O’Sullivan. See also Gong, *A Fine Pen: The Chinese View of Katherine Mansfield*, pp. 11-2.

In addition to his translations of stories and poems by Mansfield, Xu also produced a great many translations of other poets, introducing the Chinese reading public to Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Elizabeth Browning, Swinburne and Hardy.²³⁰ We can gain an impression of the significance of Mansfield for Xu by the company in which she is placed in his literary pantheon. Having been considered a minor writer in the West due to her marginal position as a woman, a colonial and a short story writer,²³¹ Mansfield could hardly imagine that, after her death, a Chinese poet would write her an elegy, a piece of ‘special prose’, and translate her stories and poems into Chinese, making her one of the most widely read foreign writers in the Chinese-speaking world.

On 19 November, 1931, when Xu was flying from Shanghai to Beijing to resume his teaching at Beijing University, the plane which carried him crashed in dense fog into the peak of a hill near Ji’nan in Shandong Province. Like Mansfield, he died at the age of 34.²³²

In July 2012, ninety years after the meeting between Mansfield and Xu, I took the overground to Hampstead Heath station, searching for the house where their meeting had taken place. As Shifen Gong points out, the address Xu gives in the original Chinese text is evidently misremembered. It should be No. 6, not No. 10 Pond Street. Unfortunately, No. 6 no longer exists; it was replaced by the Royal Free Hospital, Pond Street. Likewise, Xu seems to have misconstrued the actual date of his meeting with Mansfield. According to Alpers, she left Murry for the Hotel Chateau Belle Vue, Sierre, with Ida Baker, on 29 June, because of a rift between them, and did not return to

²³⁰ Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Chinese Literature*, p. 170.

²³¹ Clare Hanson, Chapter 14, ‘Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923)’, in *The Gender of Modernism*, pp. 298-305.

²³² Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Chinese Literature*, p. 174.

London until 16 August, when she was accompanied by Murry and Ida Baker to Dorothy Brett's House at 6 Pond Street. They both stayed there till the end of August.²³³ Hence it was unlikely that Xu met Mansfield and Murry in July 1922 as he states in the original Chinese text. Shifen Gong suggests that Xu must have seen Mansfield sometime during the last two weeks in August 1922. Given the fact that Xu mentioned in his memoir that he met Mansfield, Murry, and Sydney Waterlow at Dorothy Brett's house on a 'Thursday evening',²³⁴ I would surmise that the meeting took place on Thursday 24 August 1922,²³⁵ as suggested by a letter Mansfield wrote to Sydney Waterlow on 22 August 1922: '[...] Brett is having one of her Thursdays, I gather. Supposing we meet then? Even if I don't come down stairs & sit among die Propheten perhaps you would come up & have a little chat.'²³⁶

These two errors made by Xu make me ponder the following questions: Did Zhimo Xu really meet Mansfield in person? Is his article a real or a fictional account of a meeting with her? What happens to our sense of Mansfield and Xu if we turn Xu's overly-sentimental first-person narrative, into a more detached, third-person narrative? In reflecting on these questions, I have composed a piece of 'special *prose*', 'An Eternal Twenty Minutes', giving masks and voices to Mansfield, Xu, and No. 6 Pond Street, the people and the place that no longer exist. A number of the details of the story that derive from the writings of Mansfield, Xu and their contemporaries will be acknowledged in my footnotes.

²³³ Alpers, *Life of Katherine Mansfield*, pp. 362-72.

²³⁴ Zhimo Xu, 'Mansfield', p. 120.

²³⁵ Mansfield's letter to her father Harold Beauchamp dated 28 August 1922 shows that it was a Monday when she wrote to him. Hence, 24 August 1922 was a Thursday (*Letters* 5, p. 258). If we accept that Xu met Mansfield on 24 August 1922, it is possible that the 'July' which Xu mentions in his memoir refers to July 1922, since 24 August 1922 becomes 2 July 1922 when converted to the Chinese Lunar Calendar. I am grateful to Dr. Lillian Li-Hsing Ho for pointing out the possibility of Xu's use of the Chinese Lunar Calendar in this case.

²³⁶ *Letters* 5, p. 252.

An Eternal Twenty Minutes

It was a wet evening in August 1922. Braving the rain, Zhimo Xu was walking alone through the labyrinthine streets of Hampstead. On that evening he had his first and, alas, last encounter with Katherine Mansfield.

Xu already knew her husband, John Middleton Murry. A few days before, he had a discussion on English literature with Murry at the bustling A.B.C. café behind Charing Cross.

In passing, Xu mentioned the Chinese literary movements of recent years.²³⁷ He remarked:

‘Chinese writers today have been mostly influenced by the English writers, of course, but also the Russians. Lu Xun’s famous story, “The Diary of a Mad Man”, for example, is composed in Chinese vernacular, but it was fundamentally inspired by Gogol.’²³⁸

Murry almost jumped with joy on hearing that, since both he and his wife worshipped Russian literature. They regretted that Russian literature had been so little noticed by the English. He himself had written a book on Dostoevsky, while his wife’s preference was for Chekhov.

Then Xu inquired how Mansfield was. Murry told him that her condition was satisfactory, and that he had been able to bring her back from Switzerland to London for

²³⁷ In January, 1917, Hu Shih (1891-1962) published an article, ‘Suggestions for a Reform of Literature’, advocating the adoption of vernacular Chinese instead of classical Chinese as the national medium of communication. The article later ignited a literary revolution, radically changing the shape and course of Chinese literature. For a more detailed introduction to the Chinese literary revolution, see C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 3rd edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), Chapter 1, ‘The Literary Revolution’, pp. 3-27.

²³⁸ See Chapter 2, ‘Lu Hsun [Lu Xun]’, in C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, pp. 28-54.

two weeks. He gave Xu their address and invited him to visit the following Thursday evening.

‘How lucky I am to be able to meet the author of *Bliss!*’ Xu exclaimed internally. That Thursday evening, with assistance provided by a policeman, Xu finally reached No. 6 Pond Street, a small two-storey house. Murry opened the door. Xu took off his flat cap, wiped his two-tone Oxford shoes dry at the entrance, and was led into a room on the right.

Xu imagined that Mansfield would be a literary woman in the style of *Rose Macaulay*, Vita Sackville-West or Amy Lowell. They tried to be ‘anti-feminine’. Nine times out of ten their laughter was louder than that of their male companions. When they talked, they used language that their male companions would not dare to use. Their favourite topics were Freudian complexes, birth control and private press editions of works by James Joyce and George Moore, such as *Ulysses* and *A Storyteller’s Holiday*.²³⁹ So as he went in, he expected a handsome, middle-aged, woman to stand up from the sofa, and greet him with a cigarette, smiling her smoky smile.

But as it turned out, the drawing-room—a long, narrow one—contained not a single soul. Paintings hung on the walls in a variety of colours. A few easy-chairs with patterned covers were placed before the fireplace. Murray told Xu to sit down in one of the chairs and started chatting with him. Xu talked about his study and life at King’s, waving his big yet smooth hands in descriptive gestures:

‘In Cambridge I am busy with walking, punting, riding on bicycles, smoking, chatting, drinking five o’clock teas, eating buttered cakes and reading at random . . .’²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Shifen Gong’s translation of Xu’s essay.

²⁴⁰ For Zhimo Xu’s study and life in Cambridge, see Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes*:

Light footsteps were heard from the entrance.

A graceful lady with an oval face and chestnut curly hair came in. ‘Could this be Mansfield? So petite. . .’ Murry stood up and introduced them. She was not Mansfield, but Dorothy Brett, the landlady of the house. She was an artist, and most of the paintings on the walls were her works. She was dressed in a plum-coloured dress, a pair of lime green stockings and brown patent leather shoes. ‘A tulip after the rain,’ Xu decided. ‘What a good subject it would be for a poem . . .’

‘Are you longing for some tea? Green, Oolong, or Earl Grey?’

‘May I have a cup of Earl Grey with milk, please?’

‘Of course, it would be delightful. You are a perfect Englishman!’ Brett replied with her smiling eyes.

After a while, she returned to the room with a bone china tea set.

The door bell rang. The man who came in was Sydney Waterlow, a second cousin of Mansfield. Xu recalled seeing him once at Roger Fry’s house, where he took out from his huge pocket half a dozen pipes in different sizes and colours. As soon as he came in, he asked Murry how Mansfield was doing now. Xu was all ears to hear his answer:

‘She is not coming downstairs tonight. It’s been such terrible weather today. None of us can stand it . . .’ said Murry worriedly. Waterlow wondered if he could go upstairs to see Mansfield, and Murry agreed. Then he politely excused himself to Brett

and turned to leave. Murry went over to him and whispered in a low voice: ‘Sydney, don’t talk too much!’

Brett then asked Xu about Chinese art. Xu used the scrolls he brought to give her a brief introduction to Chinese calligraphy. He unrolled a piece of Cursive Script by Juesi Wang and then a piece of Running Script by Shanzhou Liang. Brett poured him a cup of tea and seemed to be looking at those Chinese scrolls with great admiration.

But Xu felt a profound sense of loss. He had made his way through heavy rain to see Mansfield, only to find her unable to come downstairs. There she was, confined to her chamber, to which only close friends were able to gain access. ‘You are a foreigner. You are a stranger. You are a mediocre poet. How dare you dream of talking to her in person?’ Xu thought to himself.

It was now half past nine, and with some reluctance he stood up and said his good-byes. Murry saw him to the entrance. As he helped Xu on with his raincoat, Xu said how very sorry he was that Mansfield had not been able to come downstairs and how blissful it would have been to see her. To his surprise, Murray responded earnestly: ‘If you wish to, you may go upstairs and see her.’ Overjoyed, Xu took off his raincoat straightaway and followed Murry step by step up the stairs . . .

Once upstairs, Murry knocked lightly at the door, and Xu was led into a room and introduced. Waterlow exited the room with Murry, who closed the door behind him.

The room was rather small. A bed and a blue velvet sofa occupied most of it. Everything was tidy and somehow like a doll’s house. A medicine bottle and a notebook stood on the bedside table.

Mansfield was dressed in a dusty rose kimono robe, a pair of moonlit stockings and yellow suede shoes fringed with white fur.²⁴¹ She had dark eyes, picked out by her pale complexion. Her black hair was cut short like Brett's. But the way her hair was combed was something he had never seen before in Europe or America. In fact, she had the look of a Chinese girl, with the fringe straight across her forehead.

Like a suffering canary, Mansfield dragged herself across the room, inviting Xu to sit down next to her on the sofa. Sitting upright at the edge of the sofa while he reclined, she seemed to be much taller than him. Indeed, who would not feel small in her presence?

Notes rippled from her fragile vocal chords one after the other, washing away an awkward silence. An amber lamp next to the sofa cast a soft, orange light, and discreetly masked his blushing.

She said that she had just come back from Switzerland, where she had been a neighbour of the Russells. They talked a lot, she said, about the merits of the East. She herself had always had great respect for Chinese literature, and she now found herself becoming one of its warmest admirers. What she liked best was classical Chinese poetry in the translations of Arthur Waley.

'Oh how lovely these Chinese poems are. I shall carry them about with me as a sort of wavy branch all day—to hide behind—a fan—'²⁴²

Intrigued by her exquisite metaphor for classical Chinese poetry, Xu also mentioned how English poetry he was reading at Cambridge had opened his eyes and

²⁴¹ William Orton reports that Mansfield was dressed 'in a patterned pink kimono and white flowered frock' in her room in Cheyne Place around 1911; Alpers, p. 118. Mansfield added herself into Orton's journal, mentioning that she admired her 'silver stockings' and 'yellow suede shoes fringed with white fur'. See William Orton, *The Last Romantic* (London: Cassell, 1937), p. 270. Quoted in Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 47-8.

²⁴² See note 215 above.

inspired him to start writing Chinese poetry in new verse forms. She asked him which English poets had influenced him. He said he found a kindred spirit in the works of Byron, Shelley, Keats and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. She told him that she was so steeped in Shelley and Keats that she had learned many of their poems by heart.²⁴³

She inquired which fiction writers he liked best. He said Thomas Hardy's work was wonderful.²⁴⁴ She raised her eyebrows.

'Isn't it? We have to go back to the old masters for literature—the real thing!'²⁴⁵

She went on, speaking in a high-pitched voice:

'I wonder if you have read Joyce and Eliot and these ultra-modern men? It is so strange that they should write as they do after Chekhov. For Chekhov has said the last word that has been said, so far, and more than that he has given us a sign of the way we should go. They not only ignore it but think his stories are almost as good as the "specimen cases" in Freud—'²⁴⁶

Xu noticed that each time she finished speaking, she was short of breath and her cheeks flushed. He lowered his voice in the hope that she would do likewise, and for a while she spoke more quietly.

She asked him what he was going to do when he returned to China. He told her that he was planning to launch a literary journal publishing literature written in Chinese

²⁴³ In a letter dated 20 and 21 February 1918, Mansfield writes to Murry: 'I have learned it ['The Question' by Shelley] by heart since I am here [Bandol, France]; it is very exquisite, I think. Shelley and Keats I get more and more *attached* to. Nay, to all 'poetry'. I have such a passion for it and I feel such an understanding of it. Its [*sic*] a great part of my life.' *Letters 2*, p. 83.

²⁴⁴ Xu wrote another elegy to Thomas Hardy in 1928. See Zhimo Xu, 'Thomas Hardy', in Michelle Yeh, ed. and trans., *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University, 1992), pp. 9-10.

²⁴⁵ This direct speech was given in English in the original Chinese article, 'Mansfield' (Man shu fei er), by Zhimo Xu. It was first published in *The Short Story Magazine* (Xiao shuo yue bao), 14.5 (1923). 12 pages.

²⁴⁶ A direct quote from a letter dated early August 1919. In this letter addressed to S. S. Koteliansky, Chekhov was spelled Tchekhov by Mansfield. *Letters 2*, p. 345.

vernacular by new writers as well as English literature in translation.²⁴⁷ She nodded and smiled at him.

Blushing more crimson than ever, but looking at her more seriously,²⁴⁸ he asked:

‘May I ask your permission to translate some of your stories?’

She seemed delighted, and readily agreed. But on second thoughts she doubted if they were worth the trouble.

He went on to praise the art of indirectness and obliquity in her stories, which might go beyond the reach of ordinary readers.

‘That’s just it,’ she replied. ‘Then, of course, popularity is never the thing for us.’²⁴⁹ At this her chest heaved visibly.

Finding it distressing to see her consuming her energy in this way on his account, and remembering how Murry had warned Waterlow not to tire her, he took his leave.

He expressed his regret at not having been able to see her earlier, and also his wish to see her again. She told him how lovely Lake Geneva was and invited him to Switzerland the following summer. She saw him off at the door, warmly shaking him by the hand. It was altogether no more than twenty minutes from the time he entered her room to the time she saw him out of it.

His gold-rimmed glasses became cloudy due to the heavy rain outside the house, but he could see the snow-capped Mount Blanc, mirrored in Lake Geneva.

²⁴⁷ Xu launched the *Crescent Moon Monthly* in 1928. The first issue of the *Crescent Moon Monthly*, modelled after the Victorian *Yellow Book*, contains Xu’s articles on Thomas Hardy and translations of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poetry. See Chapter 2, ‘Literary Communities in China and England’, in Laurence, *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China*, pp. 101-112.

²⁴⁸ ‘Blushing more crimson than ever, but looking at her more seriously he said, almost angrily: “Excuse me, Mademoiselle, you dropped this.”’ From Mansfield, ‘Feuille d’Album’ (1917), vol. 2, p. 97.

²⁴⁹ Like the one I mentioned in note 244, this was also a direct speech given in English in the original Chinese article. Xu presumably quoted directly from what Mansfield had said to him.

Six months later Xu learned that Mansfield died in Fontainebleau, at the age of 34. He wrote an elegy for Mansfield as his tribute to their ‘eternal twenty minutes’:

Last night in my dream I entered a dark vale
And heard cuckoos crying tears of blood amid lilies.

Last night I dreamed I ascended a mountain peak
And saw a gleaming tear falling from the sky.

In the suburbs of ancient Rome, there is a grave;
In it lies a poet who died on a voyage.
A century later, the wheels of Hades’ chariot
Rumbled in the grove at Fontainebleau.

If the universe is a machine,
Why do ideals shine before our eyes like lamps?
If all things manifest truth, goodness, and beauty,
Why doesn’t the rainbow stay in the sky?

Although you and I met only once,
Those twenty minutes are immortal.
Who could believe your heavenly presence
Is forever gone from this dewy world?

No! Life is but a dream of substance;
The fair soul is forever in the Lord’s keeping.
A thirty-year sojourn is like a night-blooming cereus;
Through tears I see you return to the Celestial Palace.

Do you remember our London pledge, Mansfield,

That this summer we'd meet by Lake Geneva?
 The lake always holds the reflection of snow-capped Mont Blanc—
 When I look at the clouds, my tears fall.

That year, when I first came to understand the message of life,
 I was struck, as if in a dream, by the solemnity of love.
 Enlightenment about life lies in mature love;
 Now, faced with death, I see the bounds of life and love.

Compassion is an unbreakable crystal;
 Love the only path to realizing life.
 Death is a grand, mysterious crucible,
 That forges the spirits of us all.

How can my condolences fly like electrifying sparks
 To touch your soul in the distant sky?
 I send you my tears with the wind—
 When can I shatter the date between life and death?²⁵⁰

On 11 March, 1923, the poem entitled 'Elegy for Mansfield' (Ai Man Shu Fei Er) appeared in a weekly magazine called *Effort* in Beijing.

Hiding behind a Chinese fan, Mansfield had arrived in China for the first time.

²⁵⁰ The allusions to Shelley, 'a poet who died on a voyage', and the Chinese legend of 'cuckoos crying tears of blood' in this poem reveals that Zhimo Xu is well-versed in both English and Chinese literature. Zhimo Xu, 'Elegy for Mansfield' in *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*, pp. 5-6.

Chapter 4

‘Hiding behind a foreign language’:

Eileen Chang’s Self-Translation and Masquerade

In previous chapters I have discussed Mansfield and Chang’s shared interest in assuming masks in daily life and literary work, and how Mansfield’s was introduced and translated to the Chinese-speaking world. One aspect yet to be explored in this thesis is the relationship between Eileen Chang’s self-translation and the use of masks. Chapter 4 discusses Chang’s penchant for rewriting existing works in Chinese and English by examining her still insufficiently recognised essays, written in English while she was still in Shanghai in the 1940s, and her English novel, *The Book of Change*,²⁵¹ which was written during the 1950s. This chapter contends that the mask of a foreigner/foreign language enables Chang, a bilingual fiction writer and essayist, to gain the emotional and spatial distance from which to reflect on Chinese culture and her personal life. Particularly important for this exploration are Ezra Pound’s view of translations as ‘elaborate masks’ and Gilles Deleuze’s idea of being a ‘foreigner’ in one’s own language.²⁵² Before proceeding to my analysis of Chang’s texts in the second and third sections of this chapter, I will discuss the title of this chapter ‘Hiding behind a Foreign Language’ with regard to the decision of other Chinese writers’ to write in English and with regard to Pound’s translation of classical Chinese poetry.

Ezra Pound’s ‘The River-Merchant’s Wife (A Letter)’

²⁵¹ Eileen Chang, *The Book of Change* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

²⁵² Gilles Deleuze, ‘He Stuttered’, in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 107-14.

The choice of this chapter title was inspired by a crucial question addressed to me a couple of times by classmates and faculty since I started my research degree in Creative and Critical writing at the University of Sussex: ‘Why don’t you write in Chinese?’ This question, I believe, touches upon a core issue related to my choice of adopting English for my writing, namely censorship. An immigrant or migrant writer chooses whether or not to resort to a language other than his or her mother tongue for different reasons. The Jewish poet Paul Celan, for instance, continued to write in his mother tongue, German, after he emigrated to France to escape the emerging of the communist regime in Romania. After the war, friends asked why wouldn’t he write in Romanian, his school and street language, or in French, which he’d lovingly mastered. ‘Only in the mother tongue can one speak one’s own truth’, Celan replied. ‘In a foreign tongue the poet lies’.²⁵³ Like Celan, Ha Jin (b. 1956), a contemporary Chinese novelist, emigrated from China to the United States due to the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989. He chose, however, *not* to continue to write in his mother tongue, Chinese. As he stated in his essay, ‘Exiled to English’ (2009), ‘if I wrote in Chinese, my audience would be in China and I would therefore have to publish there and be at the mercy of its censorship’.²⁵⁴ To preserve the integrity of his art, he has no choice but to write in a foreign language, English. Ha Jin’s case shows a distinctive sense of conflict with one’s own language, which I will refer to again in the coming pages.

Unlike Ha Jin, I am Chinese from Taiwan (Republic of China), but this does not mean that my writing is exempt from all forms of censorship. It was self-imposed censorship rather than a political one which caused me to have second thoughts about writing in Chinese. In her ‘Professions for Women’, Virginia Woolf describes her

²⁵³ Israel Chalfen, *Paul Celan: A Biography of His Youth*, trans. Maximilian Bleyleben (New York: Persea Books, 1991), p. 148.

²⁵⁴ Ha Jin, ‘Exile to English’, *The New York Times*, 30 May 2009
< <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/31/opinion/31hajin.html>>.

ongoing battle with ‘the Angel in the House’, a phantom who attempts to prevent Woolf from dealing freely and openly with ‘the truth about human relations, morality, sex’²⁵⁵. In my case, ‘the Angel in the House’ is my mother. Whenever I come to write I encounter my mother with the very first words. That is to say, my mother always slips into the webcam on my computer and whispers: ‘My dearest daughter, are you writing an autobiographical fiction based on your life story? Remember, you are a filial daughter, a brilliant student, and a woman of good breeding. All the people in your family are good people and we all love you very much. Be kind; be tender; be grateful. Above all, be modern yet modest’. Conversely, I feel only in a foreign tongue can I speak honestly about myself—a self that had been inhibited in my ‘mother’ tongue because of cultural constraints and taboos.

There is no doubt that writing in one’s second language is like sewing tapestry—it may take three hours only to finish a small floral pattern on the canvas. Nonetheless, I propose that a foreign language can serve as a mask which one can wear in order to overcome self-consciousness and therefore liberate one’s creative energy. As Cixous claims in ‘Writing Blind’, the ‘act of writing engenders the author’.²⁵⁶ Indeed, the author does not necessarily exist before writing. Writing in a foreign language enables one to get away from the notion of writing as self-expression and say things one would not otherwise have said.

More than one example can be found in *Fortress Besieged* (1947),²⁵⁷ a satire on overseas students in the 1930s. The title of this chapter ‘Hiding behind a Foreign Language’ is not a quotation from Chang’s work but is derived from this novel, which

²⁵⁵ See Virginia Woolf, ‘Professions for Women’, in *Collected Essays*, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth, 1966), pp. 285-6.

²⁵⁶ Cixous, ‘Writing Blind’, in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, p.189.

²⁵⁷ Zhongshu Qian, *Fortress Besieged*, trans. Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao (London: Penguin, 2006).

was written by her contemporary, the Chinese novelist and scholar, Zhongshu Qian. Although the novel was written in Chinese, the title was derived from a French proverb, ‘marriage is like a fortress besieged; those who are outside want to get in, and those who are inside want to get out’. Quoting a French proverb is a clever way to expose the hero Hung-chien Fang’s hapless marriage but maintain an aesthetic distance. Besides, foreign languages also enable the characters in the novel to express intimacies such as passion, secrets, and anger without being abashed. For instance, on a date with Fang, Wen-wan Su, a PhD student who was educated in Paris,

smiled triumphantly and said in a low voice, ‘*Embrasse-moi!*’ As soon as the words were out of her mouth she was at once abashed and surprised at her own courage to be foolish, but then she only dared order him [Fang] to kiss her while hiding behind a foreign language. Having no way to escape, he turned his head and kissed her.²⁵⁸

As ‘the mask of night’ allows Juliet to express her passion for Romeo instead of ‘dwell [ing] on form’ in Act II, Scene 2 of *Romeo and Juliet*,²⁵⁹ this passage demonstrates how the mask of a foreign language facilitates Su to take the initiative in her erotic encounter with Fang by ordering him in French to kiss her. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty says in his *Signs*, ‘There is a languagely [‘langagière’] meaning of language which effects the mediation of my yet unspeaking intention and words, and in such a way my spoken words surprise me myself and teach me my thought.’²⁶⁰ In the same vein, Su’s ‘spoken words’—‘*Embrasse-moi!*’—surprise her and lay bare her secret self which she would not have acknowledged in her mother tongue, Chinese. A few days later, Su received a phone call from Fang. He said, ‘ “Miss Su, let’s speak

²⁵⁸ Qian, *Fortress Besieged*, p. 108.

²⁵⁹ *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene 2, lines 85-8 in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, p. 1017: Juliet: ‘Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face, / Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek / For that which thou hast heard me speak tonight. / Fain would I dwell on form’.

²⁶⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard McCleary (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.88.

French. I—love someone—love another woman. Understand? Forgive me. I beg a thousand pardons.”²⁶¹ Ironically, only in fractured French could Fang summon the courage to reject Su. At the end of the novel, Fang and his wife, Jou-chia Sun, had a big quarrel over the in-laws, which led to their inevitable divorce:

Jou-chia didn't want her aunt coming over and blowing up the incident, but when she saw her husband beating a retreat like this, her hate and scorn won out over her hurt. She cried hoarsely, 'You're a *coward!* *Coward!* I don't want to see you ever again, you *coward!*'²⁶²

Calling her husband 'coward' in English (a foreign language) enables Jou-chia finally to speak out the unspoken truth. The characters in *Fortress Besieged* seem to propose a reworking of Paul Celan's statement as: 'Only in a foreign tongue can one speak one's own truth. . . In the mother tongue one lies'.

Another example can be found in the English writings of the Chinese poet, Huiyin Lin. As a contemporary of Mansfield and Zhimo Xu, Huiyin Lin first rose to fame with the modern Chinese poems she wrote in the 1920s. After marrying Sicheng Liang, a Chinese architectural historian in 1928, she became his helpmate in architectural research. Both Lin and Liang were children of distinguished families and were bilingual due to the good education they received in China as well as in America. They were no doubt an ideal match in the eyes of Chinese people.²⁶³

One day in the Library of the University of Sussex, I came across some letters written in English by Lin to her close American friend Wilma Fairbank, the wife of the famous sinologist John King Fairbank. In a 1936 letter to Wilma Fairbank, Lin

²⁶¹ Qian, p. 110.

²⁶² Qian, p. 386.

²⁶³ Information regarding Lin's schooling, career and marriage are derived from Wilma Fairbank, *Liang and Lin: Partners in Exploring China's Architectural Past* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

describes how duties of housework and motherhood distract her from engaging in literary work:

Whenever I am engaged in household chores, I feel what a waste of time it is, thinking that I am neglecting more interesting and more important people I do not know. [. . .] On the other hand, if I am writing something or seriously engaged in a similar activity, and housework is neglected, I do not feel at all uneasy. Frankly, I feel I am quite happy, thinking myself quite wise, being engaged in a more meaningful act. It is only when the children get sick or lose weight that I feel bad. Sometimes I chide myself in the middle of night, feeling that I am not fair to my children.²⁶⁴

In other letters to Fairbank, she would speak of how drained she felt by family complications in a packed household. While a vacation with in-laws in mid-1935 made her feel that she was ‘dispersed into bits and would no longer assemble them again into any sense of integrity’, later that same year her own mother’s resentment against her half-brother also left her ‘exhausted and worn’.²⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that these complaints were not disclosed to her Chinese acquaintances but to her American friend. If she had written to a Chinese member from her own community in her ‘mother’ tongue, she would not have felt at ease laying bare her frustration with the domestic world represented by her own mother and in-laws.

Now let us turn to another Chinese female letter writer, the river merchant’s wife in Pound’s ‘The River Merchant’s Wife (A Letter)’.²⁶⁶ On a snowy winter afternoon at the Cambridge University Library, I was delighted to find *To-Day* magazine, in which Ezra Pound published his essays ‘Chinese Poetry’²⁶⁷ and ‘Chinese Poetry-II’.²⁶⁸ In ‘Chinese Poetry-II’, Pound made an insightful statement about his poem ‘The River-

²⁶⁴ Quoted in Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 209.

²⁶⁵ See Lin’s letters to Wilma Fairbank in *Liang and Lin*, pp. 85-6, p. 92.

²⁶⁶ The poem of Pound’s title appears as ‘The River Merchant’s Wife: A Letter’ in Pound, *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 134. However, I use ‘The River Merchant’s Wife (A Letter)’, as it first appeared in *To-Day*, 15 (May 1918), pp. 94-5.

²⁶⁷ Ezra Pound, ‘Chinese Poetry’, in *To-Day*, 14 (April 1918), pp. 54-7.

²⁶⁸ Ezra Pound, ‘Chinese Poetry-II’, in *To-Day*, 15 (May 1918), pp. 93-5.

Merchant's Wife (A Letter)', which is based on a classical Chinese poem written by Li Po (also known as Rihaku) back in eighth-century China:

Perhaps the most interesting form of modern poetry is to be found in Browning's *Men and Women*. This kind of poem, which reaches its climax in his unreadable "Sordello," and is most popular in such poems as "Pictor Ignotus," or the "Epistle of Karshish," or "Cleon," has had a curious history in the west. You may say it begins in Ovid's *Heroides*, which purport to be letters written between Helen and Paris or by other distinguished persons of pseudo-history. . . . From Ovid to Browning this sort of poem was very much neglected. It is interesting to find, in eighth-century China, a poem which might have been slipped into Browning's work without causing any surprise save by its simplicity and naïve beauty.

THE RIVER MERCHANT'S WIFE

(A Letter)

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
 I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
 You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse.
 You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
 And we went on living in the village of Cho-kan;
 Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married you, My Lord,
 I never laughed, being bashful.
 Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
 Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

 At fifteen I stopped scowling,
 I desired my dust to be mingled with your dust
 Forever, and forever, and forever.

Why should I climb the look-out?

 At sixteen you departed,
 You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies.
 And you were gone for five months.

The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
 You dragged your feet, by the gate, when you were departing.
 Now the moss is grown there; the different mosses,
 Too deep to clear them away.
 The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
 The paired butterflies are already yellow with August,
 Over the grass in the West garden.
 They hurt me.
 I grow older.
 If you are coming down through the narrows of the river
 Kiang
 Please let me know beforehand
 And I will come out to meet you,
 As far as Cho-fu-Sa.²⁶⁹

Quoting the whole poem, Pound concludes his essay by saying, 'I can add nothing, and it would be an impertinence for me to thrust in remarks about the gracious simplicity and completeness of the poem.'²⁷⁰ If the poem Pound praises here refers to the original Chinese poem written by Li Po (Rihaku 701-762), however, his statement would prove to be paradoxical. After all, Pound has never dealt with Chinese characters in Li Po's poem directly, but worked from the notebook of Ernest Fenollosa, who knew no Chinese either but took dictation from the Japanese professors Mori and Ariga. If Fenollosa made changes to the original, Pound would do the same to Li Po's poem after reading Fenollosa's notes. For example, Li Po's Chinese name appears in its Japanese pronunciation, Rihaku, in Pound's version.²⁷¹ But Fenollosa's notebook shows that

²⁶⁹ Pound, 'Chinese Poetry-II', in *To-Day*, 15 (May 1918), pp. 93-5.

²⁷⁰ Pound, 'Chinese Poetry-II', p. 95.

²⁷¹ See Eliot Weinberger's introduction to *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*, ed.

Pound did make two creative additions to the original poem. First, two allusive references to classical Chinese literature in Li Po's poem were left out in the third stanza of Pound's version, while they were retained in Fenollosa's notes and the Sinologist David Hinton's translation of the same poem. This is how Fenollosa rendered lines 13 and 14 of the original poem by Li Po:

Jo son ho chu shin
 eternally preserve embrace pillar faith
 I always had in me the faith of holding to pillars (Line 13)

Ki jo bo fu dai
 why should climb look out husband terrace
 And why should I think of climbing the husband looking out terrace (Line 14)

Fenollosa, as Hugh Kenner puts it, 'jotted down line by line the Japanese sounds of the Chinese characters dictated by Mr. Shida, beneath them the meaning of the separate words, beneath these in turn the running sketch of a provincial English syntax'.²⁷² The note on line 13 indicates that the allusive reference to Wei Sheng, who died 'holding to pillars', was not omitted from Fenollosa's notebook, yet it was Pound who deliberately pushed the allusion aside and translated line 13 into the simpler yet more powerful 'Forever, and forever, and forever'.

David Hinton's translation of Li Po's poem, 'Ch'ang-Kan Village Song', is literally closest to the original one by Li Po. This is how Hinton rendered the two allusions, 'you always stood fast here for me, no towers vigils awaiting your return'.²⁷³ In the original poem, line 13 alludes to the story of Wei Sheng, who set up a date with a girl at a pillar under a bridge. The girl did not show up. He died holding

Eliot Weinberger, trans. William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Kenneth Rexroth, Gary Snyder and David Hinton (New York: New Directions, 2003), p. xvii-xxvii.

²⁷² Hugh Kenner, 'The Invention of China', in his *The Pound Era* (London: Pimlico, 1991), p. 207.

²⁷³ David Hinton, 'Ch'ang-kan Village Song', in *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*, p. 75.

tight to the pillar. Line 14 refers to the story of a woman waiting for the return of her husband on a so-called ‘wait-for-husband’ tower. One version has it that she was turned into a rock while waiting.²⁷⁴ Pound translates these, without annotations, into ‘Forever, and forever, and forever. / Why should I climb the look-out?’²⁷⁵

Pound contends that ‘there was never any question of translation, let alone literal translation. My job was to bring a dead man to life, to present a living figure.’²⁷⁶ Pound’s view of translation finds a kindred spirit in Philip E. Lewis’s notion of ‘abusive translation’ as a reaction to the strategy of repressing the discursive and poetic plurality of the source text, so that the translation becomes easily appropriable by a target culture. Despite its radical undertones, the term ‘abuse’ does not denote a desultory translational practice, but a ‘controlled textual disruption’ aspiring to counteract conventional perceptions of the usage, usefulness and usualness of translation. As Lewis states:

To accredit the use-values [of translation] is inevitably to opt for what domesticates or familiarizes a message at the expense of whatever might upset or force or abuse language and thought, might seek after the unthought or unthinkable in the unsaid or unsayable. On the other hand, the real possibility of translation—the translatability that emerges in the movement of difference as a fundamental property of languages—points to a risk to be assumed: that of the strong, forceful translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Quoted from Wai-lim Yip’s footnote added to his translation of Li Po’s ‘Chang gan xing’ into English, entitled ‘The Song of Ch’ang-kan’. See Wai-lim Yip, *Ezra Pound’s Cathay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 192.

²⁷⁵ Pound, ‘Chinese Poetry-II’, p. 94. These lines appear as ‘Forever and forever and forever. / Why should I climb the look out?’ in *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 134.

²⁷⁶ Quoted from Min Xie, ‘Pound as translator’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 208.

²⁷⁷ Philip E. Lewis, ‘The Measure of Translation Effects’, in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 40-1.

Pound has been limited by his ignorance of Chinese and by much of Fenollosa's crippled text. Nonetheless, I would consider Pound's 'abusive translation' of the original poem to be fruitful rather than merely idiosyncratic. The original poem's 'simplicity' and 'its naïve beauty' are enhanced by the repetition in three separate lines of the verb 'playing' in the first stanza to describe the childlike innocence of 'two small people'.²⁷⁸ Unlike Li Po and his faithful translator, David Hinton, who portrayed the river-merchant's wife as a reserved woman who resorts to classical allusions to communicate the intensity of a deep emotion without making such a feeling explicit by personal reference,²⁷⁹ Pound allowed the young wife to show her steadfast love to her husband directly in a childlike language and tone: 'forever and forever and forever. / Why should I climb the look out?' Like Miss Su in Zhongshu Qian's *Fortress Besieged*, it would seem that the river-merchant's wife only dares to express herself without social constraint 'while hiding behind a foreign language'.²⁸⁰ Reading Fenollosa's notes alongside Pound's 'The River-Merchant's Wife (A Letter)' confirms Hugh Kenner's suggestion that 'the way of a mind creating is more interesting than a record of inattention'.²⁸¹ As Derrida argues in *Acts of Literature*, 'what remains untranslatable is at bottom the only thing to translate. What must be translatable of that which is translatable can only be the untranslatable'.²⁸² Although the beautiful density of classical Chinese has been 'transformed'²⁸³ into a telegraphic, colloquial speech, the

²⁷⁸ Ezra Pound, 'Chinese Poetry-II', p. 94.

²⁷⁹ In her English essay, 'Still Alive', Eileen Chang writes about the quoting habit of the Chinese people: 'In contrast to people in the West, the Chinese never say anything direct when there is a suitable quotation at hand—which there always is. Nearly every imaginable situation has been enshrined in a cozy little phrase.' See 'Still Alive', in *The XXth Century* (June 1943): 433.

²⁸⁰ See note 258 above.

²⁸¹ Kenner, *The Pound Era*, p. 210.

²⁸² Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. and trans. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 257-8.

²⁸³ In *Positions*, a set of interviews, Derrida expresses his preference for the term 'transformation' over the term 'translation'. He sees translation as 'a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another'. See Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p. 20.

fifteen-year-old wife's 'untranslatable' youth and vivacity are subtly restored in Pound's English translation.

The second creative addition made by Pound to the original poem is the title. The original poem by Li Po was simply titled 'Chang gan xing' (Ch'ang-Kan Village Song), whereas the title of 'The River-Merchant's Wife (A Letter)' was invented by Ezra Pound. Pound's additional framing of 'The River-Merchant's Wife' as a letter, however, sheds new light on some aspects of Li Po's poem. First, if the poem is a letter, who writes the letter and to whom is it delivered? Since a merchant's wife would have been excluded from a literary education back in eighth-century China, the letter could hardly have been composed by her. Even if she happened to be literate because she was brought up by a male scholastic-official,²⁸⁴ 'the river of swirling eddies' strongly intimates the river-merchant's death as well as the failed delivery of her letter.

It is also noteworthy that in the original poem of Li Po, lines 27 and 28 show that the wife reminds the merchant to send her a letter before starting his journey back home, as retained in David Hinton's literal translation: 'Before you start back from out beyond / all those gorges, send a letter home.'²⁸⁵ The reference to a letter from the merchant was lost in Pound's version: 'If you are coming down through the narrows of the river / Kiang / Please let me know beforehand'.²⁸⁶ Pound's use of the conditional sentence and the omission of the merchant's mail delivery intimate the little hope of the merchant's return.

²⁸⁴ For further information on the literary life of women in traditional China, see 'Introduction', in *Women Writers in Traditional China*, ed. Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp.1-14.

²⁸⁵ Hinton, 'Ch'ang-kan Village Song', p. 76.

²⁸⁶ Pound, 'Chinese Poetry-II', p. 95. These lines appear as 'If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang, / Please let me know beforehand,' in *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 134.

How then did the wife cope with the perils of life? This is how David Hinton attempts to recreate some of the density of classical Chinese in his rendering of lines 23-26 in the original poem by Li Po: ‘Butterflies appear / in the west garden. They fly in pairs, / and it hurts. I sit heart-stricken / at the bloom of youth in my old face.’²⁸⁷ While these lines in Hinton’s ‘Ch’ang-Kan Village Song’ may appear a bit obscure, they become quite transparent, perhaps overly so, in William Carlos Williams’s paraphrase, entitled ‘Long Banister Lane’: ‘The butterflies, yellow with age in August, / Fluttered in pairs towards the western garden. / Looking at the scene, I felt a pang in my heart, / And I sat lamenting my fading youth.’²⁸⁸ I think lines 23-26 in Li Po’s poem were most aptly rendered in Pound’s version, which was ‘translucence’²⁸⁹ in the eyes of Eliot: ‘The paired butterflies are already yellow with August, / Over the grass in the west garden. / They hurt me. / I grow older.’²⁹⁰ The simple vocabulary and the understated emotion in Pound’s version slowly reveal the wife’s acquiescence in her fate, which brought us nearer to the aesthetics of Li Po, as shown in the other poem translated by Pound, ‘The Jewel Stair’s Grievance’. In the note on this poem, Pound adds that the poem was prized because the speaker ‘utters no direct reproach’.²⁹¹

At least as many love poems are as about unrequited love or loss of love as about being in love. If W. B. Yeats was happily in love with Maud Gonne, would he bother to write so many love poems?²⁹² Furthermore, I agree with what Eliot argues in his ‘The

²⁸⁷ Hinton, ‘Ch’ang-kan Village Song’, pp. 75-6.

²⁸⁸ William Carlos Williams, ‘Long Banister Lane’, in *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*, p. 74.

²⁸⁹ T. S. Eliot claims that Ezra Pound’s ‘translations seem to be—and that is the test of excellence—translucencies’. See T. S. Eliot, ‘Introduction: 1928’, in Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1928), pp. 14-5.

²⁹⁰ Pound, ‘Chinese Poetry-II’, pp. 94-5. These lines appear as ‘The paired butterflies are already yellow with August / Over the grass in the west garden; / They hurt me. I grow older.’ in *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 134.

²⁹¹ Ezra Pound, ‘The Jewel Stair’s Grievance’, in *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 136.

²⁹² For more detailed information about W. B. Yeats’ one-sided love for Maud Gonne, see ‘Introduction’, in *Yeats’s Poetry, Drama, and Prose*, ed. James Pethica (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), pp.

Three Voices of Poetry’ that ‘a good love poem, though it may be addressed to one person, is always meant to be overheard by other people. Surely, the proper language of love—that is, of communication to the beloved and no one else—is prose’.²⁹³ Love poems written in the form of a letter, to borrow Elizabeth Bishop’s phrase, ‘seem filled with the intent to be lost’.²⁹⁴ Some of them were even undelivered, such as the poem, ‘Unsent’,²⁹⁵ written by the other Chinese poet, Tu Mu (712-770). The gender difference between the male translator and the river merchant’s wife reminds the reader that this translation is not something originally written by the river merchant’s wife but, in Pound’s phrase, ‘an elaborate mask’²⁹⁶ he casts off for himself. An analogy can also be drawn between Pound’s translation and the Japanese Noh, ‘a drama of masks’, which he and Fenollosa both admire.²⁹⁷ In his in-depth study of the Japanese Noh Theatre, *Kissing the Mask: Beauty, Understatement and Femininity*, William T. Vollmann makes a beautiful and succinct contribution to the definition of the Noh, as illustrated in a traditional Noh play ‘Yuya’:

In a traditional Noh performance, the pallidly beautiful doll-mask of Yuya’s face and her orange brocade would suffice; she’s sexual and silent, receptively, untouchably divine, statue and girl; and when the news of her mother’s illness arrives, she kneels before her lord, imparting to us a feeling somehow sweet and cloudy, like the sake of the Edo period; and her mask bows exactly enough for its fixed lips to part in smiling grief; her face shines rapt over the letter of tidings which she sings in her deep man’s voice. This is Noh: a doll-mask face weeping invisible tears, half covering itself with a brawny old hand in order to telegraph its weeping.²⁹⁸

xi-xx.

²⁹³ T. S. Eliot, ‘The Three Voices of Poetry’, in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 90.

²⁹⁴ The phrase is derived from the first stanza of Elizabeth Bishop’s poem, ‘One Art’, in Bishop, *The Complete Poems: 1927-1979* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), p. 178: ‘The art of losing isn’t hard to master; / so many things seem filled with the intent / to be lost that their loss is no disaster.’

²⁹⁵ Tu Mu, ‘Unsent’, trans. David Hinton, in *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*, p.141.

²⁹⁶ See Chapter 1, note 50.

²⁹⁷ Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa, ‘Introduction’, in *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan* (New York: New Directions, 1959), p. 4.

²⁹⁸ Yuya is a Heike lord’s concubine who longs for permission to visit her dying mother. At first the lord refuses, but Yuya ‘writes a poem likening her mother to a cherry blossom, and wins her consent to depart’. William T. Vollmann, *Kissing the Mask: Beauty, Understatement and Femininity*, pp. 38-9.

An analogy can be drawn between Vollmann's remarks on the Noh performance of 'Yuya' and Pound's translation of Li Po's poem 'The River-Merchant's Wife (A Letter)'. As we saw in Chapter 1, Pound conceives 'translations' as 'elaborate masks'. According to the *OED*, 'elaborate' as an adjective means 'produced or accomplished by labour' (sense 2), or 'worked out in much detail; highly finished' (sense 3a). 'The River-Merchant's Wife (A Letter)' can be seen as a dramatic performance, in which Pound, the male translator, 'labours' to eschew himself by putting on the 'elaborate mask' of a sixteen-year old Chinese woman. Pound needs to be sufficiently the Chinese wife but not 'too much', since he has to impersonate the wife in English.²⁹⁹ Pound has to cover the mask of the Chinese wife with 'a brawny old hand' 'in order to telegraph its weeping': through the mask of the river merchant's wife, we hear 'her deep man's voice'—'forever and forever and forever'—echoes with the howl let out by King Lear to his daughter in Act V, Scene 3 of *King Lear*: 'O thou'lt come no more, / Never, never, never, never, never.'³⁰⁰ Like a Noh actor whose skill has been emphasised by the obvious difference between the actor and the elaborate mask he wears, Pound can only demonstrate his poetic craft by masquerading as the Chinese wife in English. No wonder T. S. Eliot calls Pound—in a foreign language—'*il miglior fabbro*' ('the better craftsman').³⁰¹

Eileen Chang's English Essays and Their Chinese Versions

²⁹⁹ Cixous writes in 'Unmasked', in *Stigmata: Escaping texts*, p. 182: '[...] the actor is always trembling a bit for fear of not being enough, being too much, not being quite exactly too clumsily the other. [...] "Am I sufficiently you and not too much you? Am I loving you right?" the actor asks the character'.

³⁰⁰ See *King Lear*, Act V, Scene 3, lines 306-7 in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, p. 669. In an analogous suggestion, K. K. Ruthven proposes that Pound's addition, 'Forever and forever and forever', was modelled on Shakespeare's line, 'To-morrow and to-morrow, and to-morrow' (*Macbeth*, Act V, Scene 5, line 19). See K. K. Ruthven, *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Personae (1926)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 205.

³⁰¹ T. S. Eliot dedicates *The Waste Land* to Ezra Pound: 'For Ezra Pound: *il miglior fabbro* ["the better craftsman" in Italian]'. See *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*, ed. and intro. Lawrence Rainey (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 76.

Before her Chinese writings gained popularity in the early 1940s, Chang wrote English-language essays on Chinese fashion and Peiking Opera for the Shanghai-based magazine *The XXth Century*. These essays were subsequently translated into Chinese by Chang, republished in a Chinese-language magazine in Shanghai, and finally published as a book of Chinese essays entitled *Written on Water* (*Liuyan*, 1945)³⁰². Even the title phrase of the collection speaks her habitual practice of writing and rewriting the same pieces in Chinese and English. In her later writing, Chang recalls that the title phrase, *liuyan* ('liu' means 'flowing', 'yan' means 'words' in Chinese), was derived from an English saying: 'written on water'.³⁰³ Chang did not tell us where exactly she found the title phrase, however, the words 'written on water' hark back to the broken lyre engraved on the headstone of the grave of John Keats in the Protestant Cemetery of Rome: 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.'³⁰⁴ As discussed in Chapter 1, Chang wrote the story 'The Golden Cangue' in 1943, translated it into English in the 1950s, and finally expanded it into the full-length English novel, *The Rouge of the North* (1967). In 2009, the manuscript of her English novel, *The Book of Change*, was discovered: its publication in 2010 drew many critics to re-evaluate Chang's bilingual writing. In her 'Betrayal, Impersonation, and Bilingualism: Eileen Chang's Self-Translation', Shuang Shen argues that we could look at Chang's act of 'self-translation' as an identity performance and 'impersonation':

The fact that Chang did not present herself as a translator in most cases, but intended for her texts, whether published in English or in Chinese, to be read as originals, suggests that there is an issue of 'masking' in her self-translation and bilingual practice.³⁰⁵

³⁰² *Liuyan* (1945) has been translated into English by Andrew Jones. See Chapter 1, note 80.

³⁰³ See Eileen Chang, *Nightmare in the Red Chamber* (Honglou mengyan) (Taipei: Huangguan, 1977). Quoted in Nicole Huang's introduction to *Written on Water*, p. xi.

³⁰⁴ The design was said to conform to Keats's own instruction before his premature death at age of twenty-five. See Andrew Motion, *Keats* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 564.

³⁰⁵ Shuang Shen, 'Betrayal, Impersonation, and Bilingualism: Eileen Chang's Self-Translation', in *Eileen Chang: Romancing Languages, Cultures and Genres*, ed. Kam Louie (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press), p. 98.

Elaborating on Shuang Shen's view of translation as 'impersonation', I would argue that Chang's self-translation and bilingual practice cannot be simplified as linguistic exercises. Rather, they resemble what I call masquerade. A distinction needs to be made between masquerade and impersonation. According to the *OED*, masquerade as a noun means 'the action or an act of masquerading; the assumption of a disguise or false character; a pretence' (n. sense 5a). Masquerade as a verb means 'to go about in disguise, as at a masquerade; to pass oneself off under a false character or as someone else; to have or assume the appearance of something else' (v. sense 1). To impersonate means to 'invest with a supposed personality' (v. sense 2a), 'to manifest or embody in one's own person' (v. sense 2b), 'to assume the person or character of; to play the part of' (v. sense 3). In Chapter 1 I have listed 'impersonation' as one of the figurative uses of the mask, however, I use 'masquerade' instead of what Shen calls 'impersonation' to discuss Chang's self-translation because masquerade connotes a stronger sense of disguise than impersonation does. Thinking of translation as masquerade reminds us that linguistic performance cannot be separated from identity performances in translingual and cross-border contexts. Looking at her English essays alongside her Chinese essays, we can see that Chang made conscious adjustments to her writing based on the different demands of English and Chinese readership.

In her English essay 'Chinese Life and Fashions', published in the January 1943 issue of *The XXth Century*,³⁰⁶ the opening sentence invites the outsider to enter the private sphere of the Chinese home and observe the Chinese ritual of clothes-sunning:

³⁰⁶ I am grateful to Lucy Oakley, who works at the University of Sussex Library for requesting a copy of 'Still Alive' and 'Chinese Life and Fashions' from Columbia University in the city of New York.

Come and see the Chinese family on the day when the clothes handed down for generations are given their annual sunning! The dust that has settled over the strife and strain of lives lived long ago is shaken out and set dancing in the yellow sun. If ever memory has a smell, it is the scent of camphor, sweet and cosy like remembered happiness, sweet and forlorn like forgotten sorrow.³⁰⁷

The balcony where the ritual of sunning clothes takes place can be considered an in-between space between public and private spheres, Chinese and non-Chinese worlds. Details such as dust dancing in the sun and the smell of camphor give this space a theatrical and exotic quality, making it alluring to the foreign spectator. The syntax of the imperative in the first sentence issues an invitation to the addressee, who is assumed to be a foreigner to the typical Chinese family described here. In a subsequent Chinese translation of this essay, entitled ‘A Chronicle of Changing Clothes’ (Gengyi ji, 1944), due to the change of audience, the first sentence is changed to a tone that sounds less inviting, more detached: ‘If all the clothing handed down for generations had never been sold to dealers in second hand goods, their annual sunning in June would be a brilliant and lively affair.’³⁰⁸

David Der-wei Wang argues that Chang’s ‘engagement with bilingual writing particularly intimates a polemic, treating English as no more alien a medium than Chinese for transmitting, or translating, her already alienated existence in the Chinese environment.’³⁰⁹ Indeed, looking at her English essays alongside the Chinese ones, we can see that Chang can speak more honestly about Chinese culture while hiding behind the mask of English—in the disguise of a foreigner. The ritual of sunning clothes finds an English equivalent in the English colloquial expression ‘airing dirty laundry’, the act

³⁰⁷ Chang, ‘Chinese Life and Fashions’, *The XXth Century* (January 1943): 54.

³⁰⁸ Chang, ‘A Chronicle of Changing Clothes’, in *Written on Water*, trans. Andrew F. Jones (New York: Columbia University, 2005), p. 65.

³⁰⁹ David Der-wei Wang, ‘Introduction’, in Eileen Chang, *The Fall of the Pagoda* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), p. vii.

of disclosing one's private life. Seen in this light, Chang's English essays such as 'Chinese Life and Fashions' (1943) and 'Still Alive' (1943), an introduction to Peking Opera, are intended to disclose some unspoken truth about Chinese culture that go beyond simply providing a sketch of Chinese life and custom from an objective perspective.

In 'Peking Opera through Foreign Eyes' (1943), her Chinese translation of the English language essay 'Still Alive', Chang defends her theory and practice of observing Chinese culture in the *disguise* of a foreigner by adding an entire paragraph.

Andrew F. Jones' translation runs as follows:

To see China through the eyes with which foreigners watch Peking Opera would be an exercise not entirely lacking in significance. Bamboo poles overhead from which children's cotton-padded split pants are hung out to dry; big glass jars on store counters full of 'ginseng-whisker' wine; the loudspeaker from one house broadcasting the sound of Mei Lanfang singing Peiking Opera; the wireless in another house hawking medicine for scabies; buying cooking wine under a shop sign that reads 'The Legacy of Li Po': China is all of these things—colorful, shocking, enigmatic, absurd. Many young people love China and yet have only a vague notion of what this thing called China might be. Unconditional love is admirable, but the danger is that sooner or later, the ideal will run up against reality, and the resultant rush of cold air will gradually extinguish one's ardour. We unfortunately live among our fellow Chinese. Unlike Chinese overseas, we cannot spend our lives safely and reverently gazing toward our exalted motherland at a comfortable remove. So why not make a careful study of it instead? Why not revisit its sights through the eyes of a foreigner watching Peking Opera? For it is only through surprise and wonderment that we may be able to find real understanding and steadfast, reliable love.³¹⁰

Chang's attempt to masquerade as a foreigner even in her Chinese essay anticipates what Deleuze suggests in his essay, 'He Stuttered':

³¹⁰ Chang, 'Peking Opera through Foreign Eyes', in *Written on Water*, p. 105.

A great writer is always like a foreigner in the language in which he expresses himself, even if this is his native tongue. At the limit, he draws his strength from a mute and unknown minority that belongs only to him. He is a foreigner in his own language: he does not mix another language with his own language, he carves out a nonpreexistent foreign language *within* his own language. He makes the language itself scream, stutter, stammer, or murmur.³¹¹

In the opening paragraph of ‘Peking Opera through Foreign Eyes’, the pronoun ‘we’ intimates that the author comes from the same community as the intended reader, who is Chinese as well. But Chang draws her strength, in Deleuze’s phrase, ‘from a mute and unknown minority that belongs only to’ her. She performs an exercise of revisiting Chinese life through the eyes of a foreigner watching Peking Opera. Chang ‘murmurs’ that adopting the perspective of a foreigner watching Peking Opera should produce not just a better understanding, but a ‘steadfast, reliable love’ for Chinese culture. However, the ironic undertone of ‘steadfast, reliable love’ becomes evident if we pay closer attention to what Chang says about Chinese life in her English essay, ‘Still Alive’ (1943). In the essay, Chang points out the loudness of Chinese Peking Opera, and the ‘highly unnatural’ nature of this theatrical form:

But it is this consistent overexpression which enables the one or two actors on the stage to expand and multiply themselves, so that the stage always look well peopled. The desirable crowded effect thus achieved is an important feature of Chinese drama and Chinese life.³¹²

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Chang is well aware of the dramatic nature of human life. She goes on to point out Chinese people’s tendency to spy on others’ private lives, as if watching Peking Opera. Under the subheading ‘The Crowd and Chinese Psychology’, Chang writes:

³¹¹ Deleuze, ‘He Stuttered’, pp. 109-10.

³¹² Chang, ‘Still Alive’, in *The XXth Century* (June 1943): 433.

Like French monarchs of old, the Chinese are born in a crowd and die in a crowd. There is no getting away from onlookers. A woman of the upper classes lives in nominal seclusion, but from the moment she rises in the morning the door of her bedroom is not supposed to be closed. In rigorous weather a cotton-padded curtain wards off the icy wind, but the door remains ajar, welcoming the inspection of all members of the household. A door closed in day time [*sic*] is considered scandalous. Even under the shelter of the night, an uninvited guest with any initiative at all can see everything behind the barred door by licking the paper pasted on the window and peering through the moistened spot.

Above all else, marriage and death are affairs of public concern. A man breathes his last under the watchful eyes of all members of the family, the near relatives, and the most lowly of the servants. It is not without reason that we find the Chinese tragedies bustling, noisy, showy. Grief in Peking Opera has bright, positive colorings.

The lack of privacy in China explains a certain coarseness in the Chinese temperament. There are no such things as ‘the lonely places of the soul.’ The most intimate feelings have to be defensively, satisfactorily explained for the benefit of the ever-present crowd. Whatever cannot be made public must perforce be guilty. The Chinese are forever astonished by the ridiculously secretive attitude foreigners take to entirely inconsequential things.³¹³

The Chinese version ‘Peking Opera through Foreign Eyes’ contains exactly the same passage as the English version except the subheading, ‘The Crowd and Chinese Psychology’. This subheading places emphasis on the connection between the loud performance of Peking Opera on the ‘well-peopled’ stage and the performances off stage (spying and being spied on). Comparing Chang’s English essay ‘Still Alive’ to its Chinese version, Shuang Shen contends that in the Chinese version ‘Peking Opera through Foreign Eye’,

Self-translation starts from the role-switching of the author from a supposedly ‘authentic’ Chinese informant addressing a foreign audience [in the English essay] to a Chinese person adopting the perspective of a foreigner while addressing a Chinese readership. In

³¹³ Chang, ‘Still Alive’, 433-4.

this process of role-switching, the Chinese person is delinked from Chinese culture, as is a foreigner from a foreign perspective.³¹⁴

I agree with Shen's argument that self-translation resembles role-switching, but my reading of this role-switching is quite different. I suggest that masquerading as a foreigner is closely bound up with 'hiding behind a foreign language'. In the English essay, Chang is not an '“authentic” Chinese informant addressing a foreign audience' as Shen puts it. Rather, only by writing in English and assuming the mask of a foreigner can Chang honestly disclose the dark side of Chinese culture: the prevalence of spying in everyday life only shows that there is no safe position hidden from other people's glances from which one can comfortably watch the Chinese performance. Without the mask of a foreign language, in the Chinese version, 'Peking Opera through Foreign Eyes', Chang is not 'the Chinese person [who] is delinked from Chinese culture' as Shen argues. Instead, Chang has to add an entirely new paragraph (as quoted above) in which she proposes that studying China as a foreigner allows us to 'love' China more, which proves to be ironic if we consider 'the lack of privacy' addressed in both English and Chinese essays. More clearly, 'steadfast, reliable love' for China is merely a mask which allows Chang to 'make a careful study of it' and then 'find real understanding'.

'From the Ashes' and *The Book of Change*

The previous section has dealt with Chang's English essays, which were subsequently translated into Chinese by the author herself. This section will explore Chang's bilingual practice by examining her English novel *The Book of Change*, which was based on her Chinese memoir, 'From the Ashes' (1944). This memoir not only provides

³¹⁴ Shuang Shen, 'Betrayal, Impersonation, and Bilingualism: Eileen Chang's Self-Translation', pp. 101-2.

a firsthand account of life in Hong Kong right after the Japanese invasion but also casts a unique view of the meaning of war and life under war. Under Chang's pen, the fall of Hong Kong did not bring about remarkable deeds of heroism or sacrifice so much as it revealed the selfishness and the cowardice of humanity, which corresponds to her view of writing, as she claims in her Chinese essay 'Writing of One's Own' (1944): 'I am incapable of writing the kind of work that people usually refer to as a "monument to an era" [...] And, in fact, all I really write about are some of the trivial things that happen between men and women. There is no war and no revolution in my works.'³¹⁵ The war and revolution did exist in her works; not as her main subjects, but as a background against which commoners maintain their everyday modes of life. Chang's view of writing about the Second World War echoes how Mansfield responds to the First World War. Referring to the theme of death caused by the war as, 'deserts of vast eternity' (in Andrew Marvell's celebrated phrase),³¹⁶ Mansfield explains her poetics of writing about death to Murry in a letter dated 16 November 1919:

I couldn't tell anybody *bang out* about those deserts. They are my secret. I might write about a boy eating strawberries or a woman combing her hair on a windy morning & that is the only way I can ever mention them. But they *must* be there.³¹⁷

Correspondingly, Mansfield's autobiographical story, 'An Indiscreet Journey' (1915), is about an English woman who is travelling to the French front line during the First World War to see her French lover (I, pp. 439-51). Echoing the juxtaposition of the erotic encounter ('Let us roll all out strength and all / Our sweetness up into one ball,') and the grave in Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress',³¹⁸ the story shows us the coincidental

³¹⁵ Chang, 'Writing of One's Own', in *Written on Water*, p. 18.

³¹⁶ 'But at my back I always hear / Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near; / And yonder all before us lie / Deserts of vast eternity'. From Andrew Marvell, 'To His Coy Mistress'. See note 6 on Mansfield's letter dated 16 November 1919 in *Letters* 3, p. 98.

³¹⁷ *Letters* 3, pp. 97-8.

³¹⁸ Andrew Marvell, 'To His Coy Mistress', in Thomas R. Arp and Greg Johnson's *Perrine's Sound and*

occurrence of a personal affair and an international affair. Both Chang and Mansfield attribute equal status to the mundane, ‘the trivial things that happen between men and women’ and the monumental, ‘deserts of vast eternity’. In ‘From the Ashes’, Chang describes herself as indifferent to the accidental deaths in the air raids and absent-minded on rescue missions; what concerns her most are food and cosmetics:

I remember how we scoured the streets in search for ice cream and lipstick after Hong Kong fell. We went into every store we saw to ask whether they had ice cream. [...] The streets were full of makeshift stalls selling rouge, western medicines, canned beef and mutton, stolen suits, cashmere sweaters, lace curtains, cut glass, whole bolts of woollens. We went to the city everyday to go shopping.³¹⁹

In the late 1950s, Chang revisits her war experience in Hong Kong in her English novel, *The Book of Change*. Almost all the events in ‘From the Ashes’ are adapted into this novel, and short episodes are even expanded to discrete, full-length chapters. By taking up the form of the novel, Chang presumably sought to release the dramatic power inherent in her autobiographical essay. However, *The Book of Change* may not seem as compelling as ‘From the Ashes’ because it was written in Chang’s second language. As Leo Lee points out, in the case of *The Book of Change*, ‘while the surface language is English, deep down she is still writing in Chinese, which at least in part controls and shapes her English style’. In this way, Lee contends, ‘her English is still occasionally awkward and reads like a translation’.³²⁰

Judging Chang’s English works by the standard of her achievement in Chinese works, however, is not the focus of this chapter. My primary concern is how writing in English helps Chang to revisit her personal war with her mother during the Second World War, which she could not divulge fully in her Chinese essays. In her Chinese

Sense: An Introduction to Poetry, the 11th edn (Boston: Thomas Wadsworth, 2005), pp. 86-7.

³¹⁹ Chang, ‘From the Ashes’, in *Written on Water*, p. 46.

³²⁰ See Leo Lee’s afterward to *Eileen Chang: Romancing Languages, Cultures and Genres*, p. 245.

essay, ‘Whispers’ (1944), Chang recalled her life as a girl growing up in a decaying aristocratic family, her tense relationship with her father and stepmother during her teenage years, and the ordeal of being locked up by her father in an empty room for months. Denied medication for ‘gastroenteritis’, Chang nearly died during her incarceration. She eventually escaped only because of the assistance given by her nanny.³²¹

Compared to her explicit exposé of her life in her father’s house, Chang provides a rather vague picture of her mother’s apartment in the same essay. Afterwards, she fled to her mother’s apartment only to find that it ‘was no longer full of tenderness’ due to her mother’s financial situation: ‘I could see that my mother had sacrificed quite a lot for me and that she doubted whether I was worth the sacrifice. I shared her doubts’.³²² In his famous essay ‘Autobiography as De-facement’ (1979), as I quoted in Chapter 3, Paul de Man uses the metaphor of autobiography as prosopoeia—as face- or figure-making—to unveil the fictionality of autobiography’s reference: autobiography is a created product instead of a reflection; it is a form of mask or persona— ‘the illusion of a reference’, ‘a correlation of the structure of the figure’, ‘something akin to fiction’.³²³ Accordingly, Chang seems to invent for her mother a mask of a sacrificial mother in ‘Whispers’.

Ironically, in her ‘fictional’ narrative in *The Book of Change*, Chang reveals for the first time her mother’s multi-faceted character. Composed of 22 chapters, *The Book of Change* takes up where ‘Whispers’ leaves off. It starts with Chang’s alter ego, Lute’s initiation into her mother, Dew’s apartment life in Shanghai, followed by her change of plan to study in Hong Kong instead of England, and ends with Lute’s journey back to

³²¹ Chang, ‘Whispers’, in *Written on Water*, p. 160.

³²² Chang, ‘Whispers’, p. 161.

³²³ Paul de Man, ‘Autobiography as De-facement’, in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, pp. 67-81.

her hometown, Shanghai. Whereas ‘From the Ashes’ concentrates on Chang’s experience of the war at its most intense, *The Book of Change* offers a prolonged narrative about her strained relationship with her mother against the backdrop of the Second World War. As Lute gradually adapts herself to her mother’s apartment, she becomes increasingly intrigued by her mother’s unorthodox life style: She overhears that her mother and aunt may have been in a lesbian relationship; her aunt goes to bed with her cousin (Chapters 1 and 2). But none of these secrets are more stunning than the episode regarding Lute’s scholarship. In Chapter 8, Lute is unexpectedly awarded a private scholarship from her history professor Mr. Blaisdell. She brings the good news and money to Dew, only to arouse the latter’s suspicion that ‘she [Lute] had given herself to her history teacher for eight hundred dollars’ (p. 104). Worse still, Lute later discovers that Dew gambled away all her scholarship money over a mah-jong game. This leads to an argument between the daughter and the mother. After that, Lute felt that she ‘no longer cared what her mother said or did’ (p. 100). Compared to the restrained depiction of her ambivalent relationship with her mother in the Chinese essay, ‘Whispers’, Chang’s bold portrait of her mother as a selfish gambler in her English novel, *The Book of Change*, shows that ‘leaving one’s mother tongue is a liberation’, as the bilingual Polish writer Eva Hoffman says about writers working in a foreign language:

They [writers who are writing in a foreign language] feel they can invent new personae in new words, or finally express their true personality—a self that had been inhibited in their first language because of cultural constraints or early inhibitions. [...] There are those who feel it is easier to say forbidden things in a language that does not brim with childhood memories and taboos.³²⁴

³²⁴ Eva Hoffmann, ‘P. S.’, in *Lives in Translation: Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity*, ed. by Isabelle de Courtivron (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 51.

For a Chinese writer like Chang, the taboo that prevents her from writing about her mother, is what Tze-lan Sang points out, ‘the traditional expectation of “making omissions for one’s kin”’—the Confucius precept that one should speak about one’s close kin—above all, one’s parents—only in a positive light, and avoid defaming or embarrassing them by writing about their wrongdoings or the ignoble aspects of their lives.’³²⁵ Writing in English helps Chang to overcome self-censorship which is bound up with the mother tongue and ‘cultural constraints’ of ‘making omissions for one’s kin’. This does not imply that Chang depicts her mother as the textbook example of the evil mother in her English novel, *The Book of Change*. Rather, her choice to revisit her relationship with her mother in English enables her to reveal the multiple personae of her mother, as seen in an episode in which Lute (the mask for Chang herself) is puzzled by a conversation between Dew and Coral (the masks for Chang’s mother and aunt respectively):

‘We Chinese don’t understand love,’ Dew said.

‘That’s why people say once you have loved a foreigner you never go back to a Chinese.’

‘Chinese men also don’t like a woman who’s gone round with foreigners.’

‘Sailors’ girl she’s called.’

‘A good thing I don’t want to get married again.’

‘Chinese don’t marry divorcees anyway.’

‘Yes, a virgin, that’s all they know. Like my slave girl Sunflower, not even pretty, how Pillar begged me for her. My Nankin³²⁶ cousin also asked for her. Really wicked, these people. As long as it’s a young girl.’

‘There are old hands who are said to prefer older women.’

‘That’s only with singsong girls, that’s different. Ordinarily there’s never a young girl with no taker. The French say young girls are insipid. A woman doesn’t really get to have personality until after thirty.’

³²⁵ Tze-lan Sang, ‘Romancing Rhetoricity and Historicity: The Representational Politics and Poetics of Little Reunion’, in *Eileen Chang: Romancing Languages, Cultures and Genres*, ed. Kam Louie (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 198.

³²⁶ Nankin refers to Nanjing.

After thirty, Lute repeatedly hazily to herself. What use was personality when life was over? She wasn't thinking of her mother who was an exception. But suddenly with this glimpse of a land of everlasting youth in France, as she looked at her mother leaning forward into the mirror over the wash basin Lute had for a moment a stifling feeling of the everyday world of China closing in all round, the more one wanted to get away. For the first time she had some idea of why her mother always spoke of being stranded here in her own country.

(p. 26)

The passage reveals that Chang's mother is not merely a sacrificial mother as depicted in her Chinese essay, 'Whisper' but also a victim of traditional marriage, and more importantly, a relatively modern woman who ventures to criticise the way in which Chinese men treat women ahead of her time. Furthermore, we can see that Chang has learned her strategy to observe China more clearly by adopting a foreigner's perspective from her mother, who also feels 'stranded' 'in her own country'. Her mother's 'leaning forward into the mirror' also implies that she is an actress struggling to act a part of a 'Chinese woman' in 'the everyday world of China'.

As I have sought to make clear in this chapter, masquerading as a foreigner enables Chang to gain the emotional and spatial distance from which to reflect on her war experience and conflictual relationship with her mother. Chang's habit of rewriting existing works in Chinese and English has not been warmly received by critics. This may be the conclusion if one defines creativity narrowly in terms of originality. Wyndham Lewis, for instance, sees Pound as 'a person without a trace of originality' because he surrenders his originality to 'all the people he has translated, interpreted, appreciated. . . . Ezra is a crowd'.³²⁷ But I have argued that bilingual practice and self-translation are ways to cultivate Chang's sense of foreignness even in her native tongue, which should be considered as a source of creativity instead of restraint. Echoing Deleuze's sense of being a foreigner in one's own language, Chang claims in her

³²⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), pp. 85-6.

Chinese essay, ‘Unpublished Manuscripts’ (1944): ‘It’s certainly a good thing to stop writing in Chinese for a while. Picking up a pen to write after three or five years, I may feel as though I’ve made some little progress—one never knew.’³²⁸ Likewise, Mansfield also perceives herself as a foreigner in English, as seen in her notebooks, which as Claire Davison-Pégon writes, ‘record the lure of foreignness, from some of the earliest recordings of Maori chants or a beginner’s German lesson to the final Russian vocabulary lists’.³²⁹ Mansfield’s interest in foreign languages no doubt contributed to the ‘indefinable all-pervasive freshness in her writing’,³³⁰ as C. K. Stead describes it. In light of these observations, the mask of a foreign language not only helps Chang to overcome self-censorship while writing about forbidden subjects, but also enriches and revitalises her use of Chinese language by defamiliarising it. This is what I attempt to demonstrate in my short stories in the creative component of my thesis. Hopefully I shall be able to write again in Chinese after finishing a PhD thesis in English.

³²⁸ Chang, ‘Unpublished Manuscripts’, in *Written on Water*, p. 128.

³²⁹ I thank Claire Davison-Pégon for allowing me to quote from her paper, “‘Liaisons continentales’”: Katherine Mansfield, S. S. Koteliansky and the Art of Modernist Translation’, which was presented at the Katherine Mansfield and Continental Europe Conference held at the Faculty of Arts and Letters, Catholic University in Ružomberok, Slovakia, on 29 June 2012.

³³⁰ Stead, ‘Introduction’, p. 19.

Chapter 5

Creative Component

A Cup of Camomile Tea,* or an Erotomaniac's Journal*

I

While you were drinking in the coolness of the evening breeze on Morningside Heights in X City, you could not have known that in a valley in Y City, both professors and students were sweltering in the afternoon as the temperature hit 37 °C.

The date of the Chinese Literature and Art Conference in London was looming. I had revised my paper several times. Points two and three had been combined, and some inappropriate words in the middle section had been changed. Had the paper and the conference been my only concerns, I would have been well-prepared. . . .

On the contrary, I was completely distraught. I felt very strongly that the most urgent task at hand was to help myself through the emotional crisis brought on by a meeting held only a few days ago.

Waiting for me in her office was my advisor, Professor Rose Yu-Snow. Though my paper for the conference was based on my master's thesis, which was approved by you, I needed a second reader. Not only because this was my first presentation at an international conference but more importantly, out of a suspicion that your acclaim stemmed partly from your favouritism.

The usual greetings were exchanged. I passed her the draft of my paper. 'Have you finished? Good! Let me go over it.' She pronounced the 'good' with a touch of irony and then plunged into reading it. I felt sure I saw something I had never before seen in

her. She hissed intermittently as she penned her comments in the margins. It seemed that my presence or the paper had irritated her, but I was not sure how. Was my writing too incoherent to follow? Or was it just because of the heat? The air conditioning in her office was out of order.

At length she looked up from the work. She seemed to have dropped back into her usual self. 'I just circled some grammatical errors and impropriety in word usage. Just read it over and revise. You have been well-prepared already. This is just an oral presentation. Nothing to worry about.' I should have been relieved by her first words of assurance. But I was distracted by a faint shadow lingering in her clear eyes. Or, perhaps I was imagining it.

'This is one thing. There is another thing to be discussed.' I thought she was going to say something about another paper I had shown her almost a year ago. I had looked forward to hearing comments from her for so long but dared not push her too often.

I have to admit now that what I had anticipated more were words from you. But I had never imagined that they would reach me in the most roundabout of ways.

'Professor Yang called me yesterday. He told me that you have sent him many letters over the past year. He felt embarrassed and confused while reading those letters. He attributed it to your misconception of his kindness...' She was trying to keep her tone light.

My chest tightened, and I was at a loss for a reply. A moment or two later I began to search through all the information I had hoarded, trying to decide what to hide and what to reveal. But I was not yet composed enough to think coherently. Then I blurted out: 'I was writing to him to tell him that there was a rumour spreading among his students that he was in love with me. . .'

‘For those graduate students,’ she cut in, ‘gossiping is a good way to dispel boredom and pressure when they have nothing else to do besides research. After you left, your old classmates must have already put it out of their minds. What really matters is how you feel about this.’ She paused, and then plunged right in: ‘Do you love him?’

Do you love him? ‘This is so unfair,’ I muttered. ‘Why don’t you ask him whether he loves me?’ I had not thought I could ever be so defensive in her presence.

Of course, she was too sophisticated to be taken aback by this. Instead, she forced a smile and performed the mission you had handed over to her: ‘You are not the first student of Professor Yang to form a romantic attachment to him. Patrick is a true gentleman and an esteemed scholar. He respects the professor-student relationship more than anyone does. But his reputation has never been tainted in this regard. He has devoted his time to you out of nothing more than his pedagogical duty. The last thing he wants is to see a brilliant student like you tread the same path as other students have done. We hope you can put this behind you and continue to perform well in your studies, as you have always done. All right?’

I sat numbly, listening with vacant eyes still focused on her desk. In that moment I regressed from my previous toughness to a helpless little girl. Suddenly, all the feelings drained out of me. I let the tears well up and overflow, running slowly downward.

‘What have you done to me?’ I cried out to you beneath my silence.

Struck by my response, she softened toward me, taking out some yellow table napkins from a brown paper bag. As I tried to wipe away my tears, my skin sensed the roughness of the material. After a long pause, she continued carefully: ‘I know how you feel. You must have gone through a very difficult time as an overseas student without trusted people to confide in.’ She averted her eyes from me, as if staring into a remote

past. ‘Without doubt, Patrick is a good-looking man with rare talent . . .’ She had switched to a soothing tone of voice, almost tender.

I burst into laughter. For a brief moment, I was so amused by the girlish longing that suddenly lit up her face that I almost forgot how depressed I was. Brushing aside my unseemly reaction, she went on, ‘All in all, he has never been hesitant in devoting his time to his students. That you are drawn to him is not surprising. But an attempt to develop a relationship of a private nature with your mentor is strongly discouraged.’ Despite her gentleness, I was groping for a word, to clear the stifling air that was between us.

There was another silence before she ventured: ‘Did he say anything inappropriate to you? Or, did he touch you improperly?’ What she really wanted to know was: ‘Did he have sex with you?’

Was this the only thing that mattered to onlookers? Is love not love if it does not involve physical intimacy? I felt like retorting: ‘If you are suspicious of him, then what you have said to me about him is totally unconvincing.’ Or I could have dropped the subject by saying: ‘I have a right to refuse to answer your question. If you consider my writing letters to Professor Yang to be an invasion of his privacy, now you are probing into my secrets too.’ But these are nothing but futile hindsight.

Held back by reluctance to share with her the few treasured moments that we had together, I answered emotionlessly with professional phrases borrowed from the university’s sexual harassment policy: ‘He has made sexually explicit comments more than once in class, regardless of their relevance to course materials.’

‘Really? Did he show his passion for you in class?’ She could not disguise the doubt implicit in her voice and raised eyebrows. Her Patrick didn’t seem the type. Either that, or she didn’t want to believe it.

‘Not exactly,’ I replied unsteadily, ‘but I am sure that most of my classmates felt the current running between Professor A and me. It was to me that he improvised those covert intimacies in public. I will never forget those gleeful titters and sideways glances they gave.’ My voice was shaking as if I were suddenly back in that intimidating atmosphere in class.

‘Has he ever directly conveyed his affection to you in private? If not, what you are talking about is nothing but your own interpretation. You must be over-sensitive,’ she retorted with sudden firmness, and then added: ‘I have known Patrick since childhood. I know perfectly well how he will behave when he finds someone adorable. He is not a man who will sacrifice personal love under the pressure of public opinion, as other people do in Chinese society. This is America.’ In her voice there was a slight hint of triumph. A sense of loss overtook me, for the years of your past in which I was not able to participate. I had arrived twenty years too late.

The ring of her phone interjected. It was the Dean of the School of Humanities. She talked with a light and pleasant voice. It seemed that she was relieved to find an official excuse to withdraw from our conversation for a moment.

But I can never forget the enigmatic smile on her face as she talked to me. Without warning, an awful thought popped into my head: ‘What did she really mean by those words? Did she consider me to be an erotomaniac?’* My apprehension turned to shame at the thought.

Putting down the telephone, she asked me if I had other questions to discuss. I restrained my impulse to tell her what was on my mind, and deliberately steered the conversation away from the personal to the subject of my paper. Performing well at the upcoming conference was the only thing that could rebuild my self-esteem.

I pointed to the middle section of page two, where I had quoted Teresa de Lauretis. ‘Why did you mark this?’ I asked, more sharply than I had intended.

‘“The discourse of theory, whatever its ideological bent, constitutes a form of violence in its own right.” Is this by Teresa de Lau-re-ti-s?’ she pronounced the critic’s name awkwardly. ‘I have never read Teresa de Lauretis’ works,’ she went on, ‘but your application of her theory to analyse the text doesn’t make sense to me. You suggest that violence is revealed in Ying-chen Chen’s “Mountain Path” in the sense that the narrative is used to justify the author’s ideology. Do you mean that every word is violence?’ I stopped arguing with her. I could have continued, elaborating my point more clearly, but I felt, with each word that passed between us that day, that we had pricked each other, as if we were fencing opponents.

Before I could find a more precise word, she had already stood up, a gesture which ended our discussion: ‘Well, I’m sorry I can’t carry on our conversation. I have to go home to work on my own paper for that conference.’ Then she muttered, trying to keep her tone casual, ‘It is unbearable to stay in a room without air conditioning on such a hot day! Sorry for keeping you here for so long.’

She walked me to the door, ending with a gentle reminder: ‘See you in London. Don’t go out on Friday night by yourself. Drunken people lingering on the streets will get you into trouble. Take care.’ I could barely voice even a courteous ‘thank you.’ I must still not have recovered from the initial shock when your name was mentioned.

I wandered back toward the parking lot in a daze, trying to deal with all of the thoughts that crowded into my head. I felt sure that something more obscure, more frightening lurked behind her thoughtful manner and words of understanding. I had never been afraid to follow a thought down its winding path, but I was exceedingly afraid at that moment.

I had a dull feeling close to having undergone a car accident. More unbearable than the physical damage to car or driver were those tedious procedures which needed to be completed afterwards: the bureaucracy of the car insurance company, a bad record at the Department of Motor Vehicles, disputes over responsibility. . .

I dreaded every moment ahead of me. More upsetting than your denial of love was my future relationship with Professor Snow. How could we rebuild the mutual trust which that single conversation this afternoon had wiped out?

On reaching my car, I was so overtaken with a sense of the irrevocable that I sat slumped at the wheel, unable to move.

II

I flew to London earlier than necessary. Otherwise, the thoughts of you would have kept me trapped at the bottom of this stifling valley.

Wherever I went, however, your memory haunted me as surely as the heat wave engulfed every corner of London.

On 28th July, the city's famous London Eye was closed to passengers as temperatures inside the capsules rose to nearly 32 °C.

On 29th July, while staff at London Zoo were giving ice lollies with rosemary to the tigers to help cool them down, I tried to cool down myself by cruising along the River Thames.

As the sightseeing cruise left Westminster Pier and turned riverward, a breeze stirred around me. The fumes of sultriness still hung oppressively over central London, but ahead lay a fresh world of ruffled waters. Isolated from sky, earth, beginning, and end, for a brief moment, I almost felt the entire world receding. There was no love in the time of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. There was no sentimental education to be received while hundreds of thousands of people had taken to the streets of London to voice their opposition to military action against Iraq.

The serene moment passed as steam in air. The relentless hilarity in the voices of my fellow-passengers made my gloomy silence all the more noticeable.

The mercury was still rising, according to weather officials.

Without warning, the thought of you suddenly flooded back. You had betrayed me in the most intolerable way by disclosing my deepest secrets to a third party. You had given me up for reasons unrelated to what you had told Rose Snow. You had manoeuvred me into a box. You had . . . ‘Did I still love or did I only regret love?’ I murmured to myself, as Maurice Bendrix did in Graham Greene’s *The End of the Affair*.

In Britain, the heat wave had claimed the lives of two teenage boys in separate drowning incidents.

There was a titter. Imagining they were gloating over my discomfiture, I averted my face, with blank eyes still on the river. ‘Dear Thames,’ I called to the river, discovering that the name is pronounced with a sound which approximates a sigh.

Why should I not put an end to it all? I asked myself, for the first time re-enacting the episode in literature which I once criticized as cliché. ‘It would only take a single movement.’ The weight of my head pulled me forward, and

The calm,
Cool face of the river
Asked me for a kiss.

My momentary death wish, however, had been replaced by the excited recognition of suddenly inhabiting a living poem. Ironically, I was saved by the poem, ‘Suicide’s Note’ by Langston Hughes. No matter how thoroughly and broadly you and Rose have studied, you and she could never embody a text as deeply as I had done. There exists an insurmountable wall between a critic and a text. But I broke down the wall with all my heart.

Looking up, I felt a surge of desolate victory.

III

What I am working on is not a story from an insider’s view, as David Lodge has done so precisely in *Small World*. Had I chosen an omniscient narrator, a veteran of conferences as you are would have been my best choice. If I send you a list of paper topics anonymously, you can easily identify their authors based on your thorough knowledge of the profession and unusual sensibility to styles differentiated by political orientation or aesthetic preferences. If I pass you titbits of gossip, in your eyes they would instantly turn into worn-out tales. Is it possible to find someone who knows the currents of tension running between those scholar-critics better than you do?

Gifts and Giving in Qing Art . . . A Show of Emotion: Responses to the Millennium in Three Chinese Theatre Productions . . . Does Mother Know Best? Contemporary Chinese Cinema's Critique of Motherhood . . . Pretexts of Authority: Self-justification in the Chinese Authorial Preface . . . Modernity in Flower: Private Gardens in Republican Shanghai . . . The Reception of Nobel Literature Laureates in Contemporary China . . .

All the papers presented and the following discussions blurred together like a mixture of technical jargon and courteous hand clapping. Only a few moments, that took place during coffee and lunch breaks, stood out in my recollection, and a chaos of feeling ensued.

I could imagine your official reaction to what I had confessed to you. First of all, you would express your concern and misgiving over what you consider to be my inclination toward frivolity and cynicism, which will thwart me from making further career progress. More than that, you would emphasise again the significance of presenting oneself and networking at conferences, which you see as a stepping stone in a graduate student's future career. But don't forget that you are the same person who once told me, frankly, that you were sickened by the ritualism of conferences. If it took you twenty years to become disillusioned, it took me only two days to cast a deep gaze into the nadir of human life. If you want to know the real reason behind this difference, please do pay attention to what I am going to say.

Temperatures reached 36°C around noon on 1st August. By that time I was rehearsing my paper in Russell Square Gardens, a shady retreat on a hot day. Within one hour, the conference was going to open at the nearby Centre for East Asian Studies.

I didn't feel nervous. On the contrary, I felt quite sure of myself.* Without doubt I could attribute my composure or pride neither to my status nor reputation in the field. Compared to those well-established big names or rising stars on the conference list, I was just a three-year-old child. Rather, it was due to the fighting spirit inspired by an old saying: The best way to revenge is to perform well before your enemy.

I had no doubt that my first encounter with Rose Yu-Snow, since our last discussion, would be awkward. But I thought I would be safe due to the compulsory sociability of such an occasion. Indeed, when our eyes first met at the entrance to the lecture-room, she greeted me with her customary 'How have you been? Good?' Before I could reply she was already surrounded by members of the host centre and other conferees. The group soon occupied the platform. Unnoticed, I took a seat in the back row.

I cast a quick glance at Rose as she was talking cheerfully with Professor Alan Cooker, the Chair of the conference that year. No matter how many doubts about her had hatched in my mind since that afternoon, I had no doubt that she was the most beautiful female scholar in the field. She wore a white embroidered blouse and a green silk skirt, which well displayed her creamy complexion and delicate figure characteristic of women from southern China. She was forty-eight that year, but many people would take her for under forty.

At two o'clock, Professor Rose Yu-Snow began her presentation in an unhurried manner, employing impeccable English. Whether these conferees agreed with her arguments or not, eventually they would be convinced by the intellectual aura which emanated spontaneously from her large eyes. The speech ended with enthusiastic applause from the audience. At the sight a weird thought crossed my mind: if I had

never formed a close relationship with her, I would have applauded with my whole heart. And her image would have remained ideal forever, as if frozen into a profile portrait. I wondered if she once had the same feelings as I did.

During the coffee break, I took a few steps toward her seat, and she turned and asked me casually: 'Have you had a chance to do some shopping?'

'Not yet, I just bought some postcards at the museum gift shop. I will spend some time in Oxford Street afterwards.' I answered simply.

'My friend recommended I should buy some fine tea, from Ahmad of London, Williamson & Magor, or Jacksons of Piccadilly. Have you heard of them?' I shook my head.

'And Brodies of Edinburgh, Barry's, or Taylors of Harrogate tea?' I shook my head again, with an embarrassed smile this time. These names were all empty signifiers to me. I had heard only phrases such as English Breakfast and Earl Grey.

'Where have you been in the past two weeks?'

'I have visited London's star sights including the National Gallery, British Museum, Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Kensington Gardens, and Tate Britain. I also took a boat from Westminster Pier to the Tower Millennium Pier. But I haven't gone inside the legendary Tower of London yet. I will try to pay a visit after the conference.'

My reply could not have been more mechanical, but she replied with a startled face, 'All by yourself?' At this point I was on the verge of exclaiming: 'Yes! Does it strike you as dangerous? Although I was heartbroken, I didn't lose my capacity for travelling

alone.’ Instead, I just nodded and changed the topic, ‘I didn’t see Alex this afternoon. What is his schedule today?’ I was never good at making small talk.

‘Alex is at the British Museum right now.’

‘How wonderful he is!’ I marvelled sincerely at her son’s thirst for knowledge.

‘Oh? Do you really think so? You have already visited numerous museums in London, haven’t you?’ she said in a low-pitched voice.

‘Hi, Rose!’ Professor Hermann Klein from the University of Heidelberg cut in. He bent forward to read my name badge. ‘Miss Chang. . . I didn’t know you guys came from the same university. Is Professor Snow your supervisor? Good for you!’ These words tugged at something in my mind, which was reflected in the meaningful glance that Rose darted at me.

‘Excuse me. Rose, do you have a second? I have something to discuss with you . . .’ said Hermann Klein politely.

I returned to my original seat, relieved. Neither of us mentioned your name during the remainder of the day. Nonetheless, the stream of memories flowed uneasily beneath our day to day conversation. The crisis was over for today. But what about tomorrow?

The clock struck 10:30am on 2nd August. ‘This is Miss Jade Chang, a PhD student under my tutelage.’ Professor Rose Yu-Snow introduced me in a loving voice, as if she was gratified to have me as her pupil.

I wore the purple silk stockings, to which your eyes once strayed as you talked to me in your office. An illusion of speaking to you alone made me feel confident.

I delivered my paper in a tone of devotion:

‘Ying-chen Chen began his work in 1959. As a leftist and a talented writer, he is still going strong in both ideological and literary forums in Taiwan. As for the main topic of my paper, the violence of female representation, it has two basic meanings, in relation to the heroines in Ying-chen Chen’s two short stories, “My Kid Brother, Kang-Hsiung” (“Wo de di di Kang-hsiung”, 1960) and “Mountain Path” (“Shan lu”, 1983). You will find brief synopses of both stories on the handout. First, it indicates how these female characters are represented by Ying-chen Chen. And more particularly, how violence is committed through the representation itself. Secondly, by reading closely these narratives which depict the subtle transformations of heroines, I will reveal how these heroines’s voices, transmitted through the text itself, produce semantic overtones that are not under the control of the author himself.

I would like to begin today by using the story “My Kid Brother, Kang-hsiung” to exemplify what I mean by the violence of female representation. I do so because such violence appears there in its most inhibited and nearly invisible form—that which is exercised through the interior monologue of the heroine, Kang-hsiung’s sister, as opposed to that which is out there and visible in the world, such as Kang-hsiung’s suicide. It is noteworthy that the violence committed through Kang-hsiung’s suicide was inflicted not only upon himself but also, and even more severely, upon his living relatives. Indeed, I would suggest that what really matters in this story, rather than the suicide of her brother, is the sister’s futile attempt to exorcise the heritage of the past, which violently haunts her deeply within. Thus, the chief question I will try to answer here is: how can the descriptive power possessed by the female narrator constitute a mode of violence in its own right? Let us read an episode from the story that I have included in the handout:

Just four months after Kang-hsiung's death I went to my wedding. . . . The whole affair gave me a feeling of defiant joy. But of course this joy was accompanied by a deep mourning—grief at the loss of girlhood, but also a sad adieu to school of social thought which I would never clearly understand. My last act of resistance, however, invigorated me with the faint excitement of revolution. . . .

I feel that the narrator's ability to articulate what she feels is able to drive her brother, superior to her in knowledge, into useless subjection. Soon after her brother's suicide she saw the disillusionment of Kang-hsiung, the idealistic reformer who had never seen his ideas realized. By contrast, she is able to guarantee herself a secure future through her "feminine beauty" which attracts a rich man, whom she then marries. I would like to suggest that her seemingly conventional marriage actually constitutes a reactionary form of behaviour, a way of competing with the violence implicit in those social thoughts in which her brother believes. I would even go further and assert that she is the only one here capable of being empowered through negative experiences.

In addition, we can see how the sister's marriage serves as a way of asserting negatively her lingering belief in past values and ideas. If that is true, then her marriage is better seen as a reaction, rather than as a real revolution negating all of her past attitudes. The point I wish to stress, however, is that there is no less violence and fury in the sister's seemingly conservative reaction to her brother's suicide than there is in the more overt sorts of revolution. Put differently, reaction is a no less potent form of violence than revolution.

Deriving a definition of violence from "My Kid Brother, Kang-hsiung" is a step I have taken to prepare myself to examine how the violence of representation is exercised in a more profound way in Chen's other short story, "Mountain Path". I would like to

begin here by reminding you of some words of Teresa de Lauretis: “the discourse of theory, whatever its ideological bent, constitutes a form of violence in its own right”.* Keeping that insight in mind, I would like to call your attention to the fact that, in “Mountain Path”, violence is revealed on three levels. First, and most visibly, there is the heroine’s decisive action in joining the revolution. Second, we have the ideology advanced by the author through the story. And lastly there is the narrative itself, too often neglected but actually the most powerful of the three, since it is used to justify and rationalize both the heroine’s decision and the author’s ideology.

Let us now discover how violence is gendered and operated on the heroine of “Mountain Path”, Ch’ien-hui T’sai. Essentially this is done through the author’s figuring her as a communist heroine, within the discourse of a revolutionary sublime. The really intriguing issue I will explore, however, is the conflict between the heroine’s own voice, transmitted through the text itself, and the dominant discourse in which she is figured. Let us read an episode from “Mountain Path” included in the handout:

I convinced myself to go to Kuo-kun [Li]’s home and to give all I could of my life and my physical strength. I would honour the man who courageously destroyed himself for the welfare of struggling workers by sacrificing myself. Whenever I bathed and saw my body, once as young and fresh as a flower, wither day by day from the heavy manual labour. . . .

We can tell from this paragraph that Chen has infused T’sai’s uncommon sacrifice with that quality known as the sublime. And I also would suggest that the battle T’sai fights against her feminine traits, in order to emulate those communist heroes persecuted during the 1950s, is perfectly in keeping with some words of Ban Wang, in which he addresses the intertwined themes of gender and the sublime. He says, “The grandiose image of the Communist hero relies on an unceasing masculinisation of woman through political sublimation.” This quotation leads us directly to the next question: What is the

real cause behind T'sai's all-consuming devotion to communist revolution: a clear identification with Communism, or rather a personal wish to demonstrate her love for Kuo-kun Li? We can get at least close to an answer, I believe, when we read carefully the dialogue that took place thirty years earlier, on the title's mountain path, between T'sai and the two male characters. I would just like to highlight one line in Tsai's speech, since I think it is central to the answer we seek: "When this heart [Tsai's heart] thinks back about the young me on that mountain path, it understands all too clearly the suffering of a girl in love." This sentence makes it clear that the most prominent feature of T'sai's engagement in revolutionary activities is her intensely emotive orientation. I would even suggest that what we are seeing here is reminiscent of the formula that emerged out of the leftist literature of the thirties: "revolution plus love". The point is that love can be considered the inner, emotional symbol for an eternal, social revolution. In "Mountain Path," we can see how the revolution forcibly elucidates the true object of desire among the lovers: revolution. On T'sai's part, her goal is to purify and transform her affection into dynamic actions that will propel the revolution.

I would suggest, however, that this is a young woman who has been violently pushed into the Marxist symbolic order, a place where the personal spheres of femininity have been almost entirely suppressed. This means that Tsai's pains and sorrows—indeed, her whole affective range—are not allowed to remain what they were. Rather, they must be sublimated into the higher goals of revolution.

For Roland Barthes, a text is able to continually produce meaning independent of its association with an author's intention. This means that, we readers are able to slyly elude the dominant discourse of the revolutionary sublime in the story and have our own responses to T'sai's voice, independently of Ying-chen Chen. I myself can't help but feel, despite Chen's attempt to enshrine T'sai within a leftist bible, that there is a

more real Ch'ien-hui T'sai on the other side of the author's description, ready to burst forth in words. She finds herself being standardized within that discourse of the sublime which insists on transforming her from a girl suffering from love into a communist heroine. Indeed, when I listen again to Tsai's words, "the sufferings of a young girl in love on that mountain path", I feel I must ask: can't affection be allowed to exist just for its own sake, instead of playing the role of either obstacle or impetus to revolution?

I witness a battle taking place in "Mountain Path" between the heroine's own voice and the author's ideology, a battle in which the two strive to grasp *the right to utterance*. In fact, T'sai's voice is able to disclose to us these inhibited memories and affections, ones that have almost been repressed by the dominant discourse the author gives to his story. The fact just tells us that this is a great literary text, one that resonates with profound semantic overtones which even Ying-chen Chen himself cannot control.

I would like to raise, in closing, one last question: How can we account for the fact that, in Ying-chen Chen's narratives, women function as a more apt vehicle to register the dialectics of violence than men do? Perhaps we can ponder that question without being sure of an answer. What I observe here is that, the heroines of these two stories are far richer characters than their comparatively more monotonous male counterparts. Indeed, these male characters are figured as being either extremely sublime, like Kuo-kun Li, or as absolutely nihilistic, like Kang-hsiung. I believe, Kang-hsiung's sister and Ch'ien-hui T'sai respond to the same historical stimuli the male characters are exposed to, but respond to them in a far more profound way: They show us ambiguous affection, genuine vacillation, and, ultimately, subtle transformations.'

In spite of my plain looks, the unclear pronunciation of ‘th’ and ‘m’ sounds, and the clumsiness with which I answered the questions, I want you to know, Patrick, that the paper evolved directly from the first Morningside Heights days and it owed you just about everything in every regard.

The morning session ended after Rose kindly answered, on my behalf, a sharp question raised by a Marxist from Duke University. My expectation was that she would say something encouraging to me or we would have lunch together after my presentation. Instead, there was a strange force at work which divided us, as conferees filtered out of the lecture room in groups of threes and fives.

I picked up some books displayed on a table outside the lecture-room in order to conceal my puzzlement. From out of the corner of my right eye, I saw a figure move toward the dining-room. It was Rose, followed by three other conferees.

‘Hey, are you Miss Lin? Why don’t you join us?’ Professor Liu Yi from Beijing Normal University called out from behind me. Without a good reason to turn down her invitation, I followed her.

‘Rose, is she your student? Isn’t she brilliant? You make a very good job of training your students.’ In an unstrained manner, Liu Yi patted Rose’s shoulder and congratulated her.

Her eyes met mine. ‘Oh, it’s you. Chang—Ling—En—’* Rose voiced my Chinese name with each syllable emphasised. Never before had Chinese, my mother tongue, sounded so hostile to me.

Fortunately, it seemed that Professor Liu Yi was unaware of Rose’s odd behaviour or else she pretended not to notice.

‘Weren’t you nervous?’ Rose asked from the other side of the lunch table.

‘Not really. Because I didn’t wear contact lenses, speaking to dim faces made me less nervous!’ I tried to answer jokingly. Outwardly, we were mentor and pupil as before, but it was clear from the strain in our voices that each of us had something else on our minds.

‘She looks like a porcelain doll, doesn’t she?’ Liu Yi sat down next to Rose.

‘Yes, she is the youngest conferee this year,’ Rose responded in a monotonous voice.

‘Miss Chang, where are you from originally?’ asked Professor Tony Lam from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. We were on the same panel.

‘I am from Taiwan. I went to the United States for graduate studies after college.’

‘Tony, your paper on Shen Fu’s *Six Records of a Floating Life* (Fu sheng liu ji)* was full of insights. I really enjoyed it.’ Professor Hermann Klein cut in.

‘I am flattered. I chose the text out of my genuine identification with the author. I wrote the paper to project my own love for my ex-girlfriend. . . Oh, Hermann, your reading of classical Chinese poetry is so elegant that even native speakers of Chinese will envy you!’

‘Have you read the new version of *Six Records of a Floating Life*?’ Rose switched the subject in an unexpected direction. I presumed that she was referring to the book co-written by N. H. Tang, who had retired recently from Yale, and his new wife. I glanced over the book only because my friend told me that it included a Chinese ink painting by

you as a wedding gift for the couple—a pair of bluebirds, dwelling on the branches of peonies.

‘No comment!’ Liu Yi tittered after a while.

‘To be frank, N. H. Tang’s love letters to his wife are sickening and disgusting to me. It was indecent for him to make those personal communications public. Who is he? Casanova?’ Tony Lam remarked scornfully.

‘Mrs. Tang even wrote down her history of depression in the book. Is this kind of stuff worth reading? Nowadays people are after fame no matter a bad fame or a good one. . . .’ Rose added, ‘I bet her depression was caused by the scant attention old Tang had paid her since the wedding.’

‘If he could find someone to be a companion to him in old age, good for him!’ said Hermann Klein in an understanding tone. I gave a slight nod.

‘And what do you think of David Harris and Joan Lu?’ Rose enquired.

‘They got married two years ago, didn’t they?’ Tony Lam said half-heartedly.

‘Exactly, they got married despite their age differences. She is thirty years his junior!’ Rose went on, ‘Joan Lu got only one job interview when she was single. After she won Harris’ heart, the interviews were many! After they got married, Joan Lu began to assume a haughty air. Have you heard about that? She even asked conference organisers who invited her husband to invite her, too. What she did was truly intolerable!’ Rose’s forehead puckered up, which spoilt her beauty in an instant.

‘Is Joan Lu a PhD?’ I asked in an attempt to remind them of Joan Lu’s academic achievement. Did she find a job just because of her sexual appeal?

‘She did receive her PhD from an Ivy League university. But there are still a lot of questions to be asked,’ Rose answered vaguely. I lowered my eyes.

‘This is an old issue of gender and power. Star professors are chased by girls no matter how old they are! They marry graduate students because they lose their common sense when they grow old!’ Liu Yi commented cheerily. I sipped gingerly at my camomile tea.

‘At least they got divorced. They are better than those who have mistresses at the office. . .’ There was a hint of boredom in Hermann Klein’s voice. Although he specialized in classical Chinese, the Chinese codes of ethics remained unfathomable to him.

‘So unfair, isn’t it? When I got my first job as an assistant professor, I was still young back then, but none of my male students sent me love letters. One of my colleagues is very handsome and talented. Since he joined our department ten years ago, our Dean has warned him several times that he should always leave the office door opened while talking to female students,’ said Liu Yi.

‘Nowadays young girls are prone to seek quick success and instant benefits. To seduce their male advisors is one way to achieve their goals. They are too eager, aren’t they?’ Rose shot an icy look at me as she spoke.

In fear, I bowed my head. These words came from an established scholar whom you recommended me to choose; what could I have done? Frowning into my tea cup, I saw camomile flowers inside, dimmed like yellowish-brown worms.

‘Well, the next panel will begin in less than five minutes,’ Hermann Klein stood up.

Amid the scholars, I slipped out of the Centre for East Asian Studies.

Notes:

- 113 *A Cup of Camomile Tea*: the title is derived from the title of Mansfield's story 'A Cup of Tea' (II, pp. 461-7) and her poem 'Camomile Tea', in *Poems of Katherine Mansfield*, p. 47.
- 113 *an Erotomaniac's Journal*: the part of the title was inspired by the Chinese writer Lu Xun's story 'The Diary of a Mad Man' (1918), in *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, trans. and intro. Julia Lovell (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 21-31. The story is a forceful attack on traditional China in the disguise as a diary kept by a madman who believes he has made a discovery that the Chinese have for centuries been 'eating people'. As a result, he has been confined as someone who suffers from 'a persecution complex' by his family.
- 117 *erotomaniac*: one affected by erotomania, a type of delusional disorder in which the affected patient 'has the unshakable belief that he/she is loved by a specific individual who is often of higher social standing'. In some instances 'the imagined lover' 'is believed to protect, watch over or follow the patient and all kinds of behaviours are misrepresented as evidence of passionate interest'. See Alistair Munro, *Delusional Disorder: Paranoia and Related Illnesses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 119-21.
- 123 *I didn't feel nervous. On the contrary, I felt quite sure of myself.*: these sentences are adapted from J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 47: 'He does not feel nervous. On the contrary, he feels quite sure of himself.'
- 128 *Teresa de Lauretis*: "the discourse of theory, whatever its ideological bent, constitutes a form of violence in its own right": quoted in Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, 'Introduction: Representing violence, or "how the west was won"', in *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 3.
- 131 *Chang—Ling—En—*: the I-narrator's English name is Jade Chang, while her Chinese name is Chang Ling-en. Chinese names start with the family names, then the given names follow.
- 132 *Shen Fu's Six Records of a Floating Life (Fu sheng liu ji)*: a memoir written in 1809 by the Chinese writer Shen Fu (1763–1825). The book reflects on his life as a magistrate's secretary, a loving husband, a painter and an unsuccessful tradesman. See Shen Fu, *Six Records of a Floating Life*, trans. Leonard Pratt and Chiang Su-hui (London: Penguin, 1983).

Hamster Family Connections*

Happy's Mother

‘My hamster, if I am around, so is he. I have only him, and he has only me.’ That’s the way she always talks, with a childlike drawl. ‘Ah, my Happy.’ Her hamster is called Happy.

She used to be a lecturer teaching Comparative Literature at a high ranking university (‘My hamster knows me, therefore I am...’).^{*} She, not on good terms with her colleagues, began to find her name and her critical essays excluded from every journal and anthology they had a hand in preparing. Eventually she was made redundant because of having publishing no academic essays over the past seven years. ‘It was caused by the recession,’ she told herself. She, on good terms with her students, wrote an email before leaving her job:

Dear Students,

I am humbled by your collective expression of support, as much as I am most sorry to see all of you so distressed. Almost all of you have written to me privately to convey shock and sadness, and some of you are greatly confused. I do have your best interests in mind, but at the same time, this university has made it impossible for me to continue working here. I also told some of you that at this point student input will not have much of an impact. The university as an institution can be rather cold and inhuman.

Please also remember that I am determined to conduct myself in the next few months with grace and dignity. I don’t wish to blame any individual, although we all know such situations are ultimately the results of human agency.

Kind regards,

Happy’s Mother

After that she never read another book of literary criticism. She even subscribed to certain online science journals, including several that focused on animal physiology and

nutrition. One day she saw a job posting recruiting an animal carer on gumtree.com and applied. She had never taken any course in zoology or animal care, but her experience of keeping hamsters for twenty years distinguished her from other job applicants. She succeeded on the job interview and started working at a pet shop. The job was not well-paid, but she quite enjoyed working with small animals and considered it a respite from academic thinking and the brutality of being made redundant.

‘All by myself . . . living in such . . . a big flat. Except for . . . my hamster Happy, that is.’ She is thirty-eight years old but still unmarried. She has remained single for one reason only: she is not very good at interpersonal relationships. Before the age of thirty-five, she used to idealise every man she met, seeing only the good points and finding plenty of things to love in each of them. And, of course, it always ended in absolute disaster for her. After thirty-five, by way of compensating, she found many faults and shortcomings in every male she came across. Under these conditions, she no longer fell in love with any man. Her heart was calm and serene, like a placid lake; and she expected to live like this happily ever after with her hamster Happy. Her life as an academic had finished, as did her life as a woman. However, she could still devote the rest of her life to looking after Happy and other small animals at the pet shop.

In her spare time she liked reading hamster care books and browsing the website of the National Hamster Council and the British Hamster Association*. Inspired by the history of the discovery of the Syrian hamster, she submitted a short piece of writing to the online forum for the British Hamster Association. After having being rejected by academic journals for seven years, she was thrilled to see that the story entitled ‘A Golden Hamster’* had been chosen and published on the website of the association:

A Golden Hamster

During his expedition to Syria in early 1839, the British zoologist George Robert Waterhouse (1810-1888) discovered a small animal in the desert outside the Syrian city of Aleppo. He named his find *Cricetus auratus*, which is translated as ‘Golden Hamster’. Looking into her black and surprisingly large eyes, George made a secret wish: ‘I wish that I could be a hamster and live but three springs . . . ’ Three years as a hamster, George thought, would bring more delight than fifty human summers could ever contain.

In the blink of an eye, the pretty rodent escaped his grip and ran back into her sandy burrow. As spring approaches, hamsters groom themselves several times a day and start looking for mates. The male hamster enters the female’s territory and marks the grass near her burrow with his scent. If the female hamster is receptive, she will sniff the male and allow him to investigate her head, ears and genital area. If the male hamster tries to overcome the female’s instinctive reluctance by force, she will respond by jumping nervously and biting him about his face and scrotum.

Hamsters do not make many sounds. They save their talk for important situations. Both male and female hamsters chatter their teeth rhythmically during courtship. Once mating is over, they revert to their solitary way of life.

As George awoke one night from sweet dreams he found himself transformed back into an ideal husband. Not wanting to disturb his wife and their young baby, he struggled to hold back his tears. Later that morning (the 9th of April, 1839), he would unveil the discovery of this new species at a meeting of the Zoological Society of London:

This species is remarkable for its deep golden yellow colouring. The fur is moderately long and very soft and has a silk-like gloss; the deep yellow colouring

extends over the upper parts and sides of the head and body and also over the outer sides of the limbs; on the back the hairs are brownish at the tips hence in this part the fur assumes a deeper hue than on the sides of the body; the sides of the throat and upper parts of the body are white, but faintly tinted with yellow; on the back and sides of the body, all hairs are of a deep grey or lead colour at the base. The feet and tail are white. The ears are of moderate size, furnished externally with whitish hairs. The moustaches consist of black and white hairs intermixed . . .*

The single rather elderly female specimen of Syrian hamster has been preserved at the Natural History Museum in London. She is actually named: Item BM (NH) 1855.12.24.120.

The story was warmly received by other members of the society and the moderator of the website invited her to write more stories about hamsters.

‘My dearest Happy, people seem to like my hamster story, do you know that?’ Happy stood on the top shelf of the cage, listening to her with his rounded and erect ears, as soft as an answered wish. She placed a few peanuts on the palm of her open left hand, and Happy clambered lightly onto it to get his treat. Then she lifted him up out of the cage and brought him closer to her face. She laid her right hand on his back, stroking his smooth fur. Happy became restless, shovelling all the peanuts into his cheek pouches. After a while he started scratching her palms with his tiny yet sharp claws. It felt to her that all the hamsters from the past had returned to gnaw at her hands at the same time.

Suddenly, her fingers have become full of stories. She has to get rid of that itching feeling by typing all the hamsters into words. . . .

Golden and Beige

She could never forget her first pair of hamsters, just as one could never forget one's first love ('I feel that you are more lonely than anybody else in the world,'* he told her in the classroom). Her family had never owned pets before because her parents could never agree on the type of pet. Her father was a dog person, while her mother was a cat person. Her mother thought dogs were too attention-seeking and in need of regular outdoor exercise, which was too time-consuming. Her father found cats haughty and nonchalant. After she and her two older sisters were born, however, her parents compromised their first choices and settled for small mammals. Her parents were both very busy at work, and her sisters studied abroad back then. They decided to purchase a pet to keep her company. Rabbits? No, their excrement was sticky and smelly. Guinea pigs? No, they always let out piercing shrieks. Gerbils? No, their long tails reminded them too much of their unwelcome fellow rodents—mice and rats. Eventually, her parents chose hamsters, which were scrupulously clean, quiet and had very short tails. Most importantly, their short life expectancy made them perfect pets for children, who tend to lose interest in pets quickly. It was her mother who, in spite of her own experience of marriage and childbirth, insisted on purchasing a pair of hamsters instead of a single one. 'One on its own might be lonely,' she said.

On the girl's eleventh birthday, a pair of Syrian hamsters joined the family. From the very first time she saw the two little creatures scurrying about the cardboard box lined with shredded newspaper, she knew she would love hamsters for the rest of her life. She called the male hamster Golden because of its golden-brown fur that is typical of its wild Syrian forebear. Golden was a handsome hamster. He had dark patches on both of his cheeks with off-white crescents behind. His large eyes were black, bright, and rimmed with a circle of dark fur as if he wore black eyeliner. Golden was a gentle

hamster. When she tried to approach Golden with her right hand, he did not bite but sniffed her fingers.

Within two weeks he became so tame that he would sit at ease in her hand, stripping off the outer husk from a sunflower seed with his sharp incisors and dexterous front paws. Another endearing characteristic of Golden was that he always groomed himself thoroughly after being handled. ‘Look, Daddy and Mummy, Golden is performing again!’ She considered Golden’s grooming ceremony as the best art performance she had even seen. Sitting on his ‘built-in cushions’ (later she realised those two pink lumps were his testicles), Golden began with the head. With circling motions, he ran his front paws along his outstretched tongue and stroked several times against the direction of the fur—first over the muzzle, then over the entire head. In between, he kept licking his paws. Twisting rather acrobatically, he then rubbed his belly, back, forelegs and thighs. Afterwards, he used tongue and hind paws to help comb through the places he could not reach with his front paws. After watching Golden’s grooming performance, her father said something she could not fully understand: ‘How dirty human beings and this world are! Golden knows!’

The female hamster was named Beige after her creamy-brown coat. Like a peahen which is less colourful than a peacock, Beige was less attractive than her male partner. Compared to Golden, her eyes looked smaller and the colour of the patches on her cheek was lighter and less vivid. Beige was not as quickly and tame as Golden was and exhibited more personality. On one occasion she tried to grasp Beige from above, but the alert hamster wriggled and bit her. Her thumb was stapled by Beige’s incisors and left with two small blood-stains. She did drop tears, as the wound ached, but she did not blame Beige for her aggressive biting as her mother did. Rather, she admired her agility and defensive skills. Beige was also a master of stockpiling. Whenever the hamsters

were offered food, Golden always ate the food straight away and only stored a bit of the leftover into his cheek pouches; Beige tended to pocket most of the food, until her cheek pouches were full to the brim. Then she would run back to her storage chamber to empty them. ‘That’s probably a female hamster’s instinct—to store food for her children in the future,’ her mother said. Would our little Beige become a mother very soon? She could not imagine how a female hamster could reach her sexual maturity as early as in the thirteenth week of her life.

As a rule, her parents put her to bed each night around ten o’clock. But sometimes she could not resist sneaking back into the living room to observe the nocturnal hamsters. One night while she crouched down on her knees and pressed her face as close as she could to the glass aquarium cage, she saw Golden and Beige doing something she had never seen. Golden was chasing after Beige and Beige ran away for a few feet across the bottom of the cage. But when Golden touched her back with his front paws, Beige froze. She stood very stiff, with back arched and her tail and ears erect. Following this, Golden licked Beige’s rear end for a short time and then mounted her from behind by climbing partially onto her back. Golden held himself in place by gripping Beige around the middle with his front paws. Golden thrust himself into Beige for a few seconds and finished with a slight shudder.

She kept this ‘secret activity’ between Golden and Beige from her parents.

Eighteen days later, Beige built an extra nursing nest outside her small woodhouse with shredded newspaper and hoarded a large amount of food. Then, she gave birth to a litter of six baby hamsters. Beige licked the pink and hairless babies thoroughly clean. The little ones, with their eyes still unopened, instinctively found their ways to her pink teats and suckled vigorously.

Beige and Golden always slept cuddling together. However, Beige started behaving differently towards Golden after the babies were born. One night Golden tried to sniff Beige and their babies, she was disturbed and pushed him away with her front paws. Worrying that Beige's gentle rebuff might lead to furious fighting, her parents decided to relocate Golden to another glass aquarium cage adjacent to that of Beige's. 'Poor Golden! Now he can only see his wife and babies through the glass,' the girl said. Golden, Beige and their offspring, however, seemed to be satisfied with this new arrangement. Now and then one of the inquisitive babies succeeded in getting out of the nest. Beige then grabbed it by the most accessible part of its body with her incisors and carried it back. One evening when she and her mother were having dinner, loud squeaks were heard from the drawing room. She dashed off to the living room, letting out a squeak of fright at the sight of the bloody battle between Golden and Beige. Her mother came in and soon separated the two fighters, lifting Golden out of Beige's cage by a ladle.

To prevent Golden from climbing over the glass wall and falling into Beige's 'territory' again, her mother moved Golden's cage to the other corner of the living room. The top of his little head was covered by a scrap of blood-stained newspaper. Her mother carefully removed the paper and applied iodine to the wound. In fact, a piece of furry scalp had been torn away from Golden's tiny head. 'He would have died,' her mother murmured. A few days later she noticed that one of Golden's eyes had lost its former glow. Did Beige cut off the cornea of his eyeball with her incisors? She was at a loss for words.

A year later Beige died of a tumour grown inside her right-side cheek pouch. She was survived by the single-eyed, bald Golden who died peacefully in his sleep two years later.

She only ever kept one hamster after that.

Ginger

Her father joked while separating the eight baby hamsters from Beige: ‘Hamsters make perfect kids. They wean within twenty-right days of their births. And they don’t ask for pocket money!’ They had found new homes for the little ones. Four of them had gone to her father’s friend’s laboratory, a pair had been sent to her aunt’s house, one was given to her best friend at school, and the last one had been kept for Bernadette. Bernadette had been their live-in housekeeper since she was born. As a divorced single mother from the Philippines, where the economic conditions were poor, she left her son to come to Taiwan to work in order to support him. Missing him, Bernadette asked whether they could give one of the baby hamsters to her. ‘Of course, feel free to choose the one from the litter you most like!’ Bernadette chose a male one with a golden-reddish coat and called him Ginger.

‘I went to the supermarket and took Ginger with me. He is just like my son!’ Bernadette told the girl one day.

‘How nice! Where did you place him?’ The girl was curious.

‘I placed Ginger in the front bicycle basket while cycling to the supermarket!’ said Bernadette.

‘What an adventure for the little boy!’ she exclaimed.

Then Bernadette said dreamily: ‘By the way, I guess Ginger must be missing his mother very much. Shall we let Ginger reunite with his mother some day?’

Knowing that Bernadette liked to let Ginger run in the empty bathtub while scrubbing the floor of the bathroom, she thought it would be a good idea to arrange for the mother and the son to meet in the bathtub. One late afternoon, she lured Beige out of her sleeping woodhouse with a piece of cheese and brought her into the bathtub, where Ginger was already skittering about. At first, the mother and the son sniffed each other carefully with their front paws raised to fend off trouble, but they lowered them again after a few seconds.

‘Good, she did not bite him!’ She felt relieved, recalling how Golden was attacked fiercely by Beige for intruding her territory.

‘Of course, Beige loves his son. How could a mother bite her son?’ said Bernadette with a catch in her voice. ‘Good girl, I am going to scrub the floor now. You’d better stay in the living room watching cartoons for a while. I will call you once I have finished cleaning the bathroom.’

Beige and Ginger’s whiskers touched, as if exchanging secrets. ‘Alright, they must have a lot to catch up! I won’t disturb them!’ She smiled and turned into the living room. Half an hour later she returned to the bathroom to pick up Beige.

‘Ginger, say goodbye to your mum.’ The housekeeper raised one of Ginger’s furry front paws and made it waving at Beige.

Living in separate cages, Beige still smelled Golden’s presence occasionally when their running balls hit one another in the living room. Beige was more energetic and persistent than Golden, who tended to pause or rock back and forth in his exercise ball during their fifteen-minute exercise session. One evening, however, Beige appeared to be sluggish, crawling around with a staggered gait in her exercise ball. Her father teased sadly: ‘Beige is having a mid-life crisis! She has aged and put on weight just like me,

poor girl!’ The next evening when she scooped Beige up to clean her cage, she came upon a litter of pink, hairless and blind baby hamsters attaching themselves to Beige’s teats. Startled by what she saw, she dropped Beige accidentally and the babies scattered around the cage. Then, and she would never forget this, the disturbed mother grabbed one of the pups and started eating it.

That night she confided the whole thing in her mother. ‘You can’t blame Beige and Ginger, they are animals’ Her mother gave her a big hug.

Ten years after this, she studied Greek mythology. ‘Kronos had six children with his sister Rhea, and he devoured all of them but Zeus’, the professor was lecturing. ‘Medea killed her own children. . . Oedipus married his mother Jocasta. . .’ Unlike her classmates, she was not shocked at all. Instead, she smiled. And with that all the memories of her Syrian hamsters came rushing back.

Pearl

Once her childhood was over, there followed many years without the company of hamsters, until the day she turned twenty-nine. She recalled spending her birthday in the hospital with her mother, who was recovering from food poisoning.

Lying in the bed, her mother asked the nurse: ‘The gastroenterologist Dr. Yao is very professional and handsome, isn’t he? Is he married?’

‘Yes, he got married three years ago,’ the nurse replied. ‘His wife also works as a nutritionist in this hospital.’

‘Ohhhh—how nice!’* said her mother with a long-drawn exhalation.

She broke in, walking towards the nurse: ‘Would you like to see some lovely photos of my hamsters?’

‘Ohhhh—how cute!’

‘I had them when I was a child.’

Standing next to the bed, her mother’s secretary Vera suggested: ‘I can get one for you as your birthday present.’

Later in the afternoon, Vera took her to a pet shop near the hospital.

The ordinary golden Syrian hamster was the only option for hamster owners fifteen years ago, but now a wider variety of hamsters were available. ‘Dwarf hamsters are very popular nowadays,’ the shop assistant said. Dwarf hamsters include the brownish-gray Chinese hamster with a slender body, a long tail and a dark stripe down the middle of its back, the sandy Roborovskii hamster with a large white patch above each eye and a small white patch at the base of each ear, and the Siberian hamster that occurred in dark-gray or white colour. Looking around the shop, she noticed that the Chinese hamsters were too rat-like, the Roborovskii hamsters too quick and jumpy, and the two Syrian hamsters not as handsome as her old beloved Golden. She decided on the Siberian. Because of her mixed feelings about Beige’s childbirth and cannibalism, she was planning, this time, to keep just one male hamster.

But something unexpected happened.

She was presented with two Siberian hamsters: one was male and dark-gray, while the other was female and white. She did not know how to express her admiration for the white Siberian hamster. She was like a pearl—her body was predominantly white, with

purple-gray hairs scattered sparsely through the coat. The head and spine were mostly coloured. Her gleaming black eyes were picked out by her pearl-coloured coat.

The white and female Siberian hamster was just three weeks older. Since a Siberian hamster's life expectancy is even shorter than that of the Syrian—a mere couple of years—Vera suggested that she purchase the younger one. Worrying that the white Siberian hamster would end up being the snack for a snake in the shop if not sold promptly, she chose the older hamster.

By the time she and her sister left the pet shop, she was no longer lonesome—she was on her way home with Pearl.

‘Is Pearl male or female?’ asked her father across the dining table.

‘Female. I was thinking about getting a male, but I could not resist her pearl-like beauty!’

‘I am living in a girl's dormitory. A wife, three daughters, and now a female hamster, too!’

No one laughed except him. Her mother lowered her head, shovelling rice from the rice bowl into her mouth with chopsticks.

She recalled how, last year, one of her blind dates ended badly. The gentleman was the son of her mother's best friend. His parents were successful businessmen who emigrated to New York in the 1970s and he was part of their American dream. A Taiwanese American made an ideal son-in-law for many parents in Taiwan. They believed that men who received a western education tended to be less chauvinistic than their counterparts in Asia.

‘Do you have any brothers or sisters?’ asked the gentleman.

‘Yes, I have two older sisters,’ said she.

‘No brothers?’

‘No.’

‘Oh, I am sorry for your mother. Your father must have been desperate for a son.

Every Chinese man wants a son. Isn’t your father a gynaecologist? Didn’t he think of engineering a male heir?’

She looked sideways at the clock on the wall.

‘Did I offend you? If so, it was probably a misunderstanding as your English is not that good. . .’

It turned out that he had been engaged to an older Caucasian American woman but it was broken off because of pressure from his parents. He should marry someone who was born and raised in Taiwan. Taiwanese American women were not good enough. They were just bananas. In addition to ethnicity, the fact that the Caucasian woman was thirty-five also concerned his parents. She would probably have difficulty giving birth to healthy babies to carry the family line. He was still in love with the woman.

Her mother felt sorry that things did not work out between them.

‘It’s alright. It’s a blessing in disguise.’* She cried secretly; not because she was saddened by the prospect of a life without the Taiwanese American, but because her

woman's pride had been hurt by his refusal to marry her. She knew very well that she was no more in love with him than he was with her.

‘So, you only got one hamster this time. Will Pearl feel lonely?’ asked her mother, who had lain down on the sofa in the living room. Her father was watching the news on television.

‘Of course not. Hamsters are solitary and territorial animals. Don't you remember what happened between Beige, Golden and their babies?’ She walked back to her room and returned with Pearl.

‘She is literally “the pearl on parents’ hands”.* My Pearl was born as a hamster, but she will die as a precious Pearl maiden!’*

She said this staring hard at Pearl, as though she might be able to discover the meaning of this fact in her face.

‘Look at the camera!’ Her father took a picture of her and Pearl. With Pearl in her hands, she was shining with happiness in spite of being still in the parental home, plump and uncertain about the future.

She understood from the dwarf hamster care guide that the Siberian hamster was also called the Winter White Russian hamster. This name came from the fact that no matter what colour the Siberian hamster was, it would turn white in the winter in response to a decrease in daylight hours and a drop in temperature. Was its flawless white coat camouflage for the Siberian snow desert? Could one appeal to the theory of ‘the struggle for life’ when a protective device was carried to a point of exuberance and luxury far in excess of a predator's power of appreciation? She discovered in nature the

non-utilitarian delights that she sought in literature—at once intricate enchantment and deception.

Unlike her former Syrian hamsters, Pearl was less enthusiastic about running in the exercise ball. Instead, taking sand baths in a bowl was her favourite exercise. She removed the oil and dust from her fur by rolling in the sand daily, as though it were a religious ritual.

Despite her fastidious cleanliness, however, Pearl died of a malignant tumour of the mammary gland situated just alongside her nipple. Like the medieval maiden, her Pearl died before she was two years old.

Happy

‘These stories of your hamsters are fascinating! Why don’t you get one?’ said her boyfriend John.

‘I am living in a rented flat and not allowed to keep pets.’

‘What concerns landlords are smelly dogs or fur-losing cats, I think. Who would mind a little rodent occupying a small corner in one of their flats?’

‘And my visa. . . For me, owning a hamster is like adopting a child. It’s a big responsibility to care for his or her entire life-span. I am not sure how long will I be able to stay in this country. For example, what if I lose my job and can no longer renew my work visa?’

‘Don’t worry too much about the future. You are very popular with your students, aren’t you?’

She nodded smilingly.

‘I can get a hamster for you as your Christmas gift. Any good?’

‘Yes, I would consider having a hamster if I can find one who reminds me any of my old hamsters.’ She replied.

After searching for photos of hamsters for adoption on the website of RSPCA* and visiting three Pet Corner shops, she finally found what she wanted in an independent, family-run pet shop.

‘Guess what? I have found a Syrian hamster who looks exactly like my Golden!’

‘Hooray! See you in the shop in twenty minutes.’

John purchased the hamster and a two-storey wire cage with plastic platforms, ladders and a running wheel.

‘Thank you, my darling,’ she wrapped her arms around John. Knowing that the happiest period of her life was about to begin, she called this new hamster Happy.

Truly—she is too happy. It was still in the early days of their relationship, but John and she ‘got along splendidly and were really good pals’.* They allowed each other personal space instead of cohabiting and invading one another’s territory. Her students admired her. Her parents were relieved to know that she had finally found herself a boyfriend, and they were thinking about visiting her parents in Taiwan next Easter. And John’s mother seemed to like her. She always indulges them with the best-cooked roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. . . .

And she had an ideal hamster—Happy. All the good qualities of her old hamsters were encapsulated in Happy: besides his Golden-like handsome looks, he was an agile

runner just like Beige. He was as adventurous as Ginger, and he shared Pearl's passion for sand-bathing.

'Happy, mummy loves you, do you love mummy?' she whispered to the little creature every evening.

And John would tease her by saying: 'Is he clambering up to the platform because of his love for you? I bet he is up for food only!'

She would not have believed it. Even if it was true that Happy was attached to her by basic needs, she would not have been hurt. For the moment, by overwhelming him with sunflower seeds, clean water, wood shavings, bathing sand and chew sticks, she could rely upon advantages extrinsic to her looks, her personality, her financial situation and her social status to prevent the day ever coming when he would be tempted to leaving her.

'Happy does love food! Remember that he once escaped and hid himself behind the kitchen cabinet?' She talked to John while removing the leaves from the medlars he had got from the farmer's market.

'Of course! And he came out later when he smelled the food you were cooking, right?' said John amusingly.

His iPhone rang and he turned into to her bedroom. He returned to the kitchen fifteen minutes later.

'What's up? You looked sad.'

'It's my mum. She has just had a terrible row with my sister-in-law.'

Not knowing what to say, she poured the medlars, apples, and water in a deep sauce pan and let them boil. 'I hope your mother will like the medlars jam I made.'

'That's very kind of you. Thank you.'

'My pleasure.'

'We can bring Happy to my mum's at Christmas. She would like to see her grandson.'

'Sounds great!'

They arrived there John's mother's house on Christmas Eve. John's younger brother Paul, sister-in-law Kate, nephew Ian and niece Sharon were already there.

'Is there a hamster inside?' Ian was curious about Happy's travel cage placed in the corner of the living room. Sharon was playing with her new Barbie doll on the sofa.

'Yes, my hamster Happy is sleeping at the moment! Do you like hamsters?'

'Yeah, they look funny!' Ian replied.

'Ian will turn ten next spring and we have been thinking about getting him a hamster,' said Kate.

'How long will you be staying here?' Paul asked John.

'We will leave on the 27th. Are you staying at Kate's mother's tonight?' John replied.

'Yeah, we will spend two nights there and then off to her father's on Boxing Day.'

Paul, Kate and kids left in the late afternoon after collecting children's Christmas gifts.

'I always give Ian and Sharon pocket money and nice Christmas gifts, but what have I got in return? A box of cheap shower gels? She is a taker, not a giver, isn't she?' said John's mother over the Christmas dinner.

These words worried her. She was not sure whether Maria really liked the bottle of Clinique Happy Perfume she got for her on her birthday earlier in October.

'At least she spent some money on gifts. Unlike Paul, he got you nothing this afternoon when they came!' said John.

'Paul was a lovely boy like you. Unfortunately, he has become just like her.'

'Would you like to try some of the medlar jelly, Maria? John got medlars from the farmer's market.' She presented the jar to John's mother.

'No, thanks. I will have cranberry sauce instead.' She declined politely, and went on: 'Paul shouts at me sometimes but always talks to her nicely. She is quite an attractive woman, isn't she? He does love her, doesn't he?'

'Well, she is not bad-looking, but not my type,' said John.

'He takes kids out at the weekend so she can have some me time. I never had any me time when you and Paul were little. . . '

John turned his head to the left, asking her: 'Do you know what the word "me time" means?'

'I am not sure. . . Does it mean the time a person has to himself or herself?' she answered carefully.

‘Smart!’ said John.

‘That’s correct. I can see your English has improved!’ his mother added.

Finally they finished Christmas dinner and withdrew to the living room.

Placing Happy’s travel cage on her thighs, she talked to Maria: ‘Would you like to see my hamster Happy, Maria? He is up now.’

‘Ohhhh, he is lovely!’ Maria exclaimed.

‘I got this hamster for her as a Christmas gift. We love Happy. He is like our son!’ said John. ‘I’ve already got something else for you, mum. But I can get you a hamster if you like!’

‘No, get me nothing. I am a very lucky woman, aren’t I? You father left me with this house, and I’ve got a good pension. If your father had come back to life and lived with me, I would have fought with him since I’m used to living on my own . . .’ said John’s mother.

She lifted Happy up with her right hand and placed him into the exercise ball, not saying a word.

On the morning of Christmas Day, she opened the present given to her by John’s mother. It was a bottle of Clinique Happy Perfume.

Suddenly, she felt that she was a single woman in a relationship. Would John look after Happy if one day she had to leave him? She learned from the news on the radio that some guy microwaved his girlfriend’s hamster after a drunken row with her. The hamster’s eyes became opaque and her right hind leg had been burned to the bone.

Another guy hurled the pet hamster in his cage from the first-floor window of his flat during a furious argument with his girlfriend during their break-up.

She had no lasting arrangement for her life with John. Her fearful, cringing heart could enjoy a makeshift sort of rest only in stroking Happy's fur.

Notes:

136 *Hamster Family Connections*: the title of the story is derived from the title of D. H. Lawrence's poem, 'Tortoise Family Connections' (1920), in *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts (New York: Viking Press, 1975), pp. 356-8.

'*My hamster knows me, therefore I am...*': the sentence is adapted from René Descartes's motto: 'I think, therefore I am'. See Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Related Writing*, trans. and intro. Desmond M. Clarke (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 25.

the National Hamster Council and the British Hamster Association: organisations offer membership to everyone (UK and worldwide) with an interest in hamsters. See <<http://www.hamsters-uk.org>> and <<http://www.britishhamsterassociation.org.uk>>.

137 '*A Golden Hamster*': a shorter version of the story can be viewed on the Quick Fictions app. See <<http://www.myriadeditions.com/quickfictions>>.

139 '*This species is remarkable for its deep golden yellow colouring. [...] The moustaches consist of black and white hairs intermixed . . .*': quoted from George Waterhouse's description of the Golden hamster which was published in the Zoological Society of London's proceedings for 1840. Quoted in Chris Logsdail, Peter Logsdail and Kate Hovers' *Hamsterlopaedia: A Complete Guide to Hamster Care* (Dorking: Ringpress Books, 2002), p. 8.

140 '*I feel that you are more lonely than anybody else in the world,*': the sentence is adapted from one of the words the male character says to Vera in Mansfield's story 'A Dill Pickle': ' "I felt that you were more lonely than anybody else in the world," he went on' (II , p. 102).

- 146 ‘*Ohhhh—how nice!*’: borrowed from one of Amanda’s lines in Scene 7 of Tennessee Williams’s *Glass Menagerie* (with commentary and notes by Stephen J. Bottoms), (London: Methuen Drama, 2009), p. 93.
- 149 ‘*It’s alright. It’s a blessing in disguise.*’: borrowed from one of Laura’s lines in Scene 7 of *Glass Menagerie*, p. 86.
- 150 “*the pearl on parents’ hands*”: a Chinese idiom referring to one’s beloved daughter.

Pearl maiden: the phrase refers to the dreamer’s lost daughter in the Middle English poem *Pearl*. See *Pearl: A Modernised Version of the Middle English Poem*, trans. by Victor Watts, ed. by David Fuller and Corinne Saunders (London: Enitharmon Press, 2005).

- 152 *RSPCA*: The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—the UK’s largest animal welfare charity.

‘*got along splendidly and were really good pals*’: the phrase is quoted from Mansfield’s story ‘Bliss’, vol. 2, p. 145.

The Mask of the Spring

At that time he and his parents were still living on A Street, their earliest home in B City, and had not yet moved to C Street, after which they moved again to D Street. But it had always been his impression that the earlier the home, the sweeter it seemed; every time they moved, it was to a less attractive place. Perhaps it was the nostalgia for early childhood that gave rise to such an illusion.

A Street was a quiet little alley, with less than a hundred families along its entire length. Slightly curved around its middle, the street stretched all the way to the great gray river at the end. Such was the tranquil picture when he was twelve years old; later, as small cars were allowed to pass through the street, the atmosphere of quiet seclusion was lost all together. His present reminiscences hark back to the era before the arrival of the cars.

In any events on A Street at that time cats could be seen strolling languidly along the tops of the low walls, from one house to the next. The whole landscape was filled with glistening green foliage and delicately fragrant odours from the profusion of flowers and plants growing in the front yards. Flowers loved to visit A Street: camellias bloomed in the spring and roses blossomed in the summer. Most unforgettable, however, were the evenings of that tiny street, when silent street lamps illuminated the darkness of the road. Night enjoyed its deepest and longest sleep on this street. Light breezes rustled among the leaves while remote stars twinkled in the skies; and after a few hours night passed and day broke.

In spring that year, a seamstress opened a dressmaking shop at the end of A Street near the river. It was at a time when B City, still untouched by affluence, was just beginning to prosper, and a number of three-storied buildings could be seen cropping up here and there. Ever since the previous winter, he had been watching with curiosity the construction of such a building on the vacant lot nearby his house. His feelings were excitement mingled with sadness; he was excited because he felt an immense satisfaction with all novel experiences—and sad because he was losing his favourite playground for after-school ball games. The three-storied building was completed in spring, and the woman and her family moved in.

He was a precocious child then, although he looked at least two years younger than his twelve years. One day, he discovered that he was in love with the seamstress. The realisation dawned upon him during the spring vacation, right after the soft spring flowers, in the blossom-filled month of April.

Being a sensitive and inward child, he had an instinct fear of glamorous and sophisticated women and preferred those with kind faces (He still does now). The woman at the dressmaking shop was exactly the type he liked. She was about thirty-five or so, he guessed. She wore neither rouge nor powder on her face and only a tiny trace of rose-coloured lipstick on her lips, which were often parted in a white warm smile. Her complexion was as fair as a white lily. Her eyes were not only comely but, even more important, glowed with gentle kindness. His love for her stemmed not only from approval of her looks but was rooted in a sincere admiration for the goodness of her character as well.

Love in a precocious child, like a heavy blossom atop a frail stem, was a burden too heavy to bear. Only then did he realise the consuming nature of love; if the blazing flames were the joys of love, it was the burning of the fuel itself that made these flames possible. He found it possible that true happiness could consist in achieving joy from the masochistic burning of one's own self. Although he had been in the world for a mere twelve short years, he had undergone enough minor suffering to be able to devise a means of avoiding pain. That was: if you happened to form an emotional attachment to a certain thing or a certain person, the best thing to do was to look immediately for a fault therein, upon which you would then be able to withhold your affection and thus lighten the burden. During the next few days, he often concealed himself directly opposite to her shop and scrutinised her with cold detachment, in an effort to discover some ugliness in her. But the longer he watched, the prettier she seemed. He realised

then that love had so deeply embedded itself that there was no way of uprooting it. He would have to live with it.

It was already the last day of spring vacation. He made up his mind to enjoy it to the full by playing outdoors with his classmates for the whole day. Early in the morning, he went over to his new playground (which had been relocated to the vacant lot in front of the garbage heap beside the grocery door) to wait for other children to gather. The boys started their ball game much earlier that morning than usual—it must have been before eight o'clock, for our shrill cries woke an office worker living in one of the wooden buildings. Still clad in his pajamas, he opened the window and leaned out to scold loudly. And their ball accidentally hit his classmate Paul's pet dog, who was standing next to the garbage heap and he started dashing among them madly. For some reason or other the dog seemed to pick him for his target, jumping on him repeatedly and causing him to fall several times. It was only when Paul's mother appeared and summoned him back to breakfast that they finally broke out the game and dispersed.

The sun had splashed the entire street golden by then. Thick greenery clustered over the tops of the brick walls. Market-bound housewives were already wearing wide brimmed summer hats to ward off the sunlight, whose beams had become so strong lately that some buds were bursting into flower before their time. As he passed the dressmaking shop, he saw the seamstress standing in the doorway talking with another lady, teasing now and then the baby the latter held in her arms.

He climbed up the incline at the end of A Street, walked down the steps on the other side and headed for the river. He went singing all the way up the river. He found a relatively flat patch of land under a newly-budding tree and lay down. He lay quietly, thinking of the seamstress. He turned over, resting his chin upon his arms and gazing at

the river. He had no one in whom he could confide his love, only the river. The river could not respond to his confidences. Thinking that his mother would be waiting for him to go home for lunch, he stood up and headed for home.

At home he saw the washerwoman Mrs. Lee whom his mother hired. She had not got home yet and was still doing the ironing. As soon as she saw him, she asked:

‘Young Master, have you seen my Lucien?’*

He replied that he had not.

‘Weren’t you playing ball game with him outdoors?’

He said he was not.

‘I can’t think where he could’ve gone. I told him to come and help me mop the floors, but there hasn’t been a trace of him all morning. My Lucien just cannot compare with Young Master, Ma’am. Young Master is smart and works hard. He’ll become a top official one day,’ Mrs. Lee said, shaking out one of his father’s shirts.

His mother answered her: ‘It’ll be the same with you. Lucien will also go to school, also earn money and support you.’

‘Thank you, Ma’am, thank you. But I was born to suffer, Ma’am. Lucien’s father died early, leaving me alone to raise him. I have no other hope, only that Lucien will be like Young Master, work hard in school. No matter how hard I have to work, wash clothes all my life even, I want him to be educated.’

‘He won’t disappoint you,’ his mother replied.

The washerwoman only sighed.

That kind old woman. He still remembers her broad tan face, like a piece of dark bread, warm and glowing. Where has she gone? No one knows. As he grew older, simple and unpretentious people like here were harder and harder to come by. They are not the kind to adapt easily within an increasingly complex society, he supposes.

That was the last day of the spring vacation. Another detail he remembers was that he went out and bought a diary that afternoon. His newly-sprung love and the spring itself urged him to keep a diary. All his thoughts for the day were faithfully recorded that evening in the first entry of his diary.

After the spring vacation, love continued to plague him, as if urging him to some action, to do something that would bring him closer to the seamstress, albeit only in his feelings. He thought of taking something to her shop and asking to mend it for him. What a sorry means of courtship! He thought to himself. He could not think of anything else, so one day he finally brought along his school uniform jacket with a missing button to her shop.

Her shop was tastefully arranged. Pictures cut from fashion magazines adorned the walls, and a vase of red roses stood on a small table in one corner. Four girls were sitting in the room, talking and laughing among themselves as they pedalled on machines spread with pieces of brightly coloured material.

‘What do you want, little one?’ A round-faced girl wearing a string of imitation pearls lifted her head and asked.

‘I want a button sewn,’ he said, turning to the seamstress, who stood at the table measuring a dress. ‘Can you do it for me?’ his voice started to tremble.

The woman took his jacket and said: 'Mary, sew the button on for him.' She handed the jacket over to the round-faced girl, then turned and went on with her measuring.

He felt the sorrow of rejection.

'Which button is it?' the girl asked him.

He told her, with his eyes on the woman.

'How much?' he asked the woman.

'Two dollars,' replied the girl.

The woman seemed not to have heard his question, for she did not even lift her head. His grief sank its roots into the depths of his heart. But after a while he saw the woman put on a pair of glasses, and curiosity took the place of sorrow. He found it strange that she should wear glasses, as if it were the least probable thing in the world. He did not like the way she looked with glasses; she no longer looked like herself. Moreover, she was wearing them too low. They made her look old and gave her an owlish expression.

Suddenly aware that he had stood gazing in the shop much longer than necessary, he asked the round-faced girl: 'Can I come back and get it later?'

'No, stay. It'll be ready in a minute.'

He waited nervously in the shop for her to finish. He glanced again the pictures of the models in miniskirts on the walls. They were all very pretty, smiling their bland smiles. He looked again at the roses in the corner. They were still flaming red. Feeling

that they seemed to be redder than roses usually were, he took a more careful look and discovered that they were plastic flowers.

After a while, a boy came down the stairs, munching a piece of fruit. The boy was taller than he, and was wearing a pair of glasses. With sudden intuition, he realised this was her son. Like all newcomers to the neighbourhood, he never came out to join the ball games. Amidst surprised confusion he, who was secretly in love with the woman, watched him as he went upstairs again with a water bottle.

After the button had been replaced, he hurried out the door with the jacket. In the doorway he met the washerwoman coming in. Afraid that she would report him to his mother, for he had come to the shop without her knowledge, he slipped away as unobtrusively as he could.

Despite the fact that he had been received with cold indifference at her shop, that he had seen her son who was older than himself, his love did not change; the love of a child does not change easily. He still gave her all the passion of his twelve years.

Thus he loyally allowed his love to continue, without hope, without fulfilment, and without anyone's awareness. This may go on for years. . . * Actually, he could not tell whether this sense of futility gave him sorrow or happiness. But he was sure of one thing, that with such love he was happier than adults in one respect. He was spare any unnecessary anxiety; he did not have to worry over the fact that one day his love would suddenly come to an end. As long as his admiration existed, his love existed. Looking back now, he should say he was quite happy then.

The trip he made to her shop, he recalls, was the only time he undertook such a venture. He never found another opportunity; besides, for some reason he suddenly lost all courage, and felt himself deeply ashamed over the incident. Whenever he thought of

himself going into her shop on the mere pretext of replacing a button, his shame would grow until the experience became a positive terror, causing him to sweat in anguish. For three days afterwards he did not have the heart to pass in front of her shop. Courage is a strange thing: the first plunge should never be merited as true courage until tested by subsequent tries.

Although he was never in her shop again, he was often in front of it. Opposite her shop was a dry-goods store that sold all kinds of titbits for children and in front of which he frequently stood vigil. Munching on a cracker, he watched as she moved around in her shop. Sometimes he would see her husband, a man of thirty-some, riding a motorcycle and said to be working in a commercial bank. Strangely enough, he never felt a trace of jealousy for this man. This showed, he supposes, that he was still a long way from maturity. He did not seem to realise the full significance of the word *husband*. He thought of him as merely another member of her household, like her brother or brother-in-law. But should she be talking with another man, for instance, if she chatted momentarily with his math teacher, his jealousy would lead him to visualise the teacher lying on the ground with a dagger in his heart.

Thus the days slipped by, one after another, like the turning pages of his diary. Soon it was summer and the end of school term approached. He began to worry about his grades; he was very weak in mathematics and was afraid he was not be able to pass the final exams. Yet mingled with anxiety was a sense of unbounded expectation, expectation for the freedom, the happiness, and the unlimited possibilities of the summer vacation. Under the dark shadow of the finals, he sat for hours on end with the algebra text in front of him, but, instead of studying, he often simply gazed at it anxiously. He grew pale and thin.

Finally, the heavy, burdensome finals were over. All the students hurled themselves into the free skies of the summer vacation like birds escaping their captivity. That first morning of the summer vacation, he opened his twelve-year-old eyes to the riotous singing of birds and a world brilliant with sunshine. Exams were a thing of the past. No matter how badly he did on them, they were no longer on his mind. He headed for the garbage heap to look for his friends. It had been two weeks since they played their last ball game, all because of the final exams.

He passed by the dressmaking shop, hoping to catch a glimpse of the young woman, but today her shop was closed. She must be out with her family. He felt a little disheartened. He saw her every day, but one day in which he did not see her was enough to give him that feeling of emptiness.

His friends were already in the middle of a game. He hurriedly joined in and immediately became involved in the ferocious battle. They played happily until noon. His side lost, and they blamed him, while he blamed himself for joining the wrong side. But they all determined to fight again tomorrow and win. As he walked home, the dressmaking shop was still closed. Again he experienced loss.

At home his mother was complaining over the fact that the Mrs. Lee had failed to show up that morning to do the laundry, and that if she was too busy to come she should have sent Lucien over with a message. Then she turned upon him and said that he had disappeared all morning like a pigeon let out of the cage; she had wanted him to go and look for Mrs. Lee, but she could not even find him. 'You should not spend all your time in ball games even though it is summer vacation!' These words were ones he least liked to hear.

After lunch he felt drowsy. The white-hot sunshine outside made it hard to keep his eyes open; in the room a few flies were buzzing off for about ten minutes.

Just then Mrs. Gordon, who lived next door, came over for her daily chat with his mother. She stepped in the doorway and asked:

‘Is your mother at home, little one?’

‘I’m in the kitchen, Mrs. Gordon,’ his mother called. ‘Find a seat and I’ll be out in a minute.’ Then his mother emerged with her hands covered with soapsuds. She found a piece of cloth and started wiping them.

‘How come you’re doing the wash yourself?’ Mrs. Gordon asked as she sat down.

‘The washerwoman didn’t show up today. I thought I have to do it myself.’

‘That’s why I came to tell you,’ said Mrs. Gordon. ‘You know what’s happened to Mrs. Lee? She’s lost all her money. Twenty thousand dollars of savings, and she lost it all last night. No wonder she’s ill.’

‘Oh, is that so? I didn’t know that she had so much saved up,’ his mother remarked in surprise.

‘All the money she earned by working day and night as a washerwoman, saved up bit by bit. She says she was saving for her son’s education. What a bad luck! But this time lots of other people on our street were hard hit too. Mrs. Roberts lost ten thousand—seems like she just put the money in a couple of days ago. Mrs. Johnson lost three thousand. It’s all that witch’s fault, and now the whole family skipped.’

‘Who’re you talking about?’

‘That woman in the dressmaking shop. She has embezzled all the money which has been placed in her trust! Who would believe that she was capable of doing such a thing? Everyone saw that her business was good and trusted her. Everyone thought her loan club offered higher interest and never dreamt she would suddenly skip out like that. Sheer betrayal, that’s what it is.’

‘Unbelievable,’ his mother mused. ‘She seemed to be such an honest person. Oh, poor Mrs. Lee, what is she going to do. . .’

He did not stay to hear his mother finish. He ran out of the house and headed straight for the dressmaking shop.

The shop was still closed. A few women were standing near the doorway chatting. He stood gazing at the shop as pieces of the conversation nearby drifted into his ears.

‘They left in the middle of the night. No one knows where they are now.’

‘They could report her to the police, have her arrested.’

‘No use. All she’ll have to do is to declare herself bankrupt, and she wouldn’t have a care in the world. . .’

Those women were peering in from the windows on the right. He went over and looked in through a small pane of glass: the room was empty, all the sewing machines and the furniture were gone.

‘Just imagine, she didn’t even pay the workers their wages. How mean can one get?’

Hearing this he suddenly felt his ears burn with anger.

Mrs. Gordon had already left when he got home. Seeing him, his mother murmured: ‘Unbelievable, just unbelievable. People are getting worse and worse. More people get rich and more cheating goes on. People are getting prosperous, but if morals go bad, what’s the use of all this prosperity? Luckily we aren’t rich; otherwise, who knows? We might also have been duped.’

His family was not rich. His father was teaching in a high school. But was the washerwoman rich? Why cheat her out of all her money? And those girls who had worked for next to nothing, why deprive them of their wages?

He went with a book up to the rooftop that evening; he had decided to heed his mother’s advice and do a little studying. The sky above was a soft, quiet blue. He sat on the reddish tiles and leaned against the railing.

He could see the dressmaking shop down across the street. The door was still closed; the chatting women had gone.

He still cherished his love for the seamstress. He wanted to keep that love. He closed his eyes and thought of her lily-like face—and the flower hung down and withered.

Notes :

162 *Lucien*: the name is taken from Mansfield’s story, ‘Lucien’s mother was a dressmaker’ (II , pp. 443-4).

165 *This may go on for years. . .* : the sentence is a direct quote from Mansfield’s story, ‘Feuille D’Album’ (II , p. 96).

**Easter 2012: A Letter to the Home Secretary
in the Conservative-Liberal Democratic Coalition Government**

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Brighton, 6 June 2012

Dear Rt Hon Teresa May MP Home Secretary,

I am Evgenia Trimmi, the International Students' Officer for the University of Sussex, and I represent the interests of overseas students studying at the University of Sussex and beyond. Please permit me to address myself directly to you, and to beseech you to revisit the changes that have been made to the Tier 4 student visa system* by the Home Office since May 2010, including the latest closure of the Tier 1 Post Study Work (PSW) visa route that allows non-EU graduates to remain in the UK for up to two years to apply for and undertake employment after completing their degree. I would be grateful if you could spare some time to read this letter. I believe that the new student visa rules will cause damage to the UK economy and diplomacy rather than deliver the Conservative-Liberal Democratic Coalition Government's target of bringing net migration down to 'tens of thousands' by the end of the parliamentary term.

I fully understand that the aim of implementing a more robust student visa system is to curb abuse by bogus colleges and applicants whose real motives are not to study but to work in the UK, however, as Edward Acton, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of East Anglia, argues in his article 'Why So Prickly?',* 'many of the Tier 4

proposals seemed designed to cut numbers rather than abuse and included measures that directly threatened university recruitment'. In effect, 'net migration as measured by the IPS* remains stubborn. It has increased rather than declined since 2009, reaching 250,000 in the year to June 2011', Acton points out, 'and it has become clear that the methods chosen to eliminate abuse have taken a toll on the thoroughly legitimate language schools'. In keeping with Acton's nice observation, the BBC News reports that English language schools in Sussex say student visa changes 'making it more expensive for students outside the EU to obtain visas—as well as requiring a higher standard of English to qualify—have contributed to a drop in students of between 50% and 92%'. In a time of recession, nothing is worse than what those language schools have predicted: 'the South East's economy could lose £267m a year because of a change in requirements for student visas'.*

The value of international students cannot be underestimated. First of all, the direct value of international students alone to the UK economy (including overseas tuition fees and off-campus expenditure) was calculated by the British Council in 2007 to amount to nearly £8.5 billion per year. In addition, they have enriched the UK not only economically, but also in other valuable ways. A recent report by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, for example, notes that 78 per cent of international students graduating in 2010 said they wished to build links with UK organisations and businesses. Last but not least, the presence of students and staff from across the globe has helped to instil into campuses an openness to international currents, cultures and collaboration. When I first moved into the University of Sussex managed accommodation, the drinking and partying behaviour of my British flatmates did worry me. Making friends with other international students who also experienced the same

kind of cultural shock has helped me to recognise that I am free to live according to my personal standards and should not feel pressure to 'get drunk'.

Being elected as an International Students' Officer in my second year has allowed me to fully comprehend all the problems international students are encountering. As an EU student from Greece, I am lucky enough to study and work in the UK without a visa, but it pains me to see how the new visa regulations make non-EU students' experiences of studying in the UK stressful rather than rewarding. Thus, I have launched an online survey to encourage international students across the UK to compose a narrative of how the changes to the student visa system are affecting their studies, financial plans and even perceptions of the UK. Up to now, I have received feedback submitted not only by overseas students but also from British citizens. Please see below 5 cases I selected from all the submissions after obtaining the contributors' permission to use their stories. I have removed their real names to mask their identities.

Case 1

Speaking as a British citizen, I would like to call attention to a critical dilemma facing UK schools that are pioneering the introduction of Mandarin Chinese in their curricula, as my school in Brighton has been doing since 2006. Native-speaking Chinese teachers are a crucial part of our thriving Mandarin department, especially since we offer the language at A-level both to native and non-native Chinese speakers. However, it has now become very difficult for us to sponsor the outstanding non-EU teachers our department needs in order to give Mandarin Chinese the necessary continuity in our school as a result of recent changes to work permit rules made by the Conservative-Liberal Democratic Coalition Government. Firstly, we no longer have an automatic allocation of Certificates of Sponsorship (CAS) for Tier 2 visas. Secondly, the Tier 2

shortage occupation list currently only includes ‘secondary education teachers in the subjects of maths or pure sciences (physics, chemistry, biology and any combinations of these)’. Thirdly, the latest closure of Tier 1 post-study work visa on 6 April 2012 makes it harder to employ Chinese or Taiwanese nationals who have just completed PGCEs or MAs in TCFL (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language) with a view to teach Mandarin Chinese in the UK. Lastly, we are unable to employ teaching assistants from abroad without paying them an annual salary of at least £21,000.

Given the importance of preparing our younger generations for a reality in which China will play an unprecedentedly central role economically and politically, it is—in my view—vital that schools be given the means to provide the best possible grounding in Chinese language and culture where their curricula allow for this. While many schools continue to focus on teaching more traditional languages such as French and Latin, which are arguably of decreasing usefulness, it seems to make so much more sense to look further afield and give more space to such languages as Chinese and Arabic. Language departments that focus on European languages may rarely face visa issues, and I cannot help but think that Asian language education has been overlooked and undervalued.

I suggest that the Government should consider easing some of the restrictions on nationals of China and Taiwan who are active in education as Mandarin learners of all ages can only maximize their learning under the instruction of suitably qualified native Chinese speaking teachers. Even though some native Chinese-speaking instructors are permanently domiciled in the UK, this is generally because they are married and have families here. Clearly this is no guarantee of quality in their teaching. Certainly UK schools are not lacking in British teachers like myself who can speak Mandarin at an

advanced level, but I still insist that those who go on to take the subject at A-Level must have access to native speakers to overcome the challenges posed by the language and perform well in their examinations.

More generally, I fear that the rigorous UK work visa rules will reinforce the perception that the UK is not welcoming to non-EU professionals, which results in overseas Chinese instructors going to other countries such as the US for more job opportunities. Worse still, UK is likely to lose its own talented linguists, who seek to go to China or Taiwan in order to learn Mandarin with native speakers, which might then eventually lead to permanent settlement. The UK cannot afford that.

Case 2

I am a postgraduate student pursuing an MA degree in Critical Theory at the University of Sussex. As an international student from Japan, I have to pay the overseas rate for tuition fees, which is almost three times what the EU and Home students have to pay.

I came to the UK from Japan in January 2003, and then completed my primary and secondary education in London, and I graduated with honours in English literature from the University of Sussex two years ago. Now I am thinking about applying for a permanent residence permit once I have lived in the UK for ten years, but the settlement reforms announced by the Home Office in November 2010 indicate that the ten-year continuous residence requirement may be subject to change in the near future. I resent being considered as an overseas student by the Government in spite of the fact that I have already lived in the UK for nine years. Over the past nine years, I have played important roles in a wide range of school activities, which has enabled me to make many British friends and acquire a proper British accent and fluency in English. Besides,

I have worked part-time as a Japanese language tutor for a language centre in Brighton since my second-year in the University. I have passed my two-year probation period and my teaching evaluations have been excellent; however, it is unlikely that I will be allowed to renew my contract without a Tier 1 Post Study Work visa, which has been abolished since 6 April, 2012.

One of my students is keen to continue studying Japanese with me, and she kindly wrote to her MP asking him to raise the issue about the new visa restrictions with Damian Green, the Minister for Immigration. The Conservative MP wrote back to her stressing that,

there is already enormous pressure on work experience places and the Government has funded a big expansion under the Youth Contract to try to give as many young people as possible a chance at getting into training, apprenticeships or a job. That has to be a priority over work experience places being taken up by overseas students who will be going back to their own countries.

It makes sense to me that at a time of high unemployment in the UK, helping British youth to get a job has to be considered as a priority over providing working experience for international students. However, I take issue with Mr Green over his comments that Britain ‘shouldn’t be bringing in large numbers of relatively unskilled workers because they will be doing jobs that British people can do’.* Mr. Green has no right to tell me that I am ‘unskilled’. I am considered a distinguished student by my tutors and classmates due to my high level of academic performance. Although I have encountered a few British people who can speak good Japanese, I doubt whether they can teach the language to as advanced a level as I do.

In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva remarks that ‘the foreigner is one who works’, as embodied ‘in a French village’, where she came across ‘ambitious farmers’ who had come from Portugal and Spain, and were ‘more hard-working than’ other

French farmers. The foreigner devotes himself to work, as Kristeva puts it, ‘since he has nothing’ in a country and society not his own. Indeed, at the language centre, I venture to say that my Chinese colleague and I are more enthusiastic about learning new ICT skills for language teaching than most of my European colleagues. It does not surprise me that a number of employers have hit back at Government calls to take on more British workers, ‘warning that too often British people lack the right skills or attitude to take the jobs’.

It is a crying shame that non-EU graduates are not eligible to work in the UK after investing so much of their money, time, and emotions in this country. I have more close friends and referees here than I have back in Japan, which makes going home a frightening rather than joyful transition. One thing is certain—if other Japanese students seek my advice on studying in the UK, I will reply, borrowing Akim’s welcome speech to a few newcomers from Maurice Blanchot’s story ‘The Idyll’:

‘You’ll learn that in this house it’s hard to be a stranger. You will also learn that it’s not easy to stop being one. If you miss your country, everyday you will find more reasons to miss it. But if you manage to forget it and begin to love your new place, you’ll be sent home, and then, uprooted once more, you will begin a second exile.’

I have been thinking about applying to PhD programmes at the US universities and working there for a few years before returning to Japan. I do not want to explain to my relatives in Japan that I could not get a job in the UK due to the strict visa system, which takes no account of my ability.

Case 3

Can an English native-speaker imagine how difficult it is to complete a PhD in one’s second language? I was awarded a PhD degree in Comparative Literature by the

University of London early in 2012. I have presented my papers at 6 international conferences and published 2 articles in highly-regarded academic journals over the past two years. The external examiner of my Viva, a famous scholar in my field, encouraged me to apply for a post-doctoral researcher position at the Centre for Chinese Studies at the University where she is working. I applied for it, but my dream of continuing my research work in the UK, however, was shattered by a letter which arrived a few days later:

Dear Miss xxx,

I can confirm that we did like your application very much, but our Government states that we must try to recruit an EU Citizen prior to recruiting someone who isn't an EU citizen. For this role we did receive applications from EU citizens, therefore we have to select these people for interview. I am sorry to send you disappointing news but I wish you every success with any future applications you may make.

Kind regards,

xxxxx

HR Administrator

Xxxxxx University

Whilst Damian Green, the Immigration Minister, claims that Britain will give priority to the 'brightest and the best' immigrants under new plans to cut the number of foreigners settling in the UK, I contend that my story illustrates well the extent to which the new immigration policy will result in 'brightest and best' individuals being denied employment based on arbitrary factors such as income and nationality rather than ability to do the job.

Job search frustration not only casts a shadow over my career outlook but also puts a strain on my personal life. My British boyfriend and I have just celebrated our second Valentine's Day together, but I start to doubt whether we will have a future as the UK immigration system tightens. My boyfriend suggests that I consider marrying him and then applying for a spouse visa afterwards. Should I thank the Coalition Government for getting my boyfriend to pop the question? To my surprise, his proposal made me a little sad.

One of the reasons why I was so keen to get a full-time job after earning a degree lies in the fact that I aim to remain in the UK to be with my boyfriend under the work route rather than the family route. In other words, I do not want to give the impression that I plan to get married for immigration purposes. No matter how accomplished an Asian woman is, still, she is often tagged as a China doll or a Japanese geisha in the West. Worse still, an Asian woman dating a Caucasian man is likely to be branded as a gold digger, as is Rupert Murdoch's estranged wife, Wendi Deng. Being brought up in a well-off family (my father is the Chairperson of a big food industry company in Shanghai), I could not bear to carry this kind of stigma. I am not here to take British gentlemen from British ladies. If I had a choice, I would have married a Chinese man in order to live closer to my parents to look after them. Unfortunately, all the blind dates arranged by my parents failed. Generally speaking, Chinese men tend to shy away from female PhDs and prefer younger, more 'manageable' beauties. What Tung-weng Fang (the father of the protagonist Hung-chien Fang) claims in Zhongshu Qian's *Fortress Besieged* sixty-five years ago still rings true: 'As for a girl who has studied abroad and received a PhD, no one but a foreigner would dare marry her. Otherwise, the man would have to have two doctorates at least.'

Besides the stigma attached to Asian women in the West, Theresa May's leaked letter to Nick Clegg about family route visas for non-EU nationals also makes me hesitant about marrying my British boyfriend. The Home Secretary proposes a callous minimum income threshold of £25,700 for a British citizen or person settled in the UK who wishes to sponsor the settlement of a spouse or partner from outside the EU from June, 2012. Also, the 'probationary period' before which spouses cannot apply to live permanently in Britain would lengthen from two to five years under the new family route. Mrs. May tells Mr. Clegg that the aim of these changes she has proposed is to 'differentiate between genuine and non-genuine relationships'.* Being able to show median household income and wait five years to live permanently in the UK does not make one's relationship more genuine than anyone else's. It just means that one has the money and time to adapt to the new policy. Whilst I respect the right of the Government to tackle those non-EU nationals who have illegally entered into Britain through sham marriages, I argue that the Government should also target those British citizens who are charging non-EU nationals thousands of pounds to arrange bogus weddings to EU nationals so they can stay in the UK.

Non-EU nationals and UK citizens who are genuinely in love are paying the price for political pandering. Thanks to the recession, my boyfriend's company is axing jobs, and he is considering working for my father's company in Shanghai, an expanding business in a city which welcomes overseas talent to work there. In the near future, we aim to buy British snack brand KP, following the lead of our biggest rival in Shanghai, Bright Food Group Company, which purchased a 60% stake in British cereal maker Weetabix Ltd. in May this year. I believe things will work out for us.

Case 4

I am a first year Iranian student studying Biosciences at the University of Sussex. As an international student who has helped to keep the Department of Biosciences alive where Home and EU demand has been dangerously weak, I believe that my presence in a UK university should be considered positive rather than negative.

I value my Iranian nationality, but the tough UK immigration rules applied to non-EU students from 'High Risk' countries have constantly forced me to feel otherwise. I did a nine-month English course and two years of A-levels before starting my undergraduate study. During the past three years, I had to renew my student visa twice, which was time-consuming and costly. It cost about £400 (application fee plus postage) and took almost four months to process my student visa application. Both times when I went through the procedure of visa application, I was treated like a criminal simply because I was born in Iran: I had to register with the police, allowing them to keep track of me wherever I went; I was required to go through Iris Scanning to obtain my Biometrical Identification; I was asked to say whether I had ever engaged in a terrorist act, and so on. I found the whole visa application process unbearably tedious and suggest the UKBA should consider a more efficient method of monitoring non-EU students in this country. I understood from the news that the British government is developing a plan to track current and former prisoners by means of microchips implanted under the skin. I honestly think that the UKBA should explore the possibility of injecting overseas students from 'High Risk' countries in the back of the arm with a radio frequency identification chip that contains information about their name, address, passport and visa records.

I have decided not to visit my family in Iran because I cannot stand being treated as a suspect at the airport. Since the British Embassy in Iran has closed, my parents have to apply for tourist visas through the British Embassy in Abu Dhabi, which is always

bustling with long queues of impatient crowds waiting for over half a day to get their visas. My father was issued a visa, but my mother was denied a visa because of a minor error in her visa application. Therefore, she was accused of lying and has been banned from making another application for ten years! My father hired a lawyer to contact the British Embassy in Abu Dhabi about this matter. The embassy admitted that they made a mistake by rejecting my mother's visa application on trivial grounds. We have not heard from them again, however, since they replied to our enquiry three months ago. In the end, we didn't take the lawyer's suggestion to sue the British Embassy because it would cost too much money to do so.

I have not seen my mother for almost two years. In order to visit her, I will train myself to become strong enough to take secondary security screenings at the airports with my head held high. Perhaps one day I shall become immune to the suspicious glares I receive in the UK, but at what point should I say enough is enough?

Case 5

I had been working as an engineer for three years in India before coming to Northern Ireland for my MSc degree in Music Technology and Sonic Arts at Queen's University in Belfast. I chose to study in the UK based on the assumption that I can finish my MSc degree in one year as opposed to two years studying in the US. Moreover, I was also very enthusiastic about applying for a Tier 1 Post Work Study visa, which allowed a non-EU graduate to remain in the UK for up to two years to further his career aspirations.

My perception of the UK visa system has shifted since I started a job search in January. Luckily, in March I was offered a job by a company in Belfast because of my engineering background and good references. Unexpectedly, the company reneged on my job offer *because* the Post Study Work visa will be closed to applicants on 6 April, 2012. Under new visa rules, employers are unable to employ non-EU nationals without paying them an annual salary of at least £21,000. In light of the new visa rules, it would be unlikely for a non-EU graduate to be employed in Belfast, where average wages are around 30% to 40% *lower than in London*. I do not blame this company for obeying the new visa rules, however, I do not understand why the new visa rules should apply to non-EU students who came to the UK before the effective date of the new visa system.

Britain's reputation among foreign would-be students has already worsened. 'Really very bad news' and 'new rules hit us badly' are two typical comments left on an Indian website that reported the change in UK immigration rules. A related worry is that business will suffer. The cluster of technology start-ups near the Old Street junction in east London known as 'Silicon Roundabout' relies on imported skills. In the City many migrants are on secondment from the head offices of foreign-owned businesses and banks. Workers and students are vital for building the skills and global networks that drive Britain's service exports. A poorly constructed migration target is putting Britain's long-term economic health at risk. There was also sharp criticism of tighter UK visa rules by Indian Commerce Minister, Anand Sharma. Sharma also reportedly warned the UK that Indian IT firms may relocate their business to other European countries, if British visa laws became tougher.

Now I am working part-time in a pub in Belfast because of my secondary speciality—music. I won first place in the music competition held by the Queen's University in Belfast last year and received compliments from one of the judges, Keith

Duffy, the Irish singer-songwriter. I was also invited by other Irish students to compose and record songs in the studio at the University. Currently we are working on a project of turning poems into songs. We are singing Yeats' 'Easter 1916': 'Too long a sacrifice / Can make a stone of the heart / O, when may it suffice?'

I hope these cases illustrate well how the changes to the UK immigration policy have not only caused stress to non-EU students but also challenge the UK economy in a time of recession. A Home Office study of the cohort entering in 2004 found that after five years, only 3 percent of overseas students had settled, while the vast majority left after completing their studies. International students bring significant cultural richness and long-term political and social benefits to this country, and return many benefits to the countries from which they come. However, global competition for international students is intense and a number of other countries are increasing their efforts in this area.

I therefore ask you to consider lifting university-sponsored overseas students out of the net migration, as these 'migrants' are 'temporary' instead of 'permanent'. It will help the Government to focus attention on the migrant categories that are of real public concern, such as unskilled workers, illegal immigrants, extended family members, and asylum seekers. Rather than focusing on a target-based approach to migration, we think the Government should be taking a more humane approach that better balances the right to freedom of movement with the many push and pull factors that affect migration globally.

The world's brightest talents have plenty of options and other countries are courting them. Australia has relaxed its rules on student visas. Canada gives three-year

work visas to its graduates with master's degrees. America's appeal rarely dims and its politicians may yet agree to allow more foreign-born science graduates to stay and work. Meanwhile, Britain is at risk of scaring them off. In this Olympic year, UK universities will be hosting athletics teams and media from across the globe, and I urge you to send a clear message that genuine international students are also welcome in, and valued by, the United Kingdom.

Thank you for giving your precious time to read this letter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Evgenia Trimmi

The International Students' Officer

University of Sussex

Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RH

Notes:

171 *Tier 4 student visa system*: general information about immigration categories for non-EU nationals can be found on the website of the UK Border Agency, <<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration>>

Why So Prickly?: Edward Acton's article appeared in *Times Higher Education*, no. 2,046 (19 April 2012): 38-43.

- 172 *the IPS*: the International Passenger Survey (IPS) collects information about passengers entering and leaving the UK, and has been running continuously since 1961.
- 'the South East's economy could lose £267m a year because of a change in requirements for student visas'*: see 'South East Economy "could lose millions" After Visa Changes', BBC News (26 April 2012)
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-17859917>>
- 176 *'shouldn't be bringing in large numbers of relatively unskilled workers because they will be doing jobs that British people can do'*: see 'Damian Green: "We only want the brightest immigrants"', *Telegraph* (2 February 2012)
<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/9056516/Damian-Green-we-only-want-the-brightest-immigrants.html>>
- 180 *'differentiate between genuine and non-genuine relationships'*: see 'Ministers Plan Major Immigration Crackdown', *Telegraph* (24 March 2012)
<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/9165090/Ministers-plan-major-immigration-crackdown.html>>

Conclusion

Gifts (For Katherine Mansfield)

From my father the bliss of solitude,
 From my mother the tedium of elegance,
 The inevitable self-betrayal.

From the quake-stricken island
 My shaken-up identity.

To people, my greetings
 Where no true kindness is,
 To ghosts, my silent sympathy.

To myself
 Hundreds of masquerades.
 To poetry, special *prose*.

The Functions of Theory³³¹

This morning, Chang comes across some pictures of herself taken five years ago and realizes that it is time for her to book a make-up lesson with Theory, a new brand of cosmetics recently launched.

This afternoon, Chang walks into the Theory boutique nearby and is warmly greeted by the make-up artist, Terry. ‘The cosmetic collection looks fantastic,’ Chang declares, ‘but I don’t want to put on make-up an inch thick.’ ‘No problem, my dear. I can teach you how to apply “no make-up” make-up,’ Terry promises. ‘ “No make-up”

³³¹ ‘The Functions of Theory’ is showcased on the Quick Fictions App: <<http://www.myriadeditions.com/quickfictions>>.

make-up? I would love to find out how to do so!’ Chang is curious. ‘Play up pale beauty by choosing a base that’s slightly lighter than your skin—the paleness will make black hair look shinier,’ says Terry. ‘Pick a shade with a slightly pink undertone and not a yellow one, as the latter will accentuate any under-eye circles and sunspots.’ ‘I see,’ says Chang. ‘As Asian features can be naturally flat, you may want to create a 3D-effect,’ Terry suggests. ‘That would be lovely!’ Chang agrees. He brushes a pink all over the apples of Chang’s cheeks, continuing up and out to the temples. Next, Chang’s eyes are further brought out with a soft black eye pencil traced very close to the upper and lower lashes. ‘A thick line will make the eyes look smaller,’ Terry remarks. He finishes with a pale pink lip gloss. ‘The overall effect is precious and innocent,’ he says.

Looking into the mirror, Chang is so thrilled about her new look that she purchases the following products by Theory on Terry’s recommendation: Sigmund Fluid Foundation in Ivory, Slavoj Zenith Blush in Peony, Roland Myth Lip Gloss in Pink Pearl, and Jacques Definity Eye Pencil in Black Velvet. ‘Theory makes you more attractive, doesn’t it?’ Chang reassures herself.

Boundary Crossing: On Creative and Critical Writing

My thesis focuses on boundary crossing between the personal and the impersonal, life and its dramatisation, male and female, human and non-human animals, EU and non-EU citizenships, and creative and critical writing. This thesis has demonstrated how the figurative and extensive use of the ‘mask’—impersonation, masquerade, prosopopoeia and translation—provides a crucial literary device for reflecting on these experiences of being in-between and creating literature. John Keats’s idea of ‘the chameleon poet’, Robert Browning’s conception of dramatic monologue, T. S. Eliot’s poetics of

impersonality and Katherine Mansfield's poetics of impersonation are all closely bound up with the adoption of the linguistic mask, which enables them, as Cixous suggests, 'to pluck the chance and pleasure of being another person all the while knowing that I am not the other'.³³² Katherine Mansfield attempts to extend this boundary state of 'being another person' to what Deleuze and Guattari call 'the-becoming-animal', as she tells Dorothy Brett about her experience of writing about a duck in a letter dated 11 October 1917: 'When I write about ducks I swear that I am a white duck with a round eye [...] There follows the moment when you are *more* duck [...] than any of these objects could ever possibly be, and you create them anew.'³³³ The phrase '*more* duck' indicates that Mansfield is 'becoming the duck' instead of having become the duck. It is this unbridgeable gap between human and non-human animals that facilitates her to 'create them anew'. In the same vein, it is the impossibility or difficulty of crossing the boundaries between gender, continents, languages and cultures that contributes to the development and liberation of the expressive potential of Katherine Mansfield, Eileen Chang, Ezra Pound, Zhimo Xu and myself. Like a Noh actor whose acting skill has been highlighted by the stark difference between the actor and the elaborate mask he wears, Pound can most effectively demonstrate his poetic craft by masquerading as the Chinese wife in English.

Likewise, it is the inexchangeability between creative and critical writing that generates the possibilities of both genres. As Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle claim: 'Critical writing does not involve "a suspended relation to meaning and reference" [in Derrida's phrase] in the way that literary or creative writing does.' At the same time, however, they suggest that ' "creative writing" is not simply opposed to "critical

³³² Cixous, 'Unmasked!', trans. Keith Cohen, in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, p. 182.

³³³ See Chapter 2, note 152.

writing”’.³³⁴ Therefore, I have encompassed both the creative and critical components in this thesis and attempted to suggest that creative writing and critical writing can serve as masks for one another.

Taking my poem ‘Gifts’ as an example, it is an autobiographical poem disguised as a tribute to Katherine Mansfield. Hiding behind the mask of critical elements allows me to relate life stories that I do not have the ‘courage or strength to write’ (in Cixous’ phrase).³³⁵ More specifically, ‘the quake-stricken island’ refers both to Taiwan and New Zealand. Another example is my short story, ‘A Cup of Camomile Tea, or an Erotomaniac’s Journal’, in which characters resort to critical writing, such as academic papers or the use of literary and medical terms to communicate the ‘secret disruption’ (in Mansfield’s phrase)³³⁶ within themselves. Overall, each of the four short stories is packed with literary allusions. The mask of literary allusions enables the characters to be more revealing about their secret selves without being hampered by self-censorship.

On the other hand, good creative writing is always also critical. Reflecting on a Chekhov letter translated by S. S. Koteliansky, Mansfield writes to Virginia Woolf in a letter dated c. 27 May 1919: ‘[...] what the writer does is not so much to *solve* the question but to *put* the question. There must be the question put’.³³⁷ I suggest that it is in creative writing that we can most freely play with possibilities by posing the questions rather than providing answers. In other words, the mask of creative writing allows critical writing to ‘involve “a suspended relation to meaning and reference” [in

³³⁴ As Jacques Derrida has put it: ‘There is no literature without a *suspended* relation to meaning and reference.’ From Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 48. Quoted in Bennett and Royle, Chapter 11, ‘Creative Writing’, in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 4th edn, p. 90, p. 92.

³³⁵ Cixous declares: ‘The only book that is worth writing is the one we don’t have courage or strength to write. The book that hurts us (we who are writing), that makes us tremble, redden, bleed.’ From Cixous, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, trans. Sarah Cornell and Susan Seller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 32.

³³⁶ In a letter dated 19 October 1922, Mansfield writes to S. S. Koteliansky: ‘I am a divided being with a bias towards what I wish to be, but no more. [...] So I am always conscious of this secret disruption in me.’ From *Letters* 5, p. 304.

³³⁷ *Letters* 2, p. 320.

Derrida's phrase] in the way that literary or creative writing does.' My quick fiction 'The Functions of Theory', for instance, may appear initially to be a critique of the applicability of Western theory to the study of Chinese literature (The surname 'Chang' refers to Eileen Chang or Chinese literature in general.). 'Theory' could be shown in a more positive light, however, if we gave credence to the Japanese make-up artist Shu Uemura's theory of the application of make-up. He says: 'Make-up should give life to the face, and not cover it up. Use it to enhance your own uniqueness, bring out the best of your charm.'³³⁸ In light of Uemura's advice, the theoretical and critical terms that I use in my thesis can be considered as a variety of make-up that I apply to the face of my thesis. I hope that they enhance the appeal of my thinking instead of covering it up. The mask of the creative element, 'An Eternal Twenty Minutes', in Chapter 3 permits me to experiment with Mansfield's concept of 'special *prose*' and Paul de Man's definition of 'prosopopeia' by giving masks and voices to Mansfield and Xu in a way that would not have been possible in the form of critical writing.

By inserting a piece of 'special *prose*' into a critical chapter and incorporating literary quotations into short stories, this thesis in creative and critical writing keeps literary histories alive, bringing the writing techniques I have learned from Katherine Mansfield, Eileen Chang and other writers into close contact with the contemporary practice of creative writing.³³⁹

³³⁸ Shu Uemura (1928–2007) was a Japanese make-up artist and founder of the Shu Uemura international cosmetics line which bears his name. His make-up advice is quoted from <<http://www.facebook.com/shuueumura.philippines>>.

³³⁹ The wording of this sentence is adapted from what Peter Boxall writes in his introduction to *Since Beckett: Contemporary Writing in the Wake of Modernism* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 16: 'Rather than presiding over the end of history, the postmodern weakening of historicity, I argue that his work keeps histories alive, bringing the modernist forms he has inherited from Joyce and Proust into a peculiar contact with the contemporary.'

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